

SOUTH DAKOTA BOARD OF REGENTS

Policy Manual

SUBJECT: System Academic Year / Academic Calendar

NUMBER: 2.1.1

A. PURPOSE

This policy defines the academic year for the Regental institutions and applies to the six public institutions of higher education. This policy governs the academic calendars as approved by the Board of Regents and serves two fundamental purposes for the system. First, Federal Financial Aid requires programs to meet the established academic calendars. Second, academic instruction and processing within the student information system requires a well-coordinated academic calendar that spans admissions, registration, billing, financial aid, academic records, completion and transcription, and reporting.

B. DEFINITIONS

- 1. Academic Calendar:** Date-driven academic year divided into formatted terms and detailed by academic and non-academic days.
- 2. Academic Days:** Academic class days available in the academic calendar where academic engagement and instruction occurs.
- 3. Academic Engagement:** Defined under federal regulations¹ as active participation by a student in an instructional activity related to the student's course of study and includes, but is not limited to - attending a synchronous class, lecture, recitation, or field or laboratory activity, physically or online, where there is an opportunity for interaction between the instructor and students; submitting an academic assignment; taking an assessment or an exam; participating in an interactive tutorial, webinar, or other interactive computer-assisted instruction; participating in a study group, group project, or an online discussion that is assigned by the institution; or interacting with an instructor about academic matters.
- 4. Academic Year:** Represents a 365-day period establishing term begin and end dates.
- 5. Census Date:** A date determined after calculating the calendar days as outlined in section D.4 for the term or non-standard term.
- 6. Finals Week:** Dates designated for the delivery of final examination or completion of course assignments to conclude the term and non-standard term.
- 7. Instructional Time:** A period of seven (7) consecutive days in which at least one (1) day of regularly scheduled academic engagement occurs.

¹ [Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\), Title 34, Part 600.2](#)

8. **Non-Academic Days:** Those calendar days that have no academic engagement activity. These days include holidays, non-scheduled class day, spring-break, administrative days, etc.
9. **Regental Institution:** Defined as one of the six (6) public universities: Black Hills State University, Dakota State University, Northern State University, South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, South Dakota State University, and the University of South Dakota.
10. **Semester:** Defined as fifteen (15) weeks of instructional activity followed by finals week for Fall and Spring. The duration of weeks may be shorter for the summer semester.
11. **Term:** Defined as a more general duration of the academic calendar. The Regental system provides semester terms. Within a semester, parts of terms may exist.

C. GOVERNANCE, POLICY STATEMENTS

1. All Regental institutions shall operate under a common standard academic calendar approved by the Board of Regents except for the Medical School and Law School at the University of South Dakota.
2. The U.S. Department of Education² requires institutions with programs offering credit hours to establish an academic calendar to include thirty (30) weeks of instructional time for Fall and Spring. Instructional time does not include non-academic days or periods of orientation, counseling, homework, vacation, or other activity not related to academic engagement.
3. The full part of the term for Fall and Spring semester terms are fifteen (15) weeks of instructional time each for federal compliance. The student information system may have multiple parts of terms which are approved by the institution and must comply with federal law.
4. The Summer semester/term is an abbreviated semester and may be less than fifteen (15) weeks. The academic days and part of the term for the summer courses can be an intensive and concentrated schedule to ensure the required course contact hours and credit hour requirements are met.
5. The academic year begins with the summer term and is defined as the header [beginning] of the academic year for federal financial aid purposes.
6. Finals week shall be the last full week of the semester after the fifteen (15) weeks of instructional activity.
7. The student information system shall be utilized to process all academic processes related to the academic calendar.
8. The system enrollment services center shall work with the institutional registrar, financial aid, student accounts receivable, and general student service offices to develop a processing calendar prior to each term. This processing calendar presents a collaborative effort across

² Federal Student Aid Handbook. [Academic Years, Academic Calendars, Payment Periods, and Disbursements | 2022-2023 Federal Student Aid Handbook](#)

the institutions and across multiple disciplines (academic records, accounts receivable, admissions, financial aid, and technology).

9. The system academic processing calendar shall be posted and made available to all personnel working with academic processing.

D. IMPORTANT ACADEMIC DATES

The academic calendar includes the following important dates (listed in alphabetical order). The Academic Affairs Council (AAC) Guidelines will provide more information on system academic processing for these important dates.

1. Billing Dates

The student information system and shared student accounts receivable services shall process all billing approximately six (6) weeks prior to the start of the fall and spring terms and by May 1st for the summer term across the Regental system.

2. Disbursement of Financial Aid

Federal regulations allow the first federal financial aid disbursement to be no sooner than 10 days before the start date of each term. Each institution may set their own first disbursement date for each term and their own disbursement schedule throughout the term. Financial aid disbursement occurs on a rolling basis throughout each term.

3. Add-Drop Dates

The add/drop period is the period during which students may adjust their academic schedule for the terms without financial or academic consequences. The last day of the drop/add period for a course shall be designated as the census date for that course and will be the official date for enrollment reporting.

4. Census Dates

The official date for standard courses shall be the date the first ten (10) percent of the term ends. For any non-standard course, the census date shall be calculated for the course based on the number of calendar days for the course. When calculating ten (10) percent of the term, all days are included (Saturday, Sunday, and holiday) except for breaks of five (5) or more days. Breaks of five (5) days are excluded from the total number of days for calculating ten (10) percent of the course.

5. Mid-Term Date

The Mid Term Date shall be determined by counting the number of academic days from the beginning of a term and dividing by two (2) (rounding up where the number of class days in a term is an odd number). The Mid Term Date shall be the last day of the first half of the term.

6. Mid-Term Grading Dates

Instructors shall submit midterm grades for undergraduate students no later than three (3) working days after the Mid Term Date for Fall and Spring terms. Procedures for midterm grading can be found in AAC Guideline 2.8.1.1.

7. Withdrawal Dates

Last day to withdraw from any/all courses must occur prior to 70 percent of the term or non-standard term to receive a ‘W’. There are financial implications to withdrawing after census and up to the 70 percent date as outlined on the academic calendar. For more information on tuition and fees and withdrawal, see BOR Policy 5.7 Section C.2.

8. End of Term Dates

8.1. Finals Week

For the full part of term, the last week of the schedule is considered the finals week. It shall be after the full fifteen weeks of the semester.

8.2. Final Semester Grade Dates

Instructors shall submit all grades no later than three working days after the last day of final summative examinations and assignments for the term.

8.3. Final Grade Validation

The Registrar’s Office at each university shall validate that all grades are submitted no later than two working days following the instructor’s submission deadline as outlined above in 8.2.

8.4. System Processing

Immediately following completion of grade validation (next business day), the system enrollment services center must promptly initiate the student information systems processing calendar. The end of term calendar timeline is approved by the functional experts each term.

9. Refund Dates

BOR Policy 5.7 Section C.2 shall outline the refund policy for students.

E. NON-ACADEMIC APPROVED DAYS

- 1. Holidays are considered non-academic days. The approved holiday schedule for Regental institutions is listed.

New Year’s Day	January 1*
Martin Luther King Jr. Day	Third Monday in January
Presidents’ Day	Third Monday in February
Memorial Day	Last Monday in May
Juneteenth	June 19*
Independence Day	July 4*
Labor Day	First Monday in September
Native Americans’ Day	Second Monday in October
Veterans’ Day	November 11*
Thanksgiving Day	Fourth Thursday in November
Christmas Day	December 25*

**If January 1, June 19, July 4, November 11, or December 25 fall on a Sunday, the Monday following shall be*

observed as the holiday; if they fall on a Saturday, Friday is the holiday³.

2. The academic calendar shall have other pre-scheduled dates where no class will be scheduled (e.g., spring break). If the entire week is not scheduled, it shall not count as an instructional week.

RESOURCES:

- [BOR Policy 2.4.3](#) – Definition and Assignment of Credit Hours
- [BOR Policy 5.7](#) – Refunds
- [Academic Calendar](#)
- [AAC Guideline 2.8.1.1 – Midterm and Final Grading](#)

SOURCE:

BOR 1978; BOR July 1971; § 1-5-1, 1974; BOR May 1990; BOR, April 1992; BOR December 1993; BOR January 1996; BOR June 1999; BOR May 2000; BOR May 2001; January 2002; BOR May 2002; BOR December 2002; March 2003; BOR December 2003; BOR May 2004; BOR December 2004; BOR December 2005; BOR March 2006; BOR December 2011; BOR March 2022; BOR August 2023; October 2023 (Clerical); BOR April 2025.

³ [South Dakota Codified Law 1-5-1](#).