

Example of Calendar Features

Academic calendars include **standard features**, like:

- Term type like quarter, semesters, or trimester
- Length of instructional days or weeks (e.g., 146 for UC and CSU, ranging from 120 for Princeton to 149 for Arizona)
- Start time (e.g., in August, after Labor Day, late September)
- End time (e.g., late April, early May, or early June)

Depending on these standard features, universities – including universities that have converted calendars – have included **unique features** to their academic calendar. Some examples include:

Study breaks:

UC Berkeley has created a **Reading, Recitation, and Review or RRR week** in advance of finals for the fall and spring semesters where instructors provide no new content and students have time to prepare for exams, work on final papers or projects, and/or participate in review sessions or meetings with instructors. The Berkeley campus has created guidelines¹ and ideas² on how to best use RRR weeks. RRR week is based on the pedagogical principle that students benefit from time devoted to synthesizing the course material learned over the course of the semester. As such it is considered part of the instructional day count.

Other institutions (e.g., Penn, Ohio State, Georgia, and Vanderbilt) have created **fall or autumn breaks** after the first third or half of the fall semesters. A Canadian study³ found mixed results on impact to reducing stress and recommended holding the break at later point in the term (e.g., 7th week instead of 5th week) might be preferable. These are considered holidays, and therefore not counted towards instructional days.

Some institutions – CalTech, Minnesota, Ohio State, and Georgia Tech – have **study periods or reading days** which occur after term classes are complete. The purpose of this time is similar to RRR weeks and have time before finals to synthesize course material. These are considered holidays, and therefore not counted towards instructional days.

Split terms or minimesters:

Some universities create shorter terms within a semester to take courses. As part of the calendar conversion, Minnesota and Ohio State both provide **seven-week sessions** that run parallel to the fall and spring semesters. These sessions can be used to advance various academic goals⁴,

¹ https://teaching.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/rrr_guidelines.pdf

² <https://teaching.berkeley.edu/ideas-rrr-week>

³ <https://studentsuccessjournal.org/index.php/studentsuccess/article/view/1412>

⁴ <https://nscs.org/what-is-a-minimester/>

including providing focused learning, flexibility, faster progress to degree⁵, or ability to retake courses.

Intersessions:

Some universities have created **winter intersession or Maymesters** to provide short, intensive experiences to take courses, participate in education abroad, or have community learning or internship experiences. These experiences occur over a two to four week period.

As part of the California State University (CSU) calendar conversion, many CSU campuses – such as CSU LA – created a winter intersession in January and some CSUs indicated these sessions can help students catch up and stay on track⁶, aligning with CSU’s graduation initiative 2025. In addition, one study⁷ has shown students appreciate the convenience of winter intersessions that can also help students go onto graduate school or get into the workforce sooner.

Some universities – Minnesota, Georgia Tech, and Vanderbilt – end the spring semester at the end of April or first week of May, allowing students to participate in Maymesters. Some of these experiences include immersive learning with industry professionals⁸, a quick way to satisfy major or minor requirements⁹, and education abroad programming¹⁰.

Summer sessions:

Summer sessions coursework can span a session as short a curricular Maymester experience to longer terms ranging from six to thirteen weeks.

⁵ <https://eab.com/resources/research-report/reduce-time-to-degree-with-default-mini-mesters/>

⁶ <https://cce.csus.edu/article/winter-intersession-sac-state>

⁷ <https://www.aaup.org/article/academic-winter-session-student-survey>

⁸ <https://annenbergl.usc.edu/current-students/career-development/maymester>

⁹ <https://summer.gatech.edu/2021/02/23/summer-rolls-on-at-tech-including-first-maymester-courses/>

¹⁰ <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/geo/maymesters/>