

University Academic Calendar Policy

Summary

This document provides the parameters governing the structure of the University of Bristol Academic Calendar. These parameters inform the setting of the academic calendar for each specific academic year, as part of the University Key Dates.

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1. Updates to this policy

- 1.1. This document supersedes the previous Key University Dates – Rules and Principles document, approved by University Executive Board in 2023 (UEB/22-23/067a), and has been aligned with the new University of Bristol policy management framework. The term “almanac”, previously used to refer to the University key dates, has been removed and other definitions relating to this policy have been clarified.
- 1.2. The section on latest arrival dates has been updated. Latest registration deadlines were previously specified as at the end of a teaching week, 5pm Friday. They have now been moved to the following Monday.
- 1.3. For clarity and completeness, the policy now includes information on the following:
 - Standard structure of the academic year, including start and end dates, number of weeks in the term, vacation periods, and the length of the reassessment period. Provided for clarity, no change.
 - Postgraduate Taught (PGT) Diplomas and Certifications. Provided for clarity, no change.
 - Latest arrival dates policy – previously separate document, no change.
 - Reassessment period principles – **update from Structure of the Academic Year project**. These principles are now used for setting future reassessment period dates.
 - Graduation period principles (winter and summer graduations) – **update from Structure of the Academic Year project**. These principles are now used for setting future reassessment period dates.
- 1.4. The [detailed specification](#) has been updated for clarity but the content has not been significantly changed.
- 1.5. The following week names in the [Detailed specification of academic calendar](#) (section 9) are **updated for 2025/26 onwards**:

Table 1: Updates to week names

Name in this policy version	Previous name in superseded version
TB-1 assessment period	Mid-year assessment period
TB-2 preparation week	Preparation week
Last week of standard summer term.	Marking week.
Undergraduate summer vacation	Summer vacation

2. Introduction

- 2.1. The policy provides the rules governing the structure of the University of Bristol Academic Calendar, part of the University Key Dates.

3. Scope

- 3.1. The policy applies to all programmes and students following standard academic structures at Undergraduate (UG), Postgraduate Taught (PGT) and Postgraduate Research (PGR) levels, and to all staff contributing to programme delivery.
- 3.2. Non-standard programmes may follow a different structure, particularly non-modular programmes within the Health and Life Sciences Faculty, but exceptions must be approved at the programme design stage and should be defined in relation to the standard academic calendar.

4. Definitions

- 4.1. **Academic calendar:** The system by which we define all the structural elements of the academic year, and set dates for the major teaching and assessment events in each calendar year.
- 4.2. **Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA):** Statutory body which collects, assures and disseminates data about higher education in the UK.
- 4.3. **Key dates:** Landmark dates for each academic year, including bank holidays and closure days, Open days, academic calendar dates, and accommodation tenancy dates. Includes all dates published on the [University dates webpage](#).

- 4.4. **Student Loans Company (SLC):** A non-profit making government-owned organisation that administers loans and grants to students in colleges and universities in the UK.
- 4.5. **Teaching block (TB):** A block of weeks allocated to teaching delivery.
- 4.6. **Term:** A period of study as defined by external bodies, such as the Student Loans Company (SLC), during which a student is actively engaged in study at the University.

5. Responsibilities

- 5.1. **University Executive Board (UEB):** The University Executive Board approves dates for each academic year, in line with the policy. Confirmation of the Academic Calendar is a responsibility of Senate, which is delegated to the Vice-Chancellor as Chair of Senate, and managed via UEB.
- 5.2. **Academic Quality and Policy Office (AQPO):** The AQPO is responsible for annual review of the academic calendar policy, and for appropriate consultation on any changes to the policy. Should a change be made to the Academic Calendar structure, it must be in consultation with the following groups as a minimum: Operations Board, University Learning and Teaching Committee (ULTC), University Post Graduate Research Committee (UPGRC), Student Experience Committee, Senior Tutor Network, Senior Faculty Staff, Ed-Ops (or successors). Following consultation, the change should be submitted in line with the timescales of the annual key date setting process and will be integrated into the standard process and approval route. Any changes to these principles must be submitted and approved at least two years in advance of planned introduction, along with the proposed dates for five future years.
- 5.3. **Administration and records team (ART):** The ART are responsible for maintaining a spreadsheet projecting academic calendar dates 10 years into the future based on the current policy, and for supporting AQPO with modelling of changes. The ART annually prepare the paper for AQPO to present to UEB for approval of dates.
- 5.4. Further detail on responsibilities is provided in the [University Key dates process](#).

6. Standard academic year structures (UG, PGT & PG)

Undergraduate (UG)

- 6.1. The standard UG year is 37 complete weeks from start to end, including:
- 31 weeks of term, including the TB-1 and TB-2 assessment periods
 - 3 weeks winter vacation (not term time)
 - 3 weeks spring vacation (not term time)
- 6.2. There are 15 weeks UG summer vacation, or 16 in occasional long summer (not term time). The 9 day reassessment period is in the UG summer vacation period.
- 6.3. Significant external factors in respect of UG term dates:
- a) The Student Loan Company (SLC) requires Welcome Week to be included as part of academic year, if there is any compulsory attendance. Term dates are submitted to SLC in January for the following academic year.
 - b) For the SLC, a 'long course' is anything longer than 30 weeks and 3 days. All students get a standard amount of living cost money for the academic year. Any student doing a course with an academic year longer than 30 weeks and 3 days receives extra money for each additional week.
 - c) HESA rules state that expected end dates for taught students should include any planned assessment periods but not retakes (of exams or assessments).

Postgraduate Taught (PGT)

- 6.4. The standard PGT year is 51 complete weeks from start to end, including:
- 45 weeks of term, including the TB-1 and TB-2 assessment periods
 - 3 weeks winter vacation (not term time)
 - 3 weeks spring vacation (not term time)
- 6.5. The final assessment submission deadline is Friday of week 51. The 9 day reassessment period is shared with UG programmes, in the project/dissertation period.

- 6.6. PGT students on a standard full time programme required to resubmit their dissertation due to academic failure will be given an extension of study usually of no more than 3 months.
- 6.7. PGT students on a standard full time programme who have requested an extension of study due to exceptional circumstances will be allowed an extension of study usually of no more than 3 months. See the [PGT extension of study regulations](#) for full details.
- 6.8. Significant external factors in respect of PGT term dates:
- a. The University receives funding for PGT courses that are considered to be a 'long year'. The Office for Students (OfS) stipulates that a 'long year' is where students are in attendance for 45 weeks of the year. If the PGT student is in attendance for less time, the year of the course is 'standard length', and the University would not receive the funding.
 - b. HESA rules state that expected end dates for taught students should include any planned assessment periods but not retakes (of exams or assessments).
 - c. UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) rules dictate that for courses longer than 12 months a student is granted a visa for the length of the course date plus 4 months (sometimes referred to as the 'wrap-up period'). If the course is no longer than one year, the student only gets two months as a 'wrap up period'.

Postgraduate Certifications and Diplomas

- 6.9. Postgraduate Certifications and Diplomas all start in welcome week, but unlike other PGT programmes follow the same schedule as undergraduates.

Postgraduate Research (PGR)

- 6.10. The period of study runs from the start of a PGR student's expected engagement with their degree and ends with the submission of their final assessment for examination.
- 6.11. There are minimum and maximum periods of study as detailed in the [University PGR Code of Practice](#).

7. Programme start and end dates

Undergraduate (UG)

- 7.1. **Start date:** Monday of Welcome Week.
- 7.2. **End date:** For students on a standard full time or part time UG programme, their expected programme end date is the UG term end date for the relevant academic year.
- 7.3. The end date is extended for UG finalists with reassessments to one week after the end of the reassessment period.

Postgraduate Taught (PGT)

- 7.4. **Start date:** Monday of Welcome Week.
- 7.5. **End date:** For students on a standard full time PGT programme, their expected programme end date is one year after start date plus one calendar day.
- 7.6. For students on a standard part time PGT programme, their expected programme end date aligns with the full time end date for that academic year.
- 7.7. The end date is extended for PGT students with reassessments depending on the number of credit points being assessed in the reassessment period.

Postgraduate Certifications and Diplomas

- 7.8. **Start date:** Monday of Welcome Week.
- 7.9. **End date:** UG term end date for the relevant academic year.

Postgraduate Research (PGR)

- 7.10. **Start date:** PGR students' start dates are aligned with term start dates for TB-1 and TB-2, or in other months the first Monday of the month where the Monday does not fall on a weekend, public holiday or University closure day. See the PGR start dates policy for further detail.
- 7.11. **End date:** Submission of their final assessment for examination.

8. Latest arrival dates

- 8.1. Students are expected to arrive in Bristol in time to commence their studies at the start of the academic year. However, for a small proportion of students this may not be possible for reasons outside of their control, for example, in relation to the time taken to apply for and be granted a visa. In those circumstances, the following principles for latest arrival dates apply:
- a. New UG students must be fully registered on their programme by 10am the Monday of week 4.
 - b. Returning UG students must be fully registered on their programme by 10am the Monday of week 4.
 - c. PGT students must be fully registered on their programme by 10am the Monday of week 3.
 - d. International Foundation Programme (IFP) students must be fully registered on their programme by 10am the Monday of week 2.
- 8.2. Some individual programmes may set an earlier latest arrival date where this is justified by disciplinary considerations (notably professional programmes). Where an earlier arrival date is required this should be recorded and approved as part of the [programme approval process \(non-standard start dates\)](#)

9. Detailed specification of academic calendar

- 9.1. All teaching, vacation and assessment periods except the reassessment period begin on a Monday and end on a Friday, unless this is not possible because of a public holiday. The teaching period must begin on a Monday due to the timetabling system setup.
- 9.2. Where religious festivals are not public holidays in England, they remain as teaching/assessment time.

Table 2: Detailed specification of academic calendar

Academic structure	Duration	Position within academic year	Notes
<p>Welcome Week (week 0)</p> <p>Welcome week is the first week of the Autumn term.</p>	1 week	<p>The Monday of Welcome Week always falls between 9-15 September.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calendar week 37 when Monday is 9-13 September • Calendar week 38 when Monday is 14/15 September • (see week-number.org/ for calendar weeks) 	<p>A-level results are usually released in the second week of August – but the precise release date is only known from year to year.</p>
<p>Teaching Block 1 (TB-1), comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 teaching weeks (week 1-5 and 7-11) • 1 consolidation week (week 6) • 1 assessment preparation week (week 12) 	12 weeks	<p>Monday immediately after Welcome Week</p>	<p>TB-1 starts on the Monday that falls between 16-22 Sept.</p> <p>Monday of the consolidation week falls between 21-27 Oct.</p> <p>Monday of assessment preparation week falls between 2-8 Dec</p>

TB-1 assessment period (week MA1)	1 week	Straight after Teaching Block 1	Monday of TB-1 assessment period falls between 9-15 Dec. End of the period falls between 13-19 December so always at least six days before Christmas Day.
Winter Vacation (students) (weeks CV1 – CV3)	3 weeks	Straight after TB-1 assessment period	The winter break starts on the Monday that falls between 16-22 December. End of winter break falls on Friday between 3-9 January.
TB-2 Preparation week (week P1) Preparation week is the first week of the Spring Term.	1 week	Straight after Winter Vacation.	Monday of TB-2 Preparation week falls between 6-12 January.
Teaching Block 2, comprising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 teaching weeks (weeks 13-17 and 19-23) • 1 consolidation week (week 18) • 1 assessment preparation week (week 24) 	12 weeks ¹	Straight after TB-2 Preparation Week	TB-2 starts on the Monday that falls between 13-19 January. Some exams take place during the assessment preparation week, e.g. some modern languages programmes. Separate rules govern assessments during this week.

¹ In most years Teaching block 2 is interrupted by the Spring vacation.

<p>Spring vacation (weeks EV1 – EV3)</p> <p>The Friday before the Spring vacation is the last day of the Spring term.</p> <p>The Monday after Spring vacation is the first day of the Summer term.</p>	3 weeks	<p>Always includes the Monday and Friday Easter public holidays.</p> <p>Where possible, assessment preparation week should fall after the spring vacation.</p>	<p>Bristol City Council set school holidays two years in advance at the end of March but may not confirm final dates until May-June.</p> <p>In the UK, Easter always falls on a Sunday between 22 March and 25 April inclusive.</p> <p>Where possible, the Spring vacation should align with local (Bristol) school holidays, based on the information available at time of setting.</p>
<p>Summer Assessment period (weeks SA1- SA3)</p>	3 weeks	<p>Straight after TB-2 assessment preparation week or Spring vacation, whichever is later.</p>	<p>14 working days spread over 3 consecutive weeks. First Monday of May is a public holiday so no exams or assessment deadlines are scheduled.</p> <p>The summer assessment period begins on the Monday, or Tuesday in case of public holidays, between 28 April – 5 May.</p> <p>End of assessment period falls on Friday between 16-22 May.</p>
<p>Last week of standard summer term (week 25)</p>	1 week	<p>Straight after the last week of the summer assessment period.</p>	<p>Monday of marking week falls between 19-25 May.</p> <p>The last day of the Summer term is the Friday that falls between 23-29 May.</p>

			Students may be required to attend university activities during this week. This is final week for staff to complete marking for taught units ahead of exam boards.
Undergraduate Summer Vacation/ PGT project or dissertation period (weeks SV1 – SV15/16)	Normally 15 weeks ²	Straight after the last week of standard summer term.	The UG Summer vacation begins on the Monday that falls between 26 May- 1 June. The last day of the summer vacation is the Friday that falls between 6-12 September.
Reassessment period (SV8-SV9)	9 working days	Tuesday to the following Friday, 8 weeks after the end of standard summer term.	Undergraduate summer vacation weeks 8 and 9. At least two 4 day spans required for timed assessments.
Taught Postgraduate final assessment submission deadline (SV14)	1 day	Friday of week 51 of PGT year	

² The summer vacation is 16 weeks when the first day is 26 May.

Table 3: Teaching blocks

Teaching blocks	Abbreviation	Weeks included
Teaching Block 1	TB-1	weeks 1- 12
Teaching Block 2	TB-2	weeks 13-24
Teaching Block 1A	TB-1A	weeks 1-6
Teaching Block 1B	TB-1B	weeks 7-12
Teaching Block 2C	TB-2C	weeks 13-18
Teaching Block 2D	TB-2D	weeks 19-24
Teaching Block 4	TB-4	weeks 1-24
Academic Year	AYEAR	weeks 1-52

10. Graduation periods

Table 4: Graduation periods detail

Academic structure	Duration	Position within academic year	Notes
Winter Graduation (week 16 or 17)	1 week	Monday – Friday of week 16, unless the lunar new year falls during the week or the preceding weekend. If	4 months and 3.5 weeks/5 months after PGT programme start dates. PGT visas expire 4 months after start date.

		so, winter graduation will be in week 17.	
Summer Graduation (SV6-SV7)	8 working days	6 weeks after the end of standard summer term	Undergraduate summer vacation weeks 6 and 7. The graduation and events team will confirm specific ceremony day (8 days) each year as part of education cycle planning.

Appendix 1: Year Structure Diagram

Parts of academic year (week names)	Week labels	Teaching blocks				Terms
Welcome week	0					Autumn
Teaching block	1	1	1A	4		
	2					
	3					
	4					
	5					
Week 6 - Consolidation week	6					
	7					
	8					
	9					
	10					
	11					
Week 12 - Assessment preparation week	12					
TB-1 assessment period	MA1					
Winter vacation	CV1					
	CV2					
	CV3					
TB-2 Preparation week	P1					Spring (weeks before spring vac)
Teaching block	13	2	2C	4		
	14					
	15					
	16					
	17					
Week 18 - Consolidation week	18					
	19		2D			
	20					
	21					
	22					
	23					
Week 24 - Assessment preparation week	24					
Spring vacation (moves within end of teaching weeks, in most years will be before assessment preparation week)	EV1					
	EV2					
	EV3					
Summer assessment period	SA1					Summer (weeks after spring vac)
	SA2					
	SA3					
Last week of standard summer term	25*					
Undergraduate summer vacation	SV1 – SV15					
Welcome week	0					