EXAMINATIONS AND ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

According to the bylaws of the university, the “…functions of the University Faculty shall be to consider questions of educational policy which concern more than one college, school or separate academic unit, or are general in nature…”

Responsibility of: Committee on Educational Policy. The committee considers matters of general educational policy relating to instruction that concern more than one college, school or separate academic unit, including, but not limited to grades and grading policies, preliminary and final examination policies, the academic calendar, and the class schedule and hours of instruction. It reports to the Faculty Senate.

The following is extracted from the Faculty Handbook, pp. 80-82:

**Afternoon and Evening Scheduling.** Certain hours shall be free from all formal undergraduate class or laboratory exercises: 4:25 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday; after 4:25 p.m. on Friday; after 12:05 p.m. on Saturday; and all day Sunday.

**Review Sessions.** Review sessions cannot be scheduled after 4:30 p.m. on any day unless an alternate session is made available for those with conflicts.

**Preliminary Examinations**

On Monday and Wednesday evenings only regularly scheduled courses, and prelims previously approved by the Office of the University Faculty are permitted. Other evening academic activities commencing at or after 7:30 p.m. on Mondays and Wednesdays are not allowed. Violation of these rules interferes with other university activities (athletic, musical, theatrical, employment, etc.).

Evening examinations may be given on Tuesday and Thursday evenings after 7:30 p.m. Large courses (over 30) may schedule evening exams only with prior permission from the Office of the University Faculty. No permission is required for examinations or make-up examinations involving small numbers of students (under 30) if given on Tuesday and Thursday.

**Exceptions.** Permission from the Office of the University Faculty to schedule examinations on evenings other than Tuesdays or Thursdays or at a time prior to 7:30 p.m. will be granted only on the following conditions:
• Conditions such as the nature of the examination, room availability, large number of conflicts, etc. justify such scheduling.

• An alternate time to take the exam must be provided for those students who have academic, extracurricular or employment conflicts at the time scheduled.

If there is a conflict between an examination listed on the schedule developed at the annual evening prelim scheduling meeting and an examination not on the schedule, the examination on the schedule shall have priority. The course not on the schedule must provide an alternate time to take the examination for those students faced with the conflict.

If a student has conflicting examination schedules, both of which are on the schedule developed at the annual evening prelim scheduling meeting or both of which are not on the schedule, the instructors of the courses involved must consult and agree on how to resolve the conflict. Both instructors must approach this resolution process with a willingness to provide an alternative or early examination.

Courses utilizing evening examinations should indicate this in the course description listed in "Courses of Study," "The Course and Time Roster," and "The Course and Room Roster" and must notify students of the dates of such examinations as early as possible in the semester, preferably when the course outline is distributed.

**Final Examinations**

The University Faculty long ago established, and has never reversed, the policy that each course should require a final examination or some equivalent exercise (for example, a term paper, project report, final critique, oral presentation, or conference) to be conducted or due during the period set aside for final examinations.

Although not specifically prohibited, it is university policy to discourage more than two examinations for a student in one twenty-four hour time period and especially on any one day. It is urged that members of the faculty consider student requests for a make-up examination, particularly if their course is the largest of the three involved and thus has the strongest likelihood of offering a makeup for other valid reasons, i.e. illness, death in the family, etc.
Legislation of the University Faculty governing study period and examinations is as follows:

1. No final examinations can be given at a time other than the time appearing on the official examination schedule promulgated by the Registrar's Office without prior written permission of the dean of the faculty.

2. No permission will be given, for any reason, to schedule final examinations during the last week of classes or the designated study period preceding final examinations.

3. Permission will be given by the dean of the faculty to reschedule examinations during the examination period itself if requested in writing by the faculty member, but only on condition that a comparable examination also be given for those students who wish to take it at the time that the examination was originally scheduled.

   The faculty member requesting such a change will be responsible for making appropriate arrangements for rooms or other facilities in which to give the examination. This should be done through the Registrar's Office.

4. No tests are allowed during the last week of scheduled classes unless such tests are part of the regular week-by-week course program and are followed by an examination (or the equivalent) in the final examination period.

5. Papers may be required of students during the study period if announced sufficiently far in advance that the student did not have to spend a significant segment of the study period completing them.

6. Faculty can require students to submit papers during the week preceding the study period.

7. Take home examinations should be given to classes well before the end of the regular term and should not be required to be submitted during study period but rather well into the examination period.

Return of Exams, Papers, etc. Although there is no federal or state legislation that pertains to the manner in which graded work is to be
returned to students, the returning of such materials should be handled in such a manner as will preserve the student’s privacy. Students have a right to examine their corrected exams, papers, and the like, in order to be able to question their grading. They do not, however, have an absolute right to the return thereof. Exams, papers, etc., as well as grading records, should be retained for a reasonable time after the end of the semester, preferably until the end of the following term, to afford students such right of review.

Due Date for Submitting Final Grades. The due date for submitting final grades to college offices is set by each college independently but is normally within seventy-two hours of the completion of the examination. Prompt submission of final grades is essential inasmuch as a great deal of processing follows this submission.

EVENING PRELIM TIMES

April 12, 2006, Records, pp. 10502-10505S, Appendix 5

Professor Ann Lemley, Textiles and Apparel, and Chair, Educational Policy Committee, introduced a resolution from the Faculty Advisory Committee on Athletics and Physical Education:

WHEREAS, the Faculty Advisory Committee on Athletics and Physical Education (FACAPE) has suggested that evening prelims be changed to start no earlier than 8:00 p.m. in order to allow student athletes to have time if they are let out of practice at 7:00 to shower, change and get to the prelim promptly,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT effective Fall 2006, evening prelims should begin no earlier than 8:00 p.m.

Following discussion, a vote was taken and the resolution was defeated.

EVENING PRELIMS

On May 9, 2001 (Records, pp. 9204-9209S, Appendices 6&7), Professor Susan Piliero, Education, and Chair, Educational Policy Committee, said the committee has had long discussions about evening prelims, and the overall concern about the academic calendar.
There are valid pedagogical and logistic reasons for having examinations that are longer than a class period. Pedagogical reasons include the assessment of creativity and/or problem solving, especially "real world" problems; reducing test anxiety by offering extended time; and accommodating students with disabilities who require extended time. Logistic reasons include testing multiple sections of a large course at one sitting; and reserving large lecture rooms to schedule extended testing.

The number of evening prelims scheduled through the Registrar’s office has remained relatively constant over the last several years. From 1995 to 1999, the number of evening prelims in the academic year has totaled 525, 545, 568, 547, and 554, respectively. The majority of these prelims are for engineering, science, and mathematics at the 100- and 200-level. The number of evening courses and subsequent student enrollments in such courses has increased. During the current semester, the total student enrollment in classes ending after 4:30 p.m. is 3,654.

There is a growing body of “best practices” associated with evening prelims that can help to reduce the stress associated with evening prelims, such as published make-up dates early in the semester, and cooperation among those faculty who teach large courses.

Current scheduling has minimized conflicts for many students, but has not eliminated them. This is the case for more disciplines than for others: for example, while an analysis of freshman schedules showed that 98 students had scheduled evening prelim conflicts, more than half of these conflicts were for students enrolled in the College of Engineering.

The real stress associated with evening prelims may not be that they occur in the evening, but that they cluster during the semester, and some students have two or three evening exams in one week.

During the Fall 2000 semester, the number of students sitting for scheduled evening prelims peaked on 9/28 and 11/16 (between 2700-2900 on each evening). Nearly one month elapsed between the start of the semester and the first scheduled evening prelim, indicative of the compression of workload that occurs as part of the academic cycle.

The disposition of students to evening prelims is mixed. An informal written survey of 200+ students enrolled in Chemical Engineering, Physics, and Mathematics courses during the spring 2001 semester revealed that, while some students dislike evening prelims, others find them essential for juggling the demands of classes and work. Some students feel they are more alert and focused in the evening, while for other students the opposite is true. Many students surveyed preferred having extended time for testing, and therefore tolerate evening prelims. Some like the kind of testing that can be
conducted during extended periods, and find that such exams are more consistent with stated course objectives than are exams that can be adapted to a 50-minute class period.

One clear outcome from the results of the surveys conducted this spring: students view prelims as valuable checkpoints that enable both instructors and students to assess their progress and focus on problem areas, and prefer prelims to final exams only. Overall, it appears that Cornell students value early, frequent, and varied assessment.

Evening examinations should be substitutes for in-class exams, not additions to the course schedule. For courses with 3 evening 90-minute prelims, the net gain in contact hours is 270 minutes. For a 4-credit course with four 50-minute lectures per week, this can be translated as more than one extra WEEK of classes compressed into the regular semester.

Faculty legislation requires that review sessions CANNOT be scheduled after 4:30 p.m. on any day unless an alternate session is made available for those with conflicts, except as approved by the College Dean.

Finally, it should be noted that the semester has undergone a considerable amount of compression, which has created a stressful schedule for the entire academic community. The number of days in the semester, for example, is at or close to the required minimum. Friday afternoon or Saturday classes are increasingly rare, resulting in a horizontal compression of the school week. Furthermore, classes offered at 8:00 and 3:35 account for a small percentage of the 3,000 classes offered each semester. With the free time policy eliminating the hours of 4:30 – 7:30 for undergraduate instruction, the academic day is compressed vertically. It is little wonder that conflicts have become ubiquitous.

Recommendations

The Faculty is urged to weigh the potential advantages of evening examinations versus the stress these exams may cause for many students. Alternatives to evening prelims, such as more frequent in-class assessments, could both relieve some of the stress of taking heavily weighted evening exams and provide more frequent feedback to students.

Efforts to minimize conflicts for students with evening prelims should be increased. As well, analysis of common course loads for students in engineering, mathematics, and the sciences may identify areas where adjustments in the evening prelim schedule could relieve some prelim clustering.
Much of the analysis is based on the official evening prelim schedule. Additional data to capture evening exams, including make-up exams, that are not on the official evening exam schedule should be collected and included in the ongoing analysis.

A guide on best practices for courses with evening prelims should be developed and made available to the faculty.

Further exploration of the “calendar compression” phenomenon should be encouraged. At a minimum, the Committee recommends that any further compression of the semester should be discouraged.

If review is considered an important aspect of instruction, the Committee encourages the faculty to schedule reviews as part of the course design, and hold them during normal class meeting times, thus ensuring that conflicts are eliminated and faculty and students are not burdened with additional evening meetings. Alternately, the faculty is encouraged to explore other time slots during the day that are known to be under scheduled, such as 3:35 - 4:25 p.m. and 8:00 - 8:50 a.m., to hold review sessions.

RESOLUTION ON EXCEPTIONS FOR FINAL EXAMS

April 12, 2006, Records, pp. 10495-10500S, Appendix 3

Professor Ann Lemley, Textiles and Apparel, and Chair, Educational Policy Committee, introduced the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the current rule for final exams does not allow for exceptions, “…each course should require a final examination or some equivalent exercise…to be conducted or due during the period set aside for final examinations.” (2002 Faculty Handbook, p. 81), and

WHEREAS, some courses are not following this rule in practice because of the nature of their cumulative final projects,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT an addition be made to the end of this rule that states, “unless there is a written approval from the Dean of the Faculty”, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Dean of the Faculty be encouraged to publicize this rule and that an annual summary of the exemption requests be shared with EPC.

On a vote call, following discussion, the motion failed.
The following addresses the question of why we have prelims at Cornell (meaning both multiple exams instead of a mid-term, and the unique name).

The Faculty, on February 11, 1953 (Records, p. 2687), adopted the following resolution:

"That it is the sense of this Faculty that students may be required to attend class exercises, including prelims held in the evening, only when such exercises are regularly scheduled for the class and included, as so scheduled, in the printed announcement of courses."

The practice of evening prelims dates back to at least 1953, and may date back even further.

On January 13, 1965 (Records, p. 3126, Appendix A), the Faculty adopted the academic calendar for years 1965-66 through 1967-68, and the calendar for those years included a due date for mid-term grades about halfway through each semester. [At that time, the fall semester finals were held after Christmas, i.e., 3rd week in January; and the spring semester finals were held the last week of May, with Commencement occurring in June.]

In 1967, the Faculty amended the daily class schedule, eliminating the lunch hour, and allowed 15 minutes between classes. And in 1968-69, a study was done on the calendar to complete the fall term before Christmas, and also add a study period before finals.

At the December 16, 1971 (Records, pp. 4005-4008C) Faculty Council of Representatives meeting, the Co-chairman of the Calendar Committee, presented the committee's recommendations and associated rationale as follows:

"That the FCR take whatever steps are necessary to review the educational effectiveness of the preliminary exam period, study period, and final exam period as they are currently scheduled.

"The current procedure of scheduling mid-term exams, mandating a study week between the end of class meetings and finals, and then scheduling exams over a seven day period was established when the semester calendar was materially different than it is now. There may be modifications of our current schedule that would better facilitate learning and instruction, given the incessant character of semesters under our new calendar...."

It appears that sometime between 1969 and 1973, the academic calendar was changed to the current one. And since then, the term "mid-term" has never been used. Nor do
faculty need to report mid-term grades. In addition, with the growing enrollment (and with that the need for space for prelims & exams), the change in both the daily class schedule and the academic calendar, that the term "mid-term" became a thing of the past, and more and more prelims became a measurement tool used by faculty since they no longer needed to report mid-term grades.

**INTERSPERsing OF STUDY AND EXAM DAYS**

The Joint ad hoc Committee on the University Calendar Report to the FCR/Campus Council of April 25, 1979 (co-chaired by E. Raffensperger and S. Flansburgh) called for interspersing study and examination days, especially in the early part of the examination period. This was “presented as an innovative means of making more effective use of the reading days, and alleviating some of the problems associated with preparing grade reports in the larger courses...The first Sunday of the fall semester examination period will be a study day. This scheme fits well with the principle of interspersing study and exam days, and meets in part the objections of many faculty to dropping the traditional practice of holding no exams on Sunday.”

On October 3, 1979, Provost W.K. Kennedy sent a memo to the University Community, saying that the recommendations of the Calendar Committee were accepted by the FCR and the Campus Council during the spring of 1979, adding that the Campus Council requested that he consider the pros and cons of interspersing study and examination days. He went on to say that “...I have considered the arguments for and against interspersing the study and examination days and it is my conclusion that on educational grounds neither arrangement is clearly preferable to the other. Hence, I am accepting the recommendations of the Calendar Committee for the interspersing of study and examination days for 1980-81. If experience indicates that there should be a study period followed by an examination period, then the calendar might be adjusted for 1981-82, and certainly for 1982-83.”

After one semester (Fall 1980) of interspersing the days, a Cornell Daily Sun article appeared on February 17, 1981, entitled “C.U. Reinstitutes Separation of Study and Exam Periods”. The article said that the University would not intersperse study and exam days “this semester”, as announced by Provost Kennedy. It went on to say that Kennedy accepted a Campus Council recommendation to have 4 study days followed by 7 days of exams. (This is the current study/exam schedule.)

The Sun article included the following comments as well:

Prof Raffensperger felt that interspersion should have been given a fair trial of at least a full year.
The University Registrar raised concerns as to whether her office would have enough
time to certify grades under Kennedy's exam schedule. The Arts College director of
records and scheduling (Margery Clauson) said none of the possible alternatives would
have made much difference…the time would have been short either way.

Prof Michael Fisher, Chemistry, was “pleased” with Kennedy's decision, saying he
thinks the faculty is conscientious about handing in grades on time.

**PROPOSED REVISED FINAL EXAM SCHEDULE**

*March 9, 2005, Records, pp. 10133-10136S, Appendices 1-2*

Professor Ann Lemley, Textiles and Apparel, and Chair, Educational Policy Committee, reported
on Committee discussions regarding the way final exams are scheduled.

Changes to the Spring 2005 schedule resulted in:

- 21 examination periods (7 days, 3 periods) – no change
- Optimization methodology to change way groups are assigned to exam period
- Results
  - Fewer – 3 exams in one day (-116)
  - Fewer – 2 exams back-to-back (-1656)
  - Fewer – 3 exams in 24 hours (-235)
  - More – 2 exams in one day not back-to-back (+861)

The Committee also discussed the current final exam schedule and the one proposed for Fall 2005.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Final Exam Schedule</th>
<th>Proposed Final Exam Schedule (Fall 2005)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00 am – 11:30 am</td>
<td>9:00 am – 11:30 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 pm – 2:30 pm</td>
<td>2:00 pm – 4:30 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00 pm – 5:30 pm</td>
<td>7:00 pm – 9:30 pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some dining halls will stay open later.

This is not being voted on, and not a resolution from the Committee. Rather, the Educational
Policy Committee and David Yeh, University Registrar, would like input.
Discussion ensued regarding the late hour that faculty would have to give exams, to the fact that the new schedule would be great to how would this affect non-traditional students.

FINAL EXAM SCHEDULE

April 12, 2006, Records, pp. 10500-10502S, Appendix 4

Professor Ann Lemley, Textiles and Apparel, and Chair, Educational Policy Committee, moved the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the new final exam schedule (effective Fall 2005) has exams on two Friday nights (first one for scheduled exams and the second one for make-ups), and thus creates a problem for large numbers of students who have religious observances on Friday nights,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Senate instructs the University Registrar, that starting Fall 2006, exams that are scheduled on the first Friday evening be moved to the Wednesday evening of study week at 7:00 PM.

The resolution was adopted.