

Queen's University
Senate Committee on Academic Procedures
Report to Senate – April 2011

ACADEMIC SESSIONAL DATES AND FAITH DATES

Background

In response to a discussion at the March 25, 2010 Senate meeting regarding the timing conflict of the religious observances of Rosh Hashanah and Eid Al-Fitr and Orientation Week activities in September 2010, the Principal requested that the Senate Committee on Academic Procedures (SCAP) consider developing “a policy when setting sessional dates so that they do not conflict with future faith dates”.

Analysis and Discussion

SCAP members discussed the issue of sessional dates and faith date conflicts at several meetings in the 2009/10 and 2010/11 academic years. It was acknowledged that academic sessional dates do indeed fall under SCAP's mandate; however, it was also acknowledged that Orientation Week does not.

The September 2010 faith dates conflict took place during Orientation Week. SCAP could have recommended that classes begin earlier in the year so that Orientation Week did not conflict with faith dates, but the result of this would have been that the first week of classes conflicted with faith dates, which is an undesirable outcome. SCAP could also have recommended that classes begin later in the year to accommodate the conflict, but the result of this would have been that the December exam period extended beyond the University closing date.

Recommendations

Since SCAP does not plan or oversee Orientation Week, it cannot formally make recommendations related to that event and faith dates; however, SCAP believes that it would be very challenging to consider changes to overall academic sessional dates to accommodate a faith date conflict within Orientation Week.

At its March 23, 2011 meeting, SCAP passed the following motion:

It was moved that Queen's University continue to follow the existing practice that members of the Queen's community consider necessary accommodations with students on an individual basis if a faith date conflict arises during academic sessional dates.

The practice described in the motion is consistent with our peer institutions and has been effective at Queen's when dealing with academic sessional and faith date conflicts.

Membership

J. Atkinson, Faculty of Arts and Science
C. Beach, Faculty of Arts and Science (Chair)
J. Brady, University Registrar
R. Coupland, Office of the University Registrar (Secretary)
H. Everson, Faculty of Arts and Science
S. Gouinlock, B.A.(Hons.) '11, Faculty of Arts and Science
C. Hoeniger, Faculty of Arts and Science
E. Tolley, Ph.D. '12, Faculty of Arts and Science