

PROPOSAL TO PILOT THE SHIFT IN UP'S ACADEMIC CALENDAR IN ACADEMIC YEAR 2014-15

The proposal is to pilot a shift in UP's academic calendar starting in academic year 2014-15 in the following constituent units (CUs): UP Los Baños, UP Manila, UP Visayas, UP Open University, UP Mindanao, UP Baguio, and UP Cebu.

These seven CUs have already obtained the agreement of their constituents for the calendar change and have prepared their respective 2014-15 academic calendars that all start in August 2014. They are now seeking approval by the Board of Regents of their proposed new calendars.

UP Diliman, which accounts for about 45% of the University's students and faculty, is still going through the process of assessing the pros and cons of the calendar shift and ascertaining the general preference of its constituents.

Rationale for the calendar shift

A key strategic initiative of UP is to intensify its internationalization. This initiative is aimed at fulfilling UP's mandate to serve as a regional and global university as well as to realize its vision of taking a leadership role in developing a globally competitive Philippines. A change that will synchronize UP's academic calendar with the major universities in ASEAN and in the rest of the world will provide a clear signal that UP is now internationalizing and is getting ready to fully engage universities in the country's trading partners. An internationalized UP will be in a better position to produce Filipino graduates who are internationally oriented and have the competence to assume leadership roles not only in the Philippines, as the country competes globally, but also in the region which will become an integrated ASEAN Economic Community by 2015.

To be sure, calendar synchronization is not a sufficient condition for internationalizing UP. The University is pursuing, as it must, other initiatives (e.g., faculty development, quality assurance, programs streamlining, credit transfer arrangements, infrastructure modernization, etc.) to strengthen its program offerings and make it internationally competitive.

But a synchronized academic calendar is necessary to facilitate internationalization. By minimizing the gap in the start and end of its semesters relative to its partners, UP will have the opportunity to increase student and faculty mobility (inbound and outbound), facilitate academic exchanges, and ease research collaborations and inter-cultural projects with ASEAN and other foreign universities. The interactions of UP students and faculty with their foreign counterparts will broaden their knowledge and perspectives, and deepen their understanding of important socio-cultural, political, economic, technological and developmental issues in the region and the world.

Rationale for the pilot implementation

The pilot implementation in the seven (7) CUs starting in AY 2014-15 will enable the University to make the necessary adjustments and resolve operational issues and concerns prior to full implementation possibly in AY 2015-16, the start of ASEAN integration. The experience of UP with the pilot shift will also inform other universities in the country which are also planning to shift their academic calendar. To reiterate, the said CUs have already

obtained the agreement of their constituents for the calendar change and have prepared their respective 2014-15 academic calendars that all start in August 2014.

Implementation plan

The academic calendar will be shifted by two months as follows:

FIRST SEMESTER:	FROM Jun – Oct	TO Aug – Dec
SECOND SEMESTER:	FROM Nov – Apr	TO Jan – May
SHORT TERM:	FROM May – Jun	TO Jun – Jul

Specific benefits to the University of the calendar shift

1. Academic calendar synchronized with most ASEAN, European and American academic partners will result in:
 - less problems with semestral gaps relative to partner universities;
 - increased participation in student and academic staff exchanges;
 - more joint programs and partnerships with other universities;
 - students can easily get credit transfers, particularly under ASEAN and ASEAN +3 Credit Transfer System (ACTS), on a semestral basis; and
 - greater participation of academic staff in training programs, conferences and workshops for knowledge update and sharing, usually held in June-July which are the summer breaks in these countries.
2. Combined Christmas and semestral breaks will result in continuous classes in the 1st semester and 2nd semester. This will mean:
 - no disruptive Christmas break in the 2nd semester; no time wasted in the review of lessons when classes resume after a break;
 - savings on transportation cost for vacation of students; and
 - longer bridging program during the longer summer break; good for incoming freshmen from disadvantaged high schools who urgently need bridging, particularly during the initial implementation of the K-12 basic education reform program.
3. Shifted academic calendar— 1st semester (August-December) and 2nd semester (January-May)—will mean less suspension and disruption of classes due to typhoons, rains, and floods. The current and predicted weather patterns (<http://www.weather-and-climate.com>):
 - for the northern and western parts of the country, rainy season starts in June (monsoon) and peaks in August; an August opening for the 1st semester will mean skipping part of the rainy season for the northern and western parts of the country
 - for the eastern and southern parts of the country, peak of the rainy season is December-January; a January opening for the 2nd semester will mean avoiding the peak of the monsoon rains in the eastern and southern parts of the country
 - Data from UP Diliman showed that during the past 5 years (2009-2013) the most number of days of class suspension occurred in August (7 days), followed by July (5 days)—two months which are fully within the 1st semester of the existing academic calendar. The data indicate that the avoided disruption of classes—average of about 2 days a year—may not be significant.

Major concerns

Certain concerns and issues were brought up and discussed during consultations with the various UP constituents.

Major concerns	Suggested solutions
1. Operational concerns: UPCAT and registration of freshmen	UPCAT exams and release of results will be as scheduled; this will even be more advantageous for incoming students as the 4-month break (if DepEd does not change their academic calendar since internationalization will impact more on higher education than basic education) will allow them to look for scholarships as well as have a longer bridging period.
2. Schedule of licensure examinations	UP will make representations with PRC regarding the rescheduling of the licensure examinations, if necessary. In some professions, there is no need because there are two licensure exams per year. Also, PRC should be preparing for such rescheduling in view of the provision for mutual recognition agreements of professional degrees in relation to ASEAN 2015.
3. Field activities, clinics and internship	CUs will need to reschedule field activities, clinics and internship programs; such changes can be incorporated when degree programs are revised in response to the K-12 basic education reforms.
4. Non-tenured faculty appointments	Extension of appointments of non-tenured faculty who will be renewed for AY2014-2015 can be addressed by a simple administrative order.
5. Second semester will extend to April-May which are the hottest months of the year	Need for structural changes (construction of waiting sheds and covered walks, installation of ACUs, electric fans, outdoor sprinklers, etc.) to combat summer heat; other ASEAN countries with classes that also start in August are able to cope with their summer heat even if temperatures are much higher than ours. [Note: Summer classes are not new in the Philippines and students and teachers are able to cope.]
6. Students from provinces will not be able to help during the harvest season which are April-May	Many farmers have already adapted to climate change by moving their planting time from June-August to October-December.
7. UP's traditions	UP should be flexible and find creative ways to still celebrate the Christmas season, UP Foundation Day, etc. and to hold commencement exercises.

Actions at UP's various constituent units and expected advantages they reported

CU	Action as reported	Expected advantages to the CU
UP Baguio	Unanimous approval	The shift will facilitate student and faculty exchange with partner universities outside the Philippines; student no longer needs to take a Leave of Absence (LOA) because of the difference in academic calendar.
UP Cebu	Discussed and approved by the University Council	Faculty can attend international summer schools usually scheduled in June and July; more inbound and outbound students facilitating exchanges; new calendar has fewer but more compact semestral breaks.
UP Diliman	Disapproved by the UC	A referendum conducted in the various Colleges showed that except for two, most Colleges or their CEBs agree with the shift; the UC action however does not reflect this position.
UP Los Baños	Discussed at UC; no objection to the shift	Synchronization of academic calendar will open new opportunities for greater partnerships particularly with ASEAN, in teaching and research and curricular development, providing not only expertise but physical resources of the more advance universities as well; more student, faculty and researcher exchanges since no semester will be lost due to the (dis)synchronized calendar enhancing global competitiveness of UPLB's graduates.
UP Manila	Discussed and approved by UC	Student exchanges will enrich the learning experiences of students as it will allow them to interact with multi-cultures; facilitate inbound and outbound exchanges; increased participation in and offering of training courses that will coincide with the breaks; result in less disruption of classes due to inclement weather.
UP Mindanao	Discussed and approved by UC	More student and faculty exchanges; January and July are scheduled for meetings and planning with ACIAR which will coincide with the break in the new calendar, hence class meetings will not be disrupted; no problem with licensure exam and internship programs for BS Architecture; early implementation (2014) will give time to make necessary adjustments.
UP Open U	Approved during the UC meeting; full support of the shift	Majority of students support the shift; teacher-students can do academic requirements without resulting in disruption of their own classes in their

CU	Action as reported	Expected advantages to the CU
		schools; more student and faculty international exchanges and increased participation in international training courses usually offered in June-July; greater collaboration and participation will allow staff and students to gain a wider perspective from exposure to best practices in the region; benchmarking of programs against regional and global standards.
UP Visayas	Unanimous approval by the UC; endorsement by student leaders	Facilitate UP/UPV's integration with the ASEAN academic community; less suspension of classes; longer holiday break will allow more bonding time with the family.