

MEMORANDUM

To..... SENATE

From..... SENATE COMMITTEE ON UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES

Subject..... CHANGES - FINAL EXAMINATION
SCHEDULING

Date..... FEBRUARY 17, 1984

Action undertaken by the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies at its meeting of February 7, 1984 gives rise to the following motion:

MOTION:

"That Senate approve, as set forth in S.84-21 , the proposals

i) To provide for a two-day break (Saturday, Sunday) between end of classes and the beginning of the exam period by shortening the exam period to twelve days.
[This will eliminate the first day (usually Saturday) from the exam period. Normally exams will end on Friday (day eleven of the exam period two weeks after the end of classes)].

ii) To increase the number of time slots per day for exams from three to four.
[This is required to produce a generally conflict free exam schedule. The proposed start times for exams are 0830, 1200, 1530, 1900].

Exams will be scheduled on Friday and Saturday evenings, if required.

[These items will provide 33 time slots for day exams (11 x 3) and 11 time slots for evening exams. This number of slots is required to minimize timetable conflict problems].

iii) That in-class final exams are not to be held before the beginning of the examination period.

iv) That take-home final examinations may be assigned before the start of the examination period, at as early a date as is reasonable, but their return cannot be required until the commencement of the examination period."

General Background Information

For some time there has been concern on a number of aspects relating to the scheduling of final examinations. The topic was considered by SCUS in Spring 1981 (SCUS 81-10) without resolution. Meanwhile there continued to be increase in numbers of courses, in students registered in a given course, and like impacts such as space for examining. A report was prepared by the Scheduling Officer, discussed intensively in the Registrar's Office, and reviewed and discussed

by SCUS. The report included a number of recommendations and raised some items for debate and guidance. The basic intent was to replace some then current regulations, policies and practices with some updated rules without attempt to put all regulations into a single document, but rather to identify intent and decision and to incorporate this meaningfully in the broad regulations. The Student Society provided input with major request for a break between the end of classes and the commencement of final examinations.

The report with added items was discussed by SCUS in July, 1983 (SCUS 83-26). There was agreement at SCUS on the general thrust of the report and on a number of specific items with decision to release the material through the Vice-President Academic to the Deans and Chairmen of Faculty Curriculum Committees for Faculty comment (SCUS 83-31A), with response coordination by the Dean by early Fall 83-3. That document included specific wording of the items as now proposed in the motion above.

Responses were received from Arts, Business Administration, Education, Interdisciplinary Studies, Science, Engineering Science with divergence of views. The proposals and responses were discussed by SCUS in Fall 83-3 (SCUS 83-31) with approval of the motions as above but with decision to defer any implementation procedure pending information on aspects of possible block scheduling processes for examinations and the impacts.

Additional information was provided to SCUS in early Spring 84-1 (SCUS 84-6) with discussion on February 7, 1984. There was acceptance that the matter of block scheduling involves much more than final examinations and involves basic scheduling of classes and that the scheduling information provided SCUS should be sent to Faculties for comments.

There was acceptance that the matter of block scheduling involves much more than final examinations, that it involves basic scheduling of classes, that the scheduling information provided SCUS should be sent to Faculties for comments before further discussion and that it be treated as a separate issue.

There was approval now of the motions as set forth above relative to examinations. No student would be expected to sit four examinations in a row, the Registrar's Office will undertake all reasonable endeavours to keep at a minimum the number of cases requiring three examinations on one day.

Subject to approval it is intended that changes be effective for Summer 84-2.

(Note: Should any Senator wish to review further documentation, it is available through Secretariat Services in the Office of the Registrar)

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY DOCUMENT 3
MEMORANDUM SCUS 83-31A

To..... DEANS OF FACULTIES; CHAIRMEN,
FACULTY UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM
COMMITTEES; PRESIDENT, STUDENT SOCIETY
(AS BELOW)
Subject. PROPOSED CHANGES - FINAL EXAMINATION
SCHEDULING (UNDERGRADUATE).

From..... J. M. MUNRO,
VICE-PRESIDENT, ACADEMIC.
Date..... 29 JULY 1983.

I. For some time there has been concern on a number of aspects relating to the scheduling of final examinations. The topic was considered, but incompletely, in 1981 (SCUS 81-10). With increasing pressures arising largely from growth a report was prepared by the Scheduling Officer, discussed at length in the Registrar's Office, was provided to SCUS for review, discussions and some further decisions (SCUS 83-26). The report included a number of recommendations; it raised some items for debate and guidance. SCUS addressed a number of issues.

A copy of the report is provided for general background information.

II. There was agreement at SCUS on the general thrust of the report and on a number of specific items. It was decided to release the material now to the Deans and Chairmen of Faculty Curriculum Committees for Faculty comment, with response coordination where required through the Dean's office. Comment is requested by September 15th to permit final clearance through SCUS to have the topic before Senate on October 2nd. That October meeting of Senate approval would be required to introduce changes for final exams for Fall 83-3 in December.

III. Simply put, the basic intent is to replace some current regulations, policies and practices with some updated improved rules. There has not been attempt to put all regulations into a single document but rather to identify basic changes to be made.

IV. In order to focus the specific items for your consideration they are listed below.

Proposed:-

i) To provide for a two-day break (Saturday, Sunday) between end of classes and the beginning of the exam period by shortening the exam period to twelve days.

(This will eliminate the first day (usually Saturday) from the exam period. Normally exams will end on Friday (day eleven of the exam period two weeks after the end of classes)).

ii) To increase the number of time slots per day for exams from three to four.

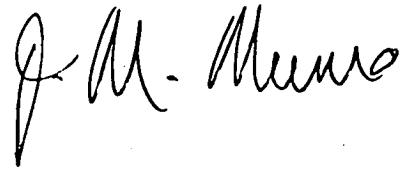
(This is required to produce a generally conflict free exam schedule. The proposed start times for exams are 0830, 1200, 1530, 1900).

Exams will be scheduled on Friday and Saturday evenings.

(These items will provide 33 time slots for day exams (11 x 3) and 11 time slots for evening exams. This number of slots

is required to minimize timetable conflict problems).

- iii) In-class final exams are not to be held before the beginning of the examination period as, for example, in the last two weeks of the semester.
(The final exam period is provided for finals; the other weeks are provided for teaching).
- iv) Take-home examinations may be assigned before the start of the examination period, at as early a date as is reasonable, but their return cannot be required until the commencement of the examination period.



/bg

NOTE:- Please respond to me with copy to H.M. Evans, Secretary, SCUS.

For information:

J.W.G. Ivany, Acting President
G. Stuart, Vice-President, Administration
E. Scott, Executive Director, Finance
H. Nagel, Director, Records & Scheduling
H.M. Evans, Secretary of SCUS
D. Whiteley, Scheduling

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

DOCUMENT 4

SCUS 83-31C

MEMORANDUM

To..... SENATE COMMITTEE ON UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES

From..... H. M. EVANS, SECRETARY
..... SENATE COMMITTEE ON UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES

Date..... SEPTEMBER 20, 1983

Subject..... SUMMARY OF RESPONSES - FINAL EXAMINATION SCHEDULING

1. Arts

Given the disadvantages to students of the proposed changes, that the current mode of scheduling final examinations be retained. Chairman did not feel that any changes were required.

2. Business Administration

The majority of the committee felt that the status quo (current examination format) should remain. Recommended that arrangements be made to allow common final examinations for both day and evening sections of multi-section courses.

3. Education

In principle the changes proposed seem acceptable but a final response is delayed until October 1.

4. Interdisciplinary Studies

The committee feels that the proposed changes are reasonable; the Dean agrees.

5. Science

The final exam schedule should be contained in the pre-registration handbook (see also Palmer memo). Adoption of a block system of scheduling of lectures and exams may be necessary but it is not clear that it would be necessary to increase the number of exam slots. Provision should be implemented to alleviate space problems by allowing more than one exam to be written simultaneously in the same room (see the response).

6. Engineering Science

Three examinations on a single day not acceptable. Examinations in adjacent time slots are acceptable but not desirable. Prefer no possibility of examination conflict as there would not be permitted classroom timetable conflicts. This would require some constraint and discipline in the matter of class and laboratory schedules (see response).

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

MEMORANDUM

SCUS 83-31

SENATE COMMITTEE ON UNDERGRADUATE
STUDIES

From. H. M. EVANS, SECRETARY,
SENATE COMMITTEE ON UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES

Date. SEPTEMBER 16, 1983

Subject. PROPOSED CHANGES - FINAL EXAMINATION
SCHEDULING (UNDERGRADUATE) - ENQUIRY
AND RESPONSES

1. Following discussion at the meeting of the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies on July 26, 1983 on Paper SCUS 83-26 - Proposal on Changes - Final Examinations, enquiry went forth from the Vice-President Academic to the Deans of Faculties, Chairmen of the Faculty Curriculum Committees, President of the Student Society, in memorandum dated 29 July, 1983, requesting response by September 15.

You are requested to bring forward your copy of Paper S.83-26.
A copy of the enquiry dated 29 July, 1983 is provided herewith.

2. Written responses have not been received from all faculties. Education indicates intent to have this item discussed with response on October 1. The Curriculum Committee of Science has approved certain recommendations but it is not clear that these have yet been approved by the Faculty of Science and they have not yet been received in writing. It is clear that there is not agreement on all items across the various faculties with views ranging from "do not make changes", through "the changes proposed seem reasonable", through "make more extensive changes including block timetabling" (these are not exact quotations).

Copies of the responses which have been received are provided herewith.

SCUS 83-26 April, 1983.
Report

REPORT ON SCHEDULING OF FINAL EXAMINATIONS

by: Diane Whiteley
Supervisor of Scheduling
and Statistics

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to examine the options available in scheduling final examinations.

In recent semesters it has become increasingly difficult to slot all the final examinations in the time allotted for them. In fact, if both the number of examination requests and the course enrolments continue to increase, changes will have to be made in the scheduling of final examinations.

For example, in the Fall 1982 semester every timeslot for day exams was used. This meant that exams began on the day after classes ended. Students with exams on that day had no preparation time. For the first time, exams were also scheduled on the last day of the exam period. Ninety-six hours later, exam marks were due in the Registrar's Office. Immediately after they are due, exam marks are loaded to a computer file and the evaluation programs are run. The evaluation programs are used at the SUAB meeting on the following morning. When the results of the SUAB review are known, the final exam mark statements are produced and mailed to students. This allows about five days for final exam mark statements to reach students before in person registration day. With exams being held on the final day of the exam period, there is no flexibility left. For example, if there are delays due to bad weather, labor disputes, machine failure, the final exam mark statements will not be produced and mailed on time.

Increasing course enrolments also have an impact on the allocation of space for exams. The majority of exams require alternate seating, and some exams require alternate seating in alternate rows. Since there are only five classrooms that seat 200 or more, further increases in enrolments will mean that other areas on campus will have to be set up specifically for exams.

This report will review the system used at Simon Fraser University for scheduling final examinations, and discuss some of the problems, advantages, and disadvantages of the present system. The report will also outline some of the systems in use at other universities. Finally, this report will make some recommendations for alleviating the problems that have developed in the scheduling of final examinations at S.F.U.

2. THE PRESENT SYSTEM FOR SCHEDULING FINAL EXAMINATIONS

2.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM

Since Simon Fraser University is on the semester system, there are three final exam periods per year, in April, August, and December. Each exam period is approximately 13 days long and begins the day after the last day of classes.

Each day there are three timeslots for exams at 0900, 1300, and 1900. The normal length for an exam is three hours. There are no exams scheduled on Sunday or on Friday and Saturday evenings.

Exams for day courses are scheduled separately from exams for evening courses. There are no evening exams for day courses, and no day exams for evening courses.

Each semester, first a tentative and then a final version of the exam schedule is posted. During week five of the semester each department sends a list of requested exams to the scheduling office. These requests are used as input in producing the exam schedule. The tentative exam schedule is posted during week nine of the semester. The following week requested changes are made to the schedule, if possible. The final version of the exam schedule is posted during week eleven of the semester. Exams are held during weeks fourteen and fifteen of the semester.

The final exams for day, evening, and correspondence courses are scheduled in different ways.

Correspondence course exams are scheduled during the second week of the exam period on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday evening. There is no checking for student conflicts. The DISC office makes arrangements for students with exam conflicts. At the request of the DISC office some of the exams for correspondence courses may be scheduled during the first week of the exam period.

Exams for day courses are scheduled using the output from the PR301, exam scheduler computer program.

The input for the exam scheduler program consists of a list of all day courses for which exams have been requested, and the number of timeslots available for exams. The output from the exam scheduler program consists of:

- A conflict list for each course for which an exam was requested. That is, for each course, the program produces a list of all other courses that would cause conflicts for students if the exams for the two courses were held at the same time. (see figure 2.1.1)
- A list of courses that could not be assigned to a timeslot without causing conflicts. (These courses have to be assigned to a timeslot using a manual procedure.)
- Three possible conflict-free exam schedules. Each schedule shows which courses are assigned to each of the 26 timeslots (13 days x 2 timeslots/day = 26). The "optimum" exam schedule is the schedule used.
- Along with the optimum exam schedule, the program produces an alphabetical listing of all the courses, with the timeslot assignment for each course. (see figure 2.1.2) The program also produces a list of the order of timeslots that will minimize the number of students having two exams in a row. (see figure 2.1.3)

Dates and times (0900 or 1300) are manually assigned to each timeslot. Then classrooms are manually assigned for each exam.

Moving an exam from the assigned timeslot to any other (preferred) timeslot is a manual procedure. (see figure 2.1.4) The conflict list for the course to be moved must be compared to the list of courses in the preferred timeslot. If there are no conflicts for students, the exam for the course can be moved to the preferred timeslot, assuming that suitable space is available.

Evening course exams are scheduled during the first week of the exam period on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday evening. The exam for an evening course is scheduled on the same evening of the week that the lecture is held. Usually, there are no conflicts for students, since students do not ordinarily take more than one course in an evening. If there is not enough classroom space in the first week, some evening exams will be scheduled during the second week of the exam period.

2.2 ADVANTAGES OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM

The present system of scheduling final exams has several advantages. The exam schedule is a conflict-free schedule for students. When selecting courses, students do not have to worry about choosing courses with exams that conflict.

Also, the number of students with two exams in a row can be minimized.

Finally, with the exam schedule spread out over thirteen days, there are fewer students writing exams each day. As a result, exams have been held in regular classroom space. However, with increased enrolments in courses and requests for alternate seating or alternate seats in alternate rows, this may not be possible in the future.

2.3 DISADVANTAGES OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM

The present system of scheduling exams also has several disadvantages.

In order to construct a conflict-free exam schedule, student enrolments in the courses must be known. Because of this, the exam schedule cannot be published at the same time as the timetable for the semester.

Another disadvantage is that day, evening, and correspondence exams are each scheduled in a different way. As a result, day exams cannot be scheduled in the evening because there is no way to determine whether or not students in the day course have conflicts with other evening exams.

Also, the exam period is long, approximately thirteen days. This long exam period causes another problem during the summer semester. The first week of the exam period for summer semester courses is held while summer session courses are still having classes. This means that a student could have an exam scheduled for a summer semester course at the same time as a class meeting for a summer session course. The long exam period also means that if there are delays due to bad weather, labor disputes, or machine failure there is no flexibility left for producing and mailing the final mark statements on time.

Finally, with the present system, students have no preparation time before exams. The first day of exams is the day after the last day of classes.

3. OTHER SYSTEMS OF SCHEDULING EXAMS

3.1 SYSTEM USED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

There are two terms per year at the University of British Columbia, one term ending in December and the other ending in April. Many of the courses at U.B.C. end in December so there are more final exams scheduled in December than in April.

The exam period in December is approximately nine days long and begins on the Monday after classes end. However, the Saturday immediately following the end of classes has been approved as an overflow day for scheduling exams.

Exams are held Monday through Saturday inclusive with four timeslots for exams per day at 0830, 1200, 1530, and 1900. Exams are scheduled on Friday and Saturday evenings. This means that the total number of timeslots for exams is 36 (9 days x 4 timeslots/day = 36).

Exams can be 2, 2 1/2 or 3 hours in length, but most exams are 2 hours long. If a student has three exams in a day, that is not considered a problem. If a student has four exams in a day, special arrangements are made for the student.

Exams for day courses and exams for evening courses are scheduled separately. At times, at the instructor's request, one exam has been scheduled for both the day and evening sections of a course. However, the Registrar's Office has received complaints from students about this practice.

In scheduling space for exams, the Registrar's Office at U.B.C. uses only some of the buildings on campus. Alternate seating is a requirement for all exams, except for large exams where single seating is a necessity. For large exams the armory is set up with 700 tables and chairs. The cost of the set up is paid for jointly by the Registrar's Office and the Physical Plant.

A computer program, similar to the one used at S.F.U., produces the exam schedule. However, the program assigns a timeslot and a date for each exam. Only the locations for the exams are assigned manually.

Producing and mailing final mark statements on time is not a problem at U.B.C. Even though many courses end in December, final marks are not mailed to the students until April.

3.2 SYSTEM USED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

At the University of Victoria there are two exam periods per year, one in December and one in April.

The exam period in December is approximately 12 days long and begins on the Monday after classes end. Students always have a two day break between the end of classes and the beginning of the exam period.

Exams are held Monday through Saturday inclusive with three timeslots for exams per day, one in the morning, one in the afternoon, and one in the evening. Exams are scheduled on Friday and Saturday evenings. The total number of timeslots for exams is 36 (12 days x 3 timeslots/day = 36).

Exams are either 2 or 3 hours long. If a student has three exams in a row, the departments make special arrangements for the student.

Exams for evening courses are always scheduled in the evening. Exams for day courses may be scheduled either during the day or in the evening. Courses with both day and evening sections often have a common exam which is held in the evening. There have been no complaints from students about this practice.

Because there are not enough large rooms at the University of Victoria, alternate seating is not possible for all exams. The gym is set up with 529 seats for holding exams. The cost of set up is paid

by the Registrar's Office.

Two computer programs are used to produce the exam schedule. The first program produces a conflict matrix. The second or "timetable generator" program produces a conflict-free exam schedule. The "timetable generator" program minimizes the number of students with 2 and 3 exams in a row. It also includes the feature that selected exams can be pre-scheduled before the program is run. For example, all the exams for evening courses can be placed in evening timeslots before the "timetable generator" program is run.

Since the courses do not end in December, no final mark statements are mailed to students until April.

3.3 THE TIMESLOT SYSTEM

With the Timeslot System of scheduling exams, there is a direct correspondence between the time that the course is scheduled during the semester, and the exam time. For example, all classes that meet at 0830 on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday have examinations at the same time. This does not mean that the exam time will be at 0830 on Monday, but only that exams for those courses will be held at the same time. For classes that meet for two or more consecutive hours, the time of the first hour of the class meeting determines the time of the final exam.

The timeslot system for scheduling exams cannot be used unless the entire timetable of classes is organized in a structured block system. For example, in a block timetable system, courses may be scheduled on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 1030 for one hour or on Tuesday and Thursday at 1230 for two hours. However, a course could not be scheduled on Monday at 1030 for one hour and on Thursday at 1230 for two hours.

At present, a block timetable system is not used at S.F.U.

The timeslot system for scheduling exams cannot be used unless the timetable of classes is changed to the block system.

The Timeslot System of scheduling exams has no relationship to course enrolment. One advantage of this, is that the exam schedule can be published at the same time as the timetable of classes. Another advantage is that the exam period is shortened. A shorter exam period means that more time could be set aside as preparation time for students. Also, more time would be available for submitting, processing and publishing grades.

The current system of scheduling exams at S.F.U. produces a conflict-free exam schedule for students. A disadvantage of the Timeslot System is that students would have to be careful to register for courses that did not have final exams at the same time. Also, the shortened exam period would mean that more exams would be given in each exam timeslot.

The shorter exam period would increase the probability that students would have 2, 3, or more exams in a row. The shorter exam period would result in an increased number of students writing exams each day. This would result in a greater demand for space. Additional space would have to be set up for exams, and the cost of setting up the space would have to be considered.

3.4 SYSTEM USED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

The University of Guelph, like Simon Fraser University, is on a trimester system. As a result, a similar problem exists at the University of Guelph in producing and mailing the final mark statements before the start of the next semester.

The exam period at the University of Guelph is normally 8 days long, but only 5 days for the spring semester. Exams begin on the Monday after classes end.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- To provide for a 2 day break between the end of classes and the beginning of the exam period by shortening the exam period to 12 days. This will eliminate the first day (usually Saturday) from the exam period.

Although 12 days will be allowed for exams, normally, exams will end on Friday (day 11 of the exam period), 2 weeks after the end of classes. This will also allow an extra day of flexibility in producing and mailing the final mark statements.

- To increase the number of timeslots per day for exams from 3 to 4. This will be necessary in order to continue to produce a generally conflict-free exam schedule. Also, exams will be scheduled on Friday and Saturday evenings. This will allow 33 timeslots for day exams (11 x 3 timeslots/day = 33). It will allow 11 timeslots for evening exams. The proposed start times for exams are 0830, 1200, 1530, and 1900.

- To allow an hour break between the 4 exams timeslots per day, while still allowing 3 hour exams to be scheduled on request.

At present approximately 67% of the exams are 3 hours long and 33% are 2 hours or less. Some changes will have to be made to the final exam scheduler program before this recommendation can be accomplished.
(SEE APPENDICES B AND C)

- To provide additional space for large exams. Suggestions for space that could be set up for exams include the gym, the south concourse of the Academic Quadrangle, the north concourse of the Academic Quadrangle, and the Mall Cafeteria.

If funds are not available for the set up and control of the additional space, to consider other solutions to the space problem. One solution would be to schedule two exams that require alternate seats in alternate rows in the same room at the same time. Then students from different courses would be sitting next to each other.

6. OTHER TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

For the following topics no specific recommendations have been made. Discussions involving the concerned areas of the university community would be useful.

- The question of whether or not only one exam should be scheduled for the day and evening sections of a course.

Exams are held Monday through Saturday inclusive with four time-slots per day at 0830, 1130, 1430, and 1930. Exams are scheduled on Friday and Saturday evenings. This means that the total number of time-slots for exams is 32 (8 days x 4 timeslots/day = 32).

The length of exams is 2 hours maximum, by university regulation.

The University of Guelph is on an "extended day" system. As a result there is no distinction between day and evening exams. One exam is scheduled for all sections of a course and that exam may be in either a day or an evening timeslot. Recently, because of complaints from students, provision has been made for separate exams for evening students when a special request is made.

In scheduling space for exams, the Registrar's Office at the University of Guelph pays for the set up of the gym which holds 900 tables and chairs.

At the University of Guelph, final mark statements are produced and mailed in time for students to receive them before the start of the next semester.

4. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 THE COST OF SETTING UP ADDITIONAL SPACE FOR EXAMS

In May, 1982 Walter Wattamaniuk did a feasibility study (see Appendix A) on the cost of setting up the East and West Gymnasias for writing exams. The study concluded that it would cost S.F.U. approximately \$15,000. in capital for the tarpaulins (to cover the gym floors) and approximately \$1500. per semester for Physical Plant labor. (costs as of May, 1982).

At this time there are no funds in the Registrar's Office budget to pay for this type of set up.

4.2 THE SCHEDULING OF SEPARATE EXAMS FOR DAY AND EVENING SECTIONS OF A COURSE

With the present system of scheduling exams, there are separate exams for the day and evening sections of a course. The Registrar's Office has been receiving an increasing number of requests from departments to schedule the exams together for the day and evening sections of a course.

There are advantages to scheduling exams for day and evening sections together. Only one exam has to be prepared, resulting in increased security and increased fairness to the students.

One disadvantage would be the need to provide space for larger groups of students when all the sections of a course were combined for the exam.

A question to be considered is whether Simon Fraser University will require evening only students to write exams whenever they are scheduled - day or evening. Also, will day only students be required to write exams in the evening as well as the day.