

Reference Number: S17-277

Senate Approval Date: Tuesday, April 18, 2017

Presidential Approval Date:

Monday, April 24, 2017

Policy #: S17?277

Supersedes: none

Senate Approval: 04/18/2017

Presidential Approval: 04/04/2017

Effective: 08/01/2018

Last Review: N/A

Next Review: Fall 2021

Standardized Time Blocks for Use in Course Scheduling; (Educational Policies Council)

Abstract

Course availability has become a major impediment to our campus goal of increasing retention and graduation rates for our students. The use of standard time blocks in course scheduling can increase the efficient use of space, as well as minimize overlap between classes. SF State has no policy requiring the use of standard time blocks in course scheduling, although there are a set of recommended time blocks for 3- and 4-unit lecture courses. The lack of set time blocks for lab and activity components as well as the optional nature of the existing time blocks has resulted in a huge range of start and end times for classes, leading to unnecessary course overlaps and an inefficient use of scarce space on campus. This policy seeks to accommodate a much wider range of class types and times, limit course overlaps and maximize efficient use of space, while maintaining flexibility for departments scheduling courses.

Key Words

Standard time blocks, course scheduling, final exams

Author/Source

Responsible Unit

Academic Resources will coordinate with the Division of Undergraduate Education and Academic Planning and College and Department schedulers to implement the policy.

History

Version	Approved	Revisions(s)
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1	04/18/2017	Original
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Rationale

In the years since SF State developed recommended standard time blocks for 3- and 4-unit lecture courses, enrollments have increased and the faculty have developed more courses in mixed formats (lecture, lab and activity) and 2-, 5- and even 6-unit courses. The lack of required time blocks for has led to inconsistent start times for courses as well as problems in scheduling final exams without conflicts. As an example, in Spring 2016 there were 28 different Monday start times between 8 am and 5 pm and 42 different end times. In contrast, this policy would allow only 12 different Monday start times between 8 am and 5 pm and 23 end times. This variety of start and end times has led to unnecessary course overlaps and an inefficient use of scarce space on campus. Given that students cannot register for courses that overlap, the chances that students will be able to get into the courses they need to graduate decreases.

The range of start and end times can also result in large time gaps between classes, which wastes space that could be used to offer more courses. In the most recent Senior Exit Survey of SF State graduates, 16% of students indicated that they did not graduate in the time they expected and attributed their delay to the lack of course availability. This policy seeks to accommodate a much wider range of class types and times, limit course overlaps and maximize efficient use of space, while maintaining flexibility for departments scheduling courses.

The time blocks have been set up in terms of class time (i.e., minutes) rather than units. For each unit of credit, lecture courses meet 50 minutes/week, activities meet 100 minute/week and labs meet 150 minutes. In the case of courses that meet 150 minutes in one session,

there is a built-in 15-minute break for a total of 165 minutes. This policy has, therefore, set up 50-minute, 100-minute and 165-minute blocks, which is consistent with CSU Academic Senate directive EP&R 76-36 (Faculty Workload: Policies and Procedures).

While there are a wide variety of types of classes offered at SF State, most can be broken down for scheduling into smaller units. For example, a 4-unit course that consists of a 3-unit lecture and a 1-unit activity, is scheduled as a 3-unit lecture per the guidelines for a 3-unit lecture, and a 1-unit activity per the guidelines of a 1-unit activity.

Standard time blocks

The standard class scheduling times in the table below must be used when scheduling courses in any space on the SF State main campus in the Fall and Spring terms. This applies to both university and college/department controlled space. This policy does not apply to the University's satellite campuses. Other exceptions, chiefly for pedagogical reasons, require approval from the home Department Chair and the Course Review Committee (CRC). Departments are encouraged to schedule their classes throughout the day and to offer evening and Friday classes as much as possible.

MW, MWF and M-F 50-minute blocks	TR 50-minute blocks	MW¹ and TR 75-minute blocks	MW and TR 100-minute blocks	M, T, W, R, F 165-minute blocks
0800 - 0850	0800 - 0850	0800 - 0915	0800 - 0940	0930 - 1215 ²
0900 - 0950	1000 - 1050	0930 - 1045	1000 - 1140	1230 - 1515 ²
1000 - 1050	1100 - 1150	1100 - 1215	1200 - 1340	1530 - 1815 ²
1100 - 1150	1300 - 1350	1230 - 1345	1400 - 1540	1600 ? 1845 1630 - 1915
1200 - 1250	1400 - 1450	1400 - 1515	1600 -1740	1700 ? 1945 1730 - 2015

1300 - 1350				1800 ? 2045
	1600 - 1650	1530 - 1645	1800 - 1940	1830 - 2115
1400 - 1450		1700 - 1815	2000 -2140	1900 - 2145
1500 - 1550		1830 - 1945		
1600 - 1650		2000 - 2115		
1700 - 1750				
1800 - 1850				
1900 - 1950				
2000 - 2050				
2100 - 2150				

¹ Academic Resources may choose to restrict the scheduling of MW 75-minute and all 165-minute blocks in large, centrally scheduled lecture halls.

² These time blocks cannot be centrally scheduled, but departments and Colleges may use them to schedule in their own spaces.

Implementation

This policy shall be in effect for courses offered no later than the Fall 2018 term. The Office of Academic Resources shall provide a report to the Academic Senate on the implementation of the policy as soon as is feasible. This report shall be used by the Senate to review the effectiveness of the policy, and modify it if necessary. The Senate encourages Academic Resources to work with Capital Planning to develop a mechanism by which non-centrally controlled space can be scheduled for courses offered outside the controlling body's unit, thereby expanding the number of classrooms available to the campus. To ensure attention to

equity in space allocations, scheduling at satellite campuses and scheduling of weekend and summer classes, this policy will be reviewed every 3 years.

Signed Memo:

S17-277 Signed Memo

Policy Document: S17-277
