

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

2020-2021 ACADEMIC CALENDAR ([link](#) to calendar)

What are the overarching goals of the academic calendar?

In developing each academic calendar, the principal goal has always been to construct the calendar that is **best for student learning** and in accordance with the rules and regulations established by the US Department of Education and the Higher Learning Commission, Calvin's accrediting agency. Other considerations may be taken into account (such as holidays), but all considerations are subject to evaluation in light of how student learning is affected.

In revising the 2020-2021 calendar, a secondary goal has been established: what calendar will best **mitigate health and safety concerns** related to the COVID-19 pandemic. With this goal in mind, the calendar will maximize the possibilities for safe return of students to campus in the fall, will minimize opportunities for travel during the semester, and will transition to online instruction and exams following the Thanksgiving break (when travelers may have been exposed to viruses) so that students need not return to campus until after the Christmas break.

Are there any changes in this calendar from the draft that was previously posted?

Classes on Labor Day. On Monday, September 7, classes will be in session following a typical Monday schedule. This is necessary to accommodate the other changes to the fall calendar.

Fall break. The previous draft calendar included a fall break for students and faculty. The fall break is now staggered over three weeks (October 8, October 21, November 3). This will allow students and faculty to have periods of rest from the routine class schedule and arrange advising appointments, while reinforcing the expectation that there be no travel during the semester.

Academic Advising. The previous draft calendar included two days for academic advising as bookends to the fall break. In the new calendar, the advising days will coincide with the fall break days (October 8, October 21, November 3). Additional details will be communicated later about advising.

Spring Break. March 15-19 will be the spring break. This is one week earlier than previously posted in order to provide greater separation between the break and Good Friday / Easter weekend.

What about clinical placements and internships in the fall semester?

Not all aspects of clinical placements and internships are within the university's control. Instructors will continue to plan with community partners and accrediting agencies and will communicate details to students as soon as possible.

Will all students have to move off campus at Thanksgiving?

Students who need to remain on campus due to such things as course requirements (e.g., clinical placements), athletics, or international travel concerns will be allowed to remain on campus. The application/petition process and expectations for safe distancing practices will be communicated later.

Will students have to completely vacate campus housing at Thanksgiving?

No. Students will be able to leave things in their rooms and apartments just as they normally do when leaving campus for Christmas break.

Will students receive a refund on room and board because they will not be returning to campus after Thanksgiving?

We do not anticipate issuing refunds for these days, given the overall increased costs to the institution that we anticipate as we prepare and maintain a safe housing program for the fall 2020 semester. Some of the COVID-related changes we anticipate are in areas such as cleaning, food service, and care for individual students who may become ill during the semester (who may require isolation space, food delivery, etc.). These services increase costs but will be assumed within the constraints of the current budget for room and board. In addition, housing options will remain available for students unable to travel home at Thanksgiving break (additional details about the process to apply/petition for an exception to stay on campus will be shared in the months ahead).

Why does the calendar show 8-week sessions alongside the 16-week semesters?

With the creation of the Calvin Global Campus and online courses for the master's degree programs, there is an increase in the number of 8-week courses offered. Showing how the traditional 16-week semesters coincide with the 8-week sessions is helpful for planning purposes for faculty and students alike.

Will there be changes to this calendar?

It is our sincere hope that this calendar will remain as currently posted for the entire 2020-2021 academic year. However, it is possible—some might even say likely—that additional adjustments may be needed. It may become necessary to make changes to the spring semester for health and safety reasons. Any modifications to this calendar will be publicized as widely as possible to the entire Calvin community. The most recent version of the calendar will always be linked here: <https://calvin.edu/offices-services/center-for-student-success/academic-calendar/>

Did you consider other options for the fall semester?

Yes, many options were considered. In fact, over twenty drafts of this calendar were created (the previous record was six). There are many, many considerations that go into the academic calendar, and any individual change will create domino changes. In approving this calendar, we took into account the directives from the Department of Education, the Higher Learning Commission, and the Centers for Disease Control. We considered the visa complications that international students are facing as well as the travel needs of students who do not live within driving distance of campus. We considered the pedagogical needs of students with labs, clinical placements, and internships. We did our best to consider every possible need and option. Every calendar has compromises, and we believe that this calendar best responds to all the competing needs.