

University Senate

University at Albany  
State University of New York

Introduced by: Educational Policies Council

Date: April 24, 2003

**Modification of starting times for courses meeting in standard time zones**

It is hereby proposed that the following be adopted

1. 1. That the starting time for standard time-zones used for the scheduling of semester courses be revised as follows:
  - a. a. Courses meeting MWF begin at 8:15am rather than 8:00am
  - b. b. Courses meeting TTH begin at 8:45am rather than 8:15am
  - c. c. That the starting time for courses in the standard time zones be adjusted accordingly (see attached)
2. 2. That this change become effective with the Fall 2004 semester.
3. 3. That the EPC establish a review cycle for the purpose of considering modifications to the standard time-zones for three credit courses.
4. 4. That this bill be referred to the President for approval.

BACKGROUND:

The Office of the Registrar issues guidelines each semester regarding “*Available Time-Zones for Semester Course Scheduling*”. Those guidelines state, in part, “Classes are scheduled according to set ‘time-zone patterns’ in order to avoid student/course-schedule conflicts within a department and school, and on a university-wide basis. These ‘time-zone patterns’ also allow greater academic space utilization, thus enabling the university to make maximum use of its academic facilities.”

The basic semester time-zones for 3 credit courses distributed with the above guidelines provides for 32 standard time zones. The proposed revision will include 36 standard time zones, and provides additional standard time zones for courses meeting once or twice a week, as follows:

Three credit Courses meeting 3 times per week: (six time zones)

MWF	8:15-9:10am	9:20-10:15am	10:25-11:20am
	11:30am-12:25pm	12:35-1:30pm	1:40-2:35pm

Three credit courses meeting 2 times per week (12 time zones)

TTH	8:45-10:05am	10:15-11:35am	11:45am-1:05pm
	1:15-2:35pm	2:45-4:05pm	4:15-5:35pm
	5:45-7:05pm	7:15-8:35pm	
MW	2:45-4:05pm	4:15-5:35pm	
	5:45-7:05pm	7:15-8:35pm	

Three credit courses meeting once per week (18 time zones)

M/T/W/TH/F	2:45-5:35pm	4:15-7:05pm
M/T/W/TH	5:45-8:35pm	7:15-10:05pm

It should be noted that courses are scheduled on the basis of the requests submitted by the school/college/department and the individual educational programs and needs of these respective units. This proposal of the standard time-zones for three credit courses does not limit the current flexibility for scheduling courses. Studio courses, mini-courses, beginning languages meeting 4 or 5 days a week, four-hour seminars, one hour discussion sections linked with a lecture course, laboratory courses, and all other forms of “non-standard” time-zones will continue.

## RATIONALE

The University's Official Schedule of Classes dates back several decades, and there is little knowledge of how some of its idiosyncratic features came to be. The proposed adjustment to the schedule is intended to spread activity more evenly across the week, reducing peak demands on classrooms and parking, and increasing the range of choices for students and faculty.

### **Why change the Basic Semester Time-Zones for 3-Credit Courses?**

- • Demand for classrooms is excessively concentrated on TTH and in the late morning and early afternoon. The University has insufficient classroom capacity at these critical times.
- • Demand for bus seats and parking spaces is excessively concentrated in the same periods, causing frustration and late arrivals in classes.
- • Because classes are concentrated on TTH and in the late morning and early afternoon, students have less effective choice of courses, because they often find that several of the courses that they want or need to take are scheduled at the same time.
- • Enrollment and attendance are low at classes that start at 8:00 AM and at 8:15 AM
- Many graduate instructors and students like one class a week, with a break in the middle. The official version of the list of Current Time Zones does not allow for 3-hour classes, but *de facto* such classes exist and have been scheduled for many years. *De facto* approval has long been granted for evening 3-hour classes starting at 4:15, 5:45 and 7:15 PM, and their inclusion in the following table recognizes that practice.
- • For lower division undergraduate classes, attendance at Friday afternoon classes is often low.
- • Though some instructors prefer three short classes a week (MWF), most prefer a two- or one-class per week format.
- • Though there are no gaps on the current MWF schedule beyond the 10 minutes assumed necessary to

move between successive classes, the current TTH schedule has gaps from 12:35 to 1:00 PM and from 3:50 to 4:15 PM. Closing up these gaps permits a later start in the morning, making the first class more attractive to most faculty and students.

- Insufficient scheduling options are available for quarter courses, especially when a large classroom is needed.

### **What principles have been used in preparing the adjusted version of the schedule?**

- The official schedule of classes and standard time-zones are intended to minimize timetable clashes and overlaps for faculty and students, and to facilitate the organization of exams. Nevertheless, it is recognized that arrangements can be, and often are, varied for small classes and special circumstances. Such arrangements are negotiated between the Registrar's Office and academic departments.
- Changes to the official schedule should be small. Major changes, for example shifting to a MWTH and TF schedule, would disrupt faculty and students' established routines.
- Changes should spread demand for classes, classrooms and parking more evenly across the week.

Changes should increase the scheduling choices available to both faculty and students.