



University Policy: Establishing Degree Conferral Dates

Policy Category: Academic

Subject: Establishing Dates for Degree Conferral

Responsible Executive: Provost

Office Responsible for Review of this Policy: Office of the Provost

Procedures: Development of the Academic Calendar; Application for Graduation

Related University Policies: University Bylaws Article III, Section 10.(f); Student Participation in Commencement Ceremonies; Undergraduate Academic Regulations; Graduate Academic Regulations; Academic Calendar; BOT Resolution dated May 17, 2019.

I. SCOPE

This policy addresses the university’s obligation to observe and implement those degree conferral dates approved by the Board of Trustees to help ensure timely conferral of students’ degrees when they complete their programs of study. This policy does not include the degree conferral dates for the Washington College of Law (WCL) which are different from main campus program dates.

II. POLICY STATEMENT

In accordance with the university Bylaws, the Board of Trustees has responsibility for conferring degrees. Subject to this provision, the Provost and the Office of the University Registrar (OUR) work in collaboration with academic units and standing committees to ensure adherence to university regulations and best practices regarding degree conferral. The Provost and OUR provide administrative oversight to confirm graduates have completed the necessary coursework to have earned a degree and that the university confers their degrees in a timely fashion consistent with the Board of Trustees’ expectations.

III. DEFINITIONS

Three-Term Academic Calendar: *An academic calendar consisting of required fall and spring semesters, and optional summer sessions.*

Fall semester: *Required, first term of a three-term academic calendar year, generally beginning in August and ending in December, providing at least 15 weeks of academic instruction in accordance with the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education.*

Spring semester: Required, second term of a three-term academic calendar year, generally beginning in January and ending May, providing at least 15 weeks of academic instruction in accordance with the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education.

Summer sessions: Optional, final term containing sessions with varying lengths, of a three-term academic calendar year, typically beginning in May and ending in August.

Four-Term Academic Calendar: An academic calendar consisting of four required terms, beginning with the fourth term of a calendar year (typically October-December) and ending with the third term of a calendar year (typically the end of September).

IV. POLICY

American University has academic programs that follow a three-term (two semesters and summer sessions) academic calendar or a four-term academic calendar. Each term has an associated degree date that is the official date of the degree conferral. Students must complete all work prior to the degree date of a given term to become eligible to graduate from that term and receive a degree.

To help ensure timely conferral of students' degrees, the university's Board of Trustees has established six (6) degree conferral dates. The Provost and OUR ensure those dates are publicized and included on the university's academic calendars. Three of the degree conferral dates coincide with the completion of the spring Semester (May), the summer session (August), and the Fall Semester (December). The three other dates are used only when needed to award a degree to a student enrolled in a program following the four-term academic calendar. Degree conferral dates for a student enrolled in a program following the four-term academic calendar will fall roughly toward the end of each March, June, September and December.

Establishing the degree conferral dates as described below provides the largest window of opportunity for students to promptly receive their degree after they have completed their program of study and any other graduation requirements. Students are only eligible to graduate from the final term in which work is completed toward the degree requirements.

The degree date for each term is established as follows:

Academic Programs Following a Three-Term Calendar

1. Fall Term: The degree conferral date for the fall semester is December 23rd.
2. Spring Term: The degree conferral date for the spring semester is the second Sunday of May (i.e., the last calendar day prior to the first day of summer session classes).
3. Summer Term: The degree conferral date for the summer session is the last

calendar day prior to the first day of fall semester classes., which usually falls on the last Sunday of August.

Academic Programs Following a Four-Term Calendar

1. First Term: The degree conferral date for the first term is the last calendar day prior to the first day of second term classes (which typically falls during the last week of March).
2. Second Term: The degree conferral date for the second term is the last calendar day prior to the first day of third term classes (which typically falls during the last week of June).
3. Third Term: The degree conferral date for the third term is the last calendar day prior to the first day of fourth term classes (which typically falls during the last week of September).
4. Fourth Term: The degree conferral date for the fourth term is December 23rd.

Degree conferral dates will be published in the academic calendar. In addition, the university will print the applicable conferral date on students' diplomas and transcript degree comments.

V. EFFECTIVE DATE AND REVISIONS:

This Policy is effective March 1, 2021.

This Policy was revised February 25, 2021