

SENATE

Title of paper: Proposed Changes to the Academic Calendar 2026-27+

Main purpose of the paper: For decision

Presenter(s): Ruth Valentine, PVCE and Lucy Backhurst, Academic Registrar and Director of Student Services

Date of paper: 13 November 2024

Purpose of the paper

The paper makes recommendations for change to the academic calendar 2026-27 and beyond. The changes are proposed to address pain points in the current calendar that impact upon the student and colleague experience, and to futureproof the calendar in the context of the new Education Strategy and other drivers.

The changes are based on the work of an Academic Calendar Reference Group convened in September/October 2024 and composed of academic, PS, NUSU and INTO colleagues, and consultation with key stakeholders.

Relation to strategy and values

Education Strategy. Education excellence

Recommendations:

Senate members are asked to approve the new model for the academic calendar set out in Section 5. The changes should be considered in the context of the accompanying Equality Assessment.

Consultation to date (including any previous committee consideration and its outcome):

Consultation has taken place with individuals and groups outlined in section 3.

The new model was approved and supported by University Education Committee on 9 October 2024.

Report to Senate

Proposed Changes to the Academic Calendar, 13 November 2024

1. Context

In April 2020, changes were made to the academic calendar in response to Covid to allow staggered start dates and build breaks into the timetable to give flex in the delivery of students' education. Post-Covid, these changes have caused challenges for the student education experience and education colleagues, both PS and academic.

In October 2022 an academic calendar consultation was undertaken, co-led by colleagues from education and research. The result was the removal of semester 2 revision week, a condensing of the Congregations period and non-structural changes designed to improve the student experience. In agreeing to the changes, Senate recommended a further review in Autumn 2024 in the context of the new Education Strategy.

The purpose of this Review is to ensure our academic calendar enables an excellent student education experience and is fit for the future. In developing the recommendations, a Reference Group set up to consider the issues has been guided in its thinking by the following: international student experience, student and colleague wellbeing, the emerging Education Strategy curriculum framework, discipline-specific need, lifelong learning and releasing research time.

This paper sets out the outcome of the October 24 consultation and makes recommendations for change to the academic year 2026-27 and beyond. A decision to support these changes is required by December 2024 to satisfy the needs of external agencies (UCAS, Student Finance England and the Office for Students), colleagues preparing for the next academic year, and applicants (particularly international) for 2026 entry.

2. Calendar Reference Group

Led by the Academic Registrar, the aim of the Academic Calendar Reference Group was to identify issues and develop recommendations for change. Membership was cross-University and included representatives from UCU, NUSU and INTO. A list of members is given in Appendix 1.

3. Discovery and Consultation

Initial discovery involved a review of competitor calendars (Appendix 2). What is clear from this exercise is that there are similarities and differences but no "stand out" models. In addition to the Reference Group meetings, consultation has taken place with PGR Sub Committee (17/10); colleagues in overseas campus' (w/c 14/10); NUSU Student Education Exec. Committee (21/10); Directors of Research and Heads and Deans of Faculty Research (by circulation); NU Parents and NU Women; Professional Services Leadership Team (29/10) and Senior Tutors (30/10). There is no clear consensus from the consultation, with pros and cons given for the changes. Reducing the Easter break is cited as the most significant negative issue amongst research colleagues particularly, with additional concern over the impact on colleagues with children. Feedback from the consultation, including an Action Plan, are included in the Equality Analysis presented with this paper.

4. Issues with the calendar

Many of the issues raised were the same as in October 2022: Semester 1 start date too early for international students to secure visas; lack of time in summer for research and colleague leave; the

challenge of an 11 week semester structure; the purpose of enrichment/revision weeks; a lack of time post-assessment for marking, feedback and exam admin; time pressure on returning students following the resit period; a long Easter Break; imbalance in semester structure; a lack of protected research time; non-inclusive language (Christmas and Easter breaks) and a lack of discipline-specific flexibility. Of the list above, the issues associated with a condensed semester 2 (time post-assessment for marking feedback and administration and the 11-week teaching structure) were agreed upon as most problematic. It was agreed that recommended changes should enable academic unit level decision-making on how the delivery of education and assessment is structured.

5. Recommendations

A number of “quick wins” have been supported by UEC and are set out in Appendix 3 for immediate implementation. The table below sets out recommendations for Academic Year 2026-27 and beyond. The changes are represented visually in Appendix 4.

	PROPOSAL	REASON
R1	Revert to 12-week teaching blocks (called Education blocks) per semester	Aligned to models being considered as part of the Education Strategy Curriculum framework & Lifelong Learning. Allow some flexibility at academic unit level to adapt weeks to the needs of the discipline (when to fit in fieldwork, whether to offer revision/reading weeks etc)
R2	Condense international welcome and start Induction and teaching one week later than currently	Provides a longer period before the new academic year starts for assessment admin, research time and leave. Enable more international students to secure their visas
R3	Reduce Easter/Spring break from 4 weeks to 3 and add an additional week between the end of Semester 2 exams and Exam Boards	Reduce no-contact for students (particularly international) over the long spring break. Create an extra week to give more time for marking and feedback and processing of results
R4	Fix spring break to be the same corresponding 3 week period each year, and specify a two week University “quiet time” period	Ensures a more balanced semester structure. Allows uninterrupted time for research Gives option of a quieter window for leave/research
R5	Maintain 4 weeks between August resit period & induction	To provide time for students between resits and the new academic year to receive and act upon results. Allows a longer summer period for research/leave before start of new academic year
R6	Be clear in communications where flexibility exists for academic units to develop an approach that is optimum for their students/colleagues/discipline	Eg whether to include an enrichment/reading week, whether to complete Semester 1 teaching before Christmas and include a revision/assignment week in week 12, whether to run fieldtrips in education weeks etc

6. UEC Response to the Model

The Committee were supportive of the proposed model and requested a full Equality Analysis following consultation with stakeholders. They agreed to the implementation of the immediate “quick wins” and endorsed the approach to the academic calendar for 2026-27 for consideration and approval by Senate.

REQUEST TO SENATE: Senate members are asked to approve the recommended changes to the academic calendar set out above.

Appendix 1: Membership of the Academic Calendar Reference Group, October/November 2024

Lucy Backhurst	Academic Registrar & Director of Student Services
Angela McNeill	Director of Student Progress
Jasmine Banks	NUSU Education Officer
Alex Barfield	School of Computing, SAgE
Yvonne Chase	Student Services (Student Success)
Helen Davis	Accommodation Services
Nicola Davison	School of Modern Languages, HaSS
Nicola Dunn	School of Medicine, FMS
Peter Gallagher	Translational & Clinical Research Institute, FMS
Jo Geary	HaSS Faculty
Stacy Gillis	School of English Literature, Language & Linguistics, HaSS
Jarka Glassey	School of Engineering, SAgE
Graeme Holloway	Student Progress Service
Paul Hubbard	School of Medicine, FMS
Lesley Innes	School of Biomedical, Nutritional & Sport Sciences, FMS
Holly-Ann Jardine	Newcastle Health Innovation Partners (supporting the calendar work)
Rene Koglbauer	Education Leadership Centre, HaSS
Clare McKeague	INTO Newcastle
Chris O'Malley	School of Engineering, SAgE
Charlotte Richardson	School of Pharmacy, FMS
Andy Roberts	Student Progress Service
Nick Rush-Cooper	School of Arts & Cultures, HaSS (and UCU representative)
Robert Shaw	School of Geography, Politics & Sociology, HaSS
Helen St Clair Thompson	School of Psychology, FMS
Steve Walls	School of Arts & Cultures, HaSS
Alice White	Student Success (Secretary)
Alfie Wilkinson	INTO Newcastle

Appendix 2: Comparison of Competitor Calendars for 2024-25

University	w/c 9 Sep	w/c 16 Sep	w/c 23 Sep	w/c 30 Sep	w/c 07 Oct	w/c 14 Oct	w/c 21 Oct	w/c 28 Oct	w/c 04 Nov	w/c 11 Nov	w/c 18 Nov	w/c 25 Nov	w/c 02 Dec	w/c 09 Dec	w/c 16 Dec	w/c 23 Dec	w/c 30 Dec	w/c 06 Jan	w/c 13 Jan	w/c 20 Jan	w/c 27 Jan	w/c 03 Feb	w/c 10 Feb	w/c 17 Feb	w/c 24 Feb	w/c 03 Mar	w/c 10 Mar	w/c 17 Mar	w/c 24 Mar	w/c 31 Mar	w/c 07 Apr	w/c 14 Apr	w/c 21 Apr	w/c 28 Apr	w/c 05 May	w/c 12 May	w/c 19 May	w/c 26 May	w/c 02 Jun	w/c 09 Jun	w/c 16 Jun							
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- * Reading week only for certain programmes
- ** Teaching week or revision week (depending on programme)
- *** Teaching & assessment week

	Teaching week
	Non-teaching week (term time)
	Assessment week
	Vacation

Appendix 3: Quick wins (non-structural) to address pain points

	PROPOSAL	REASON
R1	Encourage programmes to set fewer invigilated examinations where possible given PSRB requirements and as appropriate to pedagogy	Reduce time pressure on students and colleagues
R2	Prepare resit/deferral papers at the same time as S2 exam papers	Reduce time pressure and workload for colleagues
R3	Clarify absolute deadlines in the current calendar	To enable discipline-specific, local decision making
R4	Allow academic units to use enrichment/reading weeks flexibly, on the proviso that the week is kept the same across subjects	To enable discipline-specific, local decision making
R5	Rename Christmas and Easter break to Winter and Spring break	More inclusive
R5	Develop a model for testing with UEC based on areas of consensus	To enable the calendar to be agreed longer term (until at least 2029-30)

Appendix 4: Comparison of 2025-26 with proposed 2026-27 and 2027-28 Academic Year

Current published calendar for 2025-26:

University	w/c 8 Sep	w/c 15 Sep	w/c 22 Sep	w/c 29 Sep	w/c 06 Oct	w/c 13 Oct	w/c 20 Oct	w/c 27 Oct	w/c 03 Nov	w/c 10 Nov	w/c 17 Nov	w/c 24 Nov	w/c 01 Dec	w/c 08 Dec	w/c 15 Dec	w/c 22 Dec	w/c 29 Dec	w/c 05 Jan	w/c 12 Jan	w/c 19 Jan	w/c 26 Jan	w/c 02 Feb	w/c 09 Feb	w/c 16 Feb	w/c 23 Feb	w/c 02 Mar	w/c 09 Mar	w/c 16 Mar	w/c 23 Mar	w/c 30 Mar	w/c 06 Apr	w/c 13 Apr	w/c 20 Apr	w/c 27 Apr	w/c 04 May	w/c 11 May	w/c 18 May	w/c 25 May	w/c 01 Jun	w/c 08 Jun	w/c 15 Jun	w/c 22 Jun	w/c 29 Jun	w/c 06 Jul	w/c 13 Jul	w/c 20 Jul	w/c 27 Jul	w/c 03 Aug	w/c 10 Aug	w/c 17 Aug	w/c 24 Aug	w/c 31 Aug					
Newcastle 2025/26																																																									

Proposed calendars for 2026-27 and 2027-28:

University	w/c 7 Sep	w/c 14 Sep	w/c 21 Sep	w/c 28 Sep	w/c 05 Oct	w/c 12 Oct	w/c 19 Oct	w/c 26 Oct	w/c 02 Nov	w/c 09 Nov	w/c 16 Nov	w/c 23 Nov	w/c 30 Nov	w/c 07 Dec	w/c 14 Dec	w/c 21 Dec	w/c 28 Dec	w/c 04 Jan	w/c 11 Jan	w/c 18 Jan	w/c 25 Jan	w/c 01 Feb	w/c 08 Feb	w/c 15 Feb	w/c 22 Feb	w/c 01 Mar	w/c 08 Mar	w/c 15 Mar	w/c 22 Mar	w/c 29 Mar	w/c 05 Apr	w/c 12 Apr	w/c 19 Apr	w/c 26 Apr	w/c 03 May	w/c 10 May	w/c 17 May	w/c 24 May	w/c 31 May	w/c 07 Jun	w/c 14 Jun	w/c 21 Jun	w/c 28 Jun	w/c 05 Jul	w/c 12 Jul	w/c 19 Jul	w/c 26 Jul	w/c 02 Aug	w/c 09 Aug	w/c 16 Aug	w/c 23 Aug	w/c 30 Aug					
Newcastle 2026/27									*									*									*																														

University	w/c 6 Sep	w/c 13 Sep	w/c 20 Sep	w/c 27 Sep	w/c 04 Oct	w/c 11 Oct	w/c 18 Oct	w/c 25 Oct	w/c 01 Nov	w/c 08 Nov	w/c 15 Nov	w/c 22 Nov	w/c 29 Nov	w/c 06 Dec	w/c 13 Dec	w/c 20 Dec	w/c 27 Dec	w/c 03 Jan	w/c 10 Jan	w/c 17 Jan	w/c 24 Jan	w/c 31 Jan	w/c 07 Feb	w/c 14 Feb	w/c 21 Feb	w/c 28 Feb	w/c 06 Mar	w/c 13 Mar	w/c 20 Mar	w/c 27 Mar	w/c 03 Apr	w/c 10 Apr	w/c 17 Apr	w/c 24 Apr	w/c 01 May	w/c 08 May	w/c 15 May	w/c 22 May	w/c 29 May	w/c 05 Jun	w/c 12 Jun	w/c 19 Jun	w/c 26 Jun	w/c 03 Jul	w/c 10 Jul	w/c 17 Jul	w/c 24 Jul	w/c 31 Jul	w/c 07 Aug	w/c 14 Aug	w/c 21 Aug	w/c 28 Aug					
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	Teaching week
	Reading week / Intersemester break
	Assessment week
	Vacation
	Summer Congregations
	Induction
*	Flexible reading/revision week
EB	Exam Boards
RoR	Deadlines for release of results
	International welcome

Equality Analysis

STEP 1 – DEFINE THE FOCUS

Name/title of what this EA is about	Consultation on the University Calendar		
Lead officer/Manager (owner of EA)	Lucy Backhurst, Academic Registrar and Director of Student Services		
Team members involved	Holly-Ann Jardine, Project Manager Newcastle Health Innovation Partners (and volunteer supporting this work)		
Start date	1 December 2024	Is the EA for something new or being revised?	<input type="checkbox"/> New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Revised
Initial completion date	23/10/2024		
Review date and frequency	Initial review after 6 months then full review after 2 years		
Who does it affect? e.g., students, colleagues, other stakeholders	Colleagues and students		

Briefly describe what this EA is about and what it is focusing on
<p>This EA covers proposed changes to the University calendar based on the outcomes of a consultation which took place with colleagues, students and sabbatical officers, to gather different views and inform recommendations for change.</p> <p>A consultation on changing the academic calendar was conducted in September/October 2024 to resolve issues created by changes made in Covid. The consultation involved academic and professional service colleagues from all University campuses, Sabbatical Officers and students/student reps. As a result of the consultation, a paper was taken to University Education Committee for consideration and approval setting out recommendations for change and a proposed model for 2026/7+:</p> <p>Short term recommendations (“quick wins”) for Academic Year 2025-26:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage programmes to set fewer examinations (online and in person) were possible and appropriate to the subject area • Prepare resit/deferral papers at the same time as Semester 2 exam papers

- Clarity on absolute red lines/ hard deadline dates in current calendar (and where local flexibility was possible)
- Allow academic units to use enrichment/reading weeks and revision weeks flexibly, according to the needs of their discipline
- Rename Christmas and Easter break to Winter and Spring Break

Proposed model for 2026/27 and 2027/28 +

- Revert to 12 week teaching / education blocks per semester, with flexibility at academic unit level to have a mid-semester reading week, or the final week in each semester to be a revision week.
- Reduce Easter/Spring Break from 4 weeks to 3 weeks and add an additional week between the end of Semester 2 exams and the Exam Boards to enable more time for making & feedback and processing student results.
- Fix Spring Break to the same corresponding 3 week period each year, and specify a 2-week 'University downtime period'
- Maintain a minimum of 4 weeks between the August resit/deferral period and induction week to support continuing students and allow time for leave/research time/preparation for the new academic year
- Condense International welcome and start induction and teaching 1 week later than currently held
- Communicate to academic units, the scope for flexibility for local planning within the framework, enabling the development of an approach that works for their students and colleagues re timings, assessment, reading weeks and breaks.

The aim of these changes is to address issues relating to the student education experience and the colleague experience, that have been surfaced through consultation with colleagues and students:

- Semester structure: the current 11-week semester structure has created challenges in the academic calendar. The goal is to create a more balanced structure that alleviates pressure points throughout the year.
- Revision week after Christmas week to enable students to have some break over the Winter/Christmas period and colleagues to prepare for exams/process PECs
- Assessment periods: to allow more time after assessments for marking, feedback and administrative tasks, ensuring processes are not rushed and students receive timely, high-quality feedback.
- Resit period in semester 2: to reduce the pressure on returning students by revisiting the current resit schedule, which has been identified as a significant source of stress due to its proximity to the start of the new academic year
- Function and lack of uptake of enrichment/reading week: to reassess the purpose of enrichment/reading week, ensuring it is meaningful and of value to students and colleagues

Further detail is explained in the accompanying paper, but the focus of this EA is on the proposed model/changes set out above, and a consideration of possible impact on groups of students/colleagues that could arise as a result.

STEP 2 – GATHER EVIDENCE & CONSULT

What evidence and consultation with colleagues or students has been used to determine any implications (negative and positive) for different groups? Examples of evidence include:

- Colleague and/or student diversity profile data
- Comparator/benchmarking data (internal or external)
- Take-up/usage data by different groups
- Survey results e.g. satisfaction, experience or engagement surveys
- Feedback and anecdotal evidence from colleagues or students
- Reports of discrimination, harassment, victimisation, complaints, concerns or grievances
- Findings of research/reports or good practice relevant to this EA (internal or external)

If there are any gaps in evidence that limit the assessment, try to fill them before progressing. If gaps remain, explain this and identify if this limits the assessment, and how you will seek address this in the future at Step 4.

The consultation on the shape of the University calendar consisted of 2x2 hour Calendar Reference Group meetings with academic and professional service colleagues from across the University including a UCU representative, the NUSU Education Officer and INTO. Following the meetings, further consultation on the model took place with colleagues in our overseas campuses, Directors of Research and research colleagues, Senior Tutors, Professional Services Leadership Team and students via the NUSU Education Executive Group. The consultation was led by the Academic Registrar.

Participants in the Reference Group were very engaged. There was a universal agreement that there was no ‘silver bullet’ to solve all the issues relating to the academic calendar. Priority issues were identified in the first session and these issues were ranked in order of importance. Following the ranking, the four priority issues were identified:

1. Assessment periods: the lack of time post-assessment for marking, feedback & administration
2. Resit period in semester 2: the short window between receiving resit results and the start of the new academic year
3. Semester structure: the 11 week semester structure caused problems for colleagues, particularly those engaged in block teaching
4. A lack of clarity on the function/uptake of enrichment/reading week.

We also conducted a desk-based comparator analysis of how the calendar works at other comparator institutions universities (Appendix 2 in the paper). The NU Inclusion Calendar was also examined to assess whether the changes would have unintended consequences for any members of the University community. A variety of options for change were discussed in these sessions, mindful of different groups of colleagues and students who may be impacted, such as international students, those with parental or caring responsibilities and other groups below, attempting to ensure that there were no unintended consequences. The discussion had a particular focus on inclusion, student and staff wellbeing and consideration of unintended consequences.

The feedback and anecdotal evidence from these sessions alongside emailed feedback from colleagues who were unable to attend informed the presentation that was taken to University Education Committee (UEC) for discussion, and the recommendations proposed to Executive Board and Senate. These proposals are as follows:

Short term recommendations for Academic Year 2025-26:

- Encourage programmes to set fewer examinations (online and in person) were possible and appropriate
- Prepare resit papers at the same time as Semester 2 exam papers
- Clarity on absolute red lines/hard deadline dates in current calendar (and where internal flex)
- Allow academic units to use enrichment/reading week flexibly
- Rename Christmas and Easter break to Winter and Spring Break

Proposed model for 2026/27 and 2027/28 +

- Revert to 12 week teaching / education blocks per semester, with flexibility at academic unit level to have a mid-semester reading week, or the final week in each semester to be a revision week.
- Reduce Easter/ Spring Break to 3 weeks and add an additional week between the end of Semester 2 exams and the Exam Boards to enable more time for making & feedback and processing student results.
- Fix Spring Break to the same corresponding 3 week period each year, and specify a 2-week 'University downtime period'
- Maintain a minimum of 4 weeks between the August resit/deferral period and induction week
- Condense International welcome and start induction and teaching 1 week later than currently
- Develop a clear narrative that within the framework, there is flexibility for programmes to plan an approach that works for their students and colleagues re timings, assessment, reading weeks and breaks.

In parallel we have looked at the Annual EDI Report for 2023. This has enabled us to use the demographic data available to estimate the number of colleagues from different groups who took part in the consultation process:

For example, within the EDI Report:

- 11.6 % identified as being from a minoritised ethnic background
- 4.4% declared they had a disability
- 30.9% of colleagues are 50+ years old
- % said their sexual orientation was LGB+
- 0.2 % of colleagues said their current gender is not the same as it was at birth

These estimations are necessary as we did not track demographic data of those who attended therefore there was a gap in our data and we could not be sure of the demographics of those who attended, however the EDI Report can be useful to give an approximate number.

The student group consulted was made up of students from across the three faculties and included both undergraduate, postgraduate taught and research students, including a mature student.

Research into common issues surrounding protected characteristics and the academic calendar was also completed using evidence available on websites such as Wonkhe, THE and newspapers.

The outcome was that information covering this topic was extremely limited and suggests that there are few sector-wide issues surrounding calendar change and protected characteristics that we should be aware of. As this EA will be reviewed in six months' time, we will continue to keep a watching brief on sector issues in this context.

STEP 3 – ASSESS IMPACT & DECIDE HOW TO PROCEED

Using the evidence and feedback gathered in Step 2, answer the following two questions considering all the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010. Where no negative or positive implications can be identified, please specify if impacts are unknown or you anticipate a neutral impact. Where relevant, consider combinations of protected characteristics (intersectionality) and other considerations, such as parental responsibilities or socio-economic background.

1. **Are there any negative impacts for any group(s)?** Examples include:
 - A group being treated less favourably
 - A group being placed at a disadvantage
 - A group being impacted (negatively) more than others
 - Not making reasonable adjustments for disabled people
 - Barriers to access and participation
 - Poorer experiences or outcomes
 - Negative affect on relations between groups
 - Any other negative implications or findings

2. Are there any positive impacts for any group(s)? Examples include:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling access and participation • Anticipatory adjustments for disabled people • Improving colleague/student experience or outcomes • Preventing discrimination, harassment or victimisation • Fostering good relations between groups • Any other positive implications or findings 		
Group	Impact	Comments – please explain your assessment here
Age Being a certain age, in a certain age range, or stage of life (e.g., menopause, retirement).	<input type="checkbox"/> Positive <input type="checkbox"/> Negative <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	The proposed changes are not expected to have a negative or positive impact on colleagues or students because of age. However we will continue to monitor any effects and reassess the sector wide trends.
Disability Physical or mental condition, including unseen, which (untreated) has a substantial and long-term impact, which might recur. Unpaid carers are protected from discrimination related to their association with/responsibilities for caring for a disabled person.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Positive <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Negative <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<p>There may be a positive effect on disabled students and unpaid carers if academic units are able to reduce the number of examinations they set as fewer exams/assessments could result in less pressure and create a more manageable workload.</p> <p>Allowing academic units to use enrichment/reading weeks flexibly may have a negative effect on disabled students and unpaid carers who use this time to manage chronic illnesses, disabilities or careering responsibilities.</p> <p>Reverting to a 12 week teaching/ education blocks per semester could result in both a positive and negative impact on disabled students and unpaid carers. Longer teaching blocks might provide a more consistent pace of content which could benefit students who need extra time for processing information due to disabilities or health conditions. However, without a guaranteed mid-semester break, it could lead to fatigue for those who need regular rest periods.</p> <p>Introducing a shorter Easter/Spring break may reduce recovery time for students and staff managing long term conditions or fatigue, although having identified quiet times may support the wellbeing of students and colleagues.</p> <p>The introduction of an additional week post-exams for marking and feedback could have a positive effect as it could reduce pressure on disabled staff and unpaid carers who may require more time to manage their workload and personal commitments.</p>

		Fixing Easter/Spring break to the same 3 week period each year could have a positive effect as it would allow for better long term planning, which is helpful for disabled students and staff managing health needs or carers with set schedules.
Gender affirmation Including all non-binary and trans identities who do and do not undergo medical or other transitions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Positive <input type="checkbox"/> Negative <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	The proposed changes are not expected to have negative or positive impact on colleagues or students because of gender affirmation. However we will continue to monitor any effects and reassess sector wide trends.
Marriage & civil partnership Being married or in a civil partnership (relevant to employment only).	<input type="checkbox"/> Positive <input type="checkbox"/> Negative <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	The proposed changes are not expected to have a negative or positive impact on colleagues or students because of marriage and civil partnership. However will continue to monitor any effects and reassess the sector wide trends.
Pregnancy & maternity Being pregnant, having recently given birth, being on maternity leave or breast/chestfeeding.	<input type="checkbox"/> Positive <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Negative <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	The reduction of the Easter/Spring break to 3 weeks, combined with allowing academic units to use enrichment or reading weeks flexibly could negatively impact pregnant staff and students who rely on non-teaching periods for essential rest and recovery, although the two week quiet period may offer more chance to rest for these groups.
Race & ethnicity Majority and minority ethnic groups. Where relevant, nationality or national origins, and related factors such as culture or language.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Positive <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Negative <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<p>The reduction of the Easter/Spring break to 3 weeks may negatively affect students from a widening participation background who rely on the longer break to work additional hours and support their studies financially. However, this could have a positive impact on international students who are faced with long periods with no contact over the vacation period.</p> <p>Condensing international students welcome and starting induction and teaching one week later could have a positive effect on international students as more students would be on campus and could help foster a sense of belonging. Additionally, this would provide international students with more time to obtain visas ensuring they can begin courses on time without missing any teaching.</p> <p>The introduction of a 2-week quiet period during the Easter/Spring break could have a positive impact as these changes could provide colleagues with more research time as we know there is a gap in research with regards to race and ethnicity; these changes could provide more time for research activity and thus work towards reducing this gap.</p>
Religion or belief • Having/not having a religion.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Positive <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Negative <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral	Renaming the Christmas and Easter break to Winter and Spring break could have a positive impact as the non-religious terms makes the calendar more inclusive and sensitive to a diverse range of beliefs.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having/not having philosophical beliefs that apply to an important aspect of life. 	<input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	Fixing spring break to a consistent 3-week period could have a negative impact if it does not align with movable religious holidays leading to potential conflicts for observant students and staff.
Sex In UK law, female or male.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Positive <input type="checkbox"/> Negative <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<p>There may be a positive impact as these changes could provide colleagues with more research time during the 2 week quiet period and since there is a gender gap in carrying out research and applying for research grants, these changes could provide more time for being more research active and thus work towards reducing this gap.</p> <p>The proposed changes are not expected to have further negative or positive impact on colleagues or students because of sex but we will monitor this as part of the 6-month review.</p>
Sexual orientation A person's sexual attraction to other people, or lack thereof.	<input type="checkbox"/> Positive <input type="checkbox"/> Negative <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	The proposed changes are not expected to have a negative or positive impact on colleagues or students because of sexual orientation. However we will continue to monitor any effects and reassess the sector wide trends.
Other considerations Such as parental responsibilities, wellbeing, socio-economic background, or working pattern.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Positive <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Negative <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<p>Parental Responsibilities (negative and negative): Reducing the break to 3 weeks may pose challenges for parents who depend on longer breaks to manage childcare, particularly if school holidays don't align with the proposed 3- week period leading them to seek additional childcare. However, desk-based research indicates that the Spring break fully or partially aligns with school holidays in 4 out of the next 5 years. Some thought should be given to what could be done in 2029-30 where Easter does not map on to the proposed 3 week break. Students with parental responsibilities may appreciate the revision week after the Winter/Christmas break.</p> <p>The 2- week University quiet time during the Spring break could offer parents an opportunity to spend time with their families or take annual leave during their children's holidays.</p> <p>Wellbeing (positive and negative): Longer, structured teaching blocks with built in flexibility could help reduce stress by allowing students and colleagues the time to rest during intensive education blocks.</p> <p>Reducing the Spring break to three weeks could increase stress levels as students and staff have less non-teaching/resarch time, however the additional week of marking could ease pressure on staff who need more time to provide feedback and undertake the admin required to confirm results to students. Additionally, whilst the Spring break is proposed to be shortened, the additional measure of a '2 week quiet period' would allow staff to schedule downtime or research time as required. A fixed and predicable spring break offers staff and</p>

		<p>students stability as they can plan time off in advance, improving work-life balance and overall wellbeing.</p> <p>Allowing flexibility in the use of enrichment/reading week could negatively impact wellbeing if students perceive inequality, as some may not be granted this time by their academic unit, leading to feelings of unfairness or disadvantage compared to their peers.</p> <p>The proposed changes would introduce an extra week after the semester 2 assessment period for marking and feedback and to prepare results for module moderation/ Board of examiners. This could help to reduce stress on colleagues as they have longer to provide quality feedback. An additional week before the start of the next academic year before the start of the next academic year could enable research time, or preparation for the new semester outside of the school holiday period.</p> <p>Impact on socio-economic background (positive and negative): Students from a widening participation background may use the reading/ enrichment to work additional hours to support their studies, therefore if an academic unit decides to use the enrichment/revision week for teaching this would negatively impact the student. The latter can also be said for the shortening of the Spring break. However, a fixed and predictable Spring break offers stability allowing students to plan their time off in advance and therefore helps with predicting income.</p> <p>Impact on work patterns: Allowing academic units to make decisions locally, within the overall calendar framework, in a way that works best for the discipline, students and colleagues, will enable planned, productive and effective work patterns to be developed with fewer pressure points.</p>
<p>Intersectionality Characteristics in combination e.g. disability & race, age & pregnancy, sex & religion, more than one disability.</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Positive <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Negative <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown</p>	<p>The impact outlined above may interact with one another for example if a colleague is religious and also a parent/carer. The actions outlined below should reduce the negative impacts from an intersectional lens.</p> <p>Through the timeline of monitoring and altering this EA after 6 months and then 2 years, we will monitor how intersectionality relates to these changes and work to reduce any further negative impacts.</p>
<p>Conclusions Summarise your key findings below.</p>		
<p>The anticipated impact of the proposed changes to the University calendar has both positive and negative impacts across various groups. The key findings are laid out below:</p>		

Positive impacts

1. Disability and Unpaid Carers: Revision week, fewer exams and extended marking periods could reduce pressure on both staff and students offering a more manageable workload and would allow better long-term planning
2. Race & Ethnicity: The reduction of long holiday breaks may positively impact international students allowing more time to obtain visas prior to the start of teaching and help foster a sense of belonging during the year.
3. Religion or Belief: Renaming Christmas and Easter Breaks to Winter and Spring breaks promotes inclusivity for non-Christian faiths.
4. Sex: The introduction of a 'quiet' period' could allow more research time, potentially addressing research gaps related to sex and gender
5. Parental responsibilities: Fixed breaks allow academic units and parents to plan better, improving their ability to balance work and family life
6. Wellbeing: structured teaching blocks with built in flexibility tailored to the discipline could offer stability and clarity, reducing stress and improving work-life balance

Negative Impacts:

1. Disability & Unpaid Carers: Flexibility in the use of enrichment weeks (or lack of reading week) may negatively impact those managing chronic illnesses or with caregiving responsibilities.
2. Pregnancy & Maternity: Shortening the Spring break may limit rest and recovery time for pregnant staff and students.
3. Socio-economic background: students from a widening participation background may lose the opportunity to work additional hours during shorter breaks and flexible use of reading and enrichment weeks affecting their financial stability.
4. Religion or Belief: A fixed Spring break may clash with moveable religious holidays, creating conflicts for students and staff who observe them.
5. Parental Responsibilities: Reduced breaks may create challenges for parents who depend on longer periods of downtime to manage childcare.
6. Wellbeing: Perceived inequality in flexible use of enrichment/reading weeks may lead to feelings of unfairness among students which could in turn affect their mental health.

Decide how to proceed

How does your assessment suggest the proposal/policy/initiative should proceed? You can explain your answer in the box below.

Stop or postpone (e.g. in order to consider EDI implications in more depth).

Alter in order to address impacts (set out the actions required at Step 4).

Proceed as planned (if there are any negative impacts, you will need to be able to objectively justify this decision).

We recognise that there is no single solution that works for all members of our community, but the actions outlined below aim to counter some negative impacts highlighted to balance risk and improve the overall student and colleague experience. As such, we have elected to proceed with the proposal and submit it for a decision by EB and Senate. We understand that an EA is a living document and that issues across the institution and the HE sector more widely may emerge as time goes on and as the changes are put into place. We will therefore review this EA in 6 months and then 2 years' time to accommodate and address any unforeseen consequences which may arise as a result of the changes.

STEP 4 – PLAN ACTION

The assessment in Step 3 should inform **actions to be recorded below and included in Faculty, School or Central services plans**. For example:

- actions to mitigate negative implications or enable positive implications
- actions to fill gaps in available evidence
- actions to consult with colleagues or students

This action plan should also outline how and when you will *monitor impacts* during implementation and review this EA.

Actions	Due date	Assigned to	Managed by
Communicate with stakeholders that the changes to the calendar are intended to enable more flexibility within units to adapt to the needs of the discipline. For example, enrichment/reading weeks and revision weeks can be used flexibly and according to academic unit need. In Semester 1, teaching can be frontloaded to weeks 1 – 11 (eg before the winter break) and week 12 can be used as a revision week to give staff and students a week post-break to prepare/submit or process PECs/revise/research etc. Fieldtrips can take place over the Spring Break and include week 1 of Semester 2 if more time is needed etc.	Dec. 24	Lucy Backhurst/Deputy Dofos/ Faculties/ schools	Heads of Schools/ Deans of Education
Work with academic units to communicate changes that might be affected by internal deadlines such as encouraging the reduction in examinations/assessment where possible with PSRBs and appropriate to pedagogy and submitting resit papers at the same time as semester 2 exams	Nov/Dec	Angela McNeill	Heads of Schools/ Deans of Education
Develop a comprehensive communication plan regarding the academic calendar, especially those affecting start dates and the reduction of the Spring break to 3 weeks to ensure offer holders, students and colleagues have sufficient notice to plan accordingly.		Lucy Backhurst / Angela McNeill / Emma Reay	Education Deans
Review the fixed spring break to assess its alignment with the Easter school holidays, implementing adjustments where possible and feasible. Proposed mitigation for 2029-30 are included as (see appendix 1) in response to feedback from Directors of Research and NUParents, and insights gathered through consultation. This involves a tweak of the proposed model, but would address the legitimate concerns raised by colleagues.		Lucy Backhurst/ Angela McNeill	Lucy Backhurst/ Angela McNeill
Use the 6-month review to monitor any further impact on key groups such as those outlined above, colleagues engaged in research, sabbatical officers and liberation officers at NUSU and students. Ensure that stakeholders are part of the future development of this work and are consulted appropriately.		Lucy Backhurst	Lucy Backhurst /Heads of School/DDoFos

Liaise with the Faith and Spirituality colleagues alongside the University Chaplaincy and relevant sabbatical and liberation officers from NUSU to understand when Ramadan will take place in the coming years and how colleagues and students can best be supported during this time, particularly if it falls during a busier period as a result of the proposed changes to the calendar.		Lucy Backhurst	Lucy Backhurst/Sally Ingram/chaplaincy colleagues
Communicate with key stakeholders and line managers, including D/DoFOs the potential negative impact that could occur for colleagues, to enable them to work with schools to facilitate support as appropriate particularly for research colleagues, colleagues with parental responsibilities, those who are religious and/or have a disability		Lucy Backhurst/ Deputy DoFOs	Lucy Backhurst/ Deputy DoFOs

completed EAs to enable the sharing of good practice within the University. Would you be willing to share your completed EA?

Yes

No

If yes, once completed and approved please send a copy with accompanying documentation (e.g., the policy or proposal) to

The Equality Analysis should be presented at any decision-making or approval process about the proposal/policy//change in question.

For any queries or to request advice, contact: equality.analysis@newcastle.ac.uk

