

Block Scheduling: The Facts

Stacey Murray
Reporter

Over the past few months, there have been whispers of something that could change the lives of students forever: block scheduling. Nothing this drastic has been proposed since Island women got the vote in 1923.

However, most students know next to nothing about it. The common response tends to be "They're trying to screw up our schedules." So I went to the belly of the beast (otherwise known as the Registrar's office) to try to understand it myself.

The way the new system has been proposed, classes will be separated into blocks. The blocks themselves will each be three hours long: from 8:30 – 11:20, 11:30 – 2:20, 2:30 – 5:30 (as well as an evening block). So your classes could take place at any time in those sets of blocks.

Classes will still be fifty minutes long, but the times and days will vary, unlike our current schedule. For example, if you have a Math class in the 8:30 – 11:20 block, you could end up having an 8:30 Monday class, an 8:30 Tuesday class, and a 10:30 Thursday class. This schedule takes away the longer Tuesday and Thursday classes, and eliminates the need for a day between classes.

"What the proposed changes are meant to do," said Joanne MacVicar, Registration Supervisor. "Is manage the schedule so students can get access to more courses. With so many cross-discipline [students], there is a need for a timetable for all students." The schedule is meant to improve on the existing schedule which is tailored more towards department needs. It also ensures that labs don't overlap into multiple blocks, which cause problems in some current schedules.

But what do the departments have to say about the changes?

When speaking to the Chair of the Department of Biology Dr. Lawrence Hale, he commented that

the proposed schedule would cause "a serious inconsistency between lecture and lab [times]. Labs would be much later." Another concern he had was that the changes would make it difficult to schedule times for labs and grad supervision.

He does, on the other hand, see a need for change. "We are losing class space all the time. The renovated Duffy building has one class less than before, as does AVC. Class space needs to be a high priority."

Dr. Brent MacLaine, Chair of the Department of English, thinks that the plan will probably be a good idea and agrees with Dr. Hale that there is currently a scheduling problem with classrooms. He went on to say that "if it maximizes [the use of] good classroom space, then I'm all for it."

Joanne MacVicar also addressed the classroom problem and insisted the implementation of a new schedule would optimize classroom space. "We need to do something because we're losing three more classrooms this year."

The proposed model is currently in use at Queen's University.

"There needs to be more communication," said MacLaine. "I've heard little about it since it was proposed."

These changes are still in the discussion process and have yet to be approved. They are still unsure of whether they will go with this plan or another. "There's more than one possibility," adds MacVicar.

The proposed change doesn't appear to be that drastic in the scheme of things. It may just require students to pay a little closer attention to their schedules and in the end, if it improves class selection, then maybe it will all work out for the better.

At the earliest, changes would take effect in January 2007, although it seems more likely that it won't be in place until September 2007.

Democracy is a Two-Way Street: Gallant UPEI President Applauds Student Union For Their Efforts

Kimberley Johnston
A&E Editor



Last week's candidate's debate held at UPEI was a true exercise in democracy, says UPEI Student Union President Ryan Gallant.

Our student union president said that not only is the onus on candidates such as Shawn Murphy (LIB), Thomas DeBlois (CON), David Daughton (GRN), and Brian Pollard (NDP) to get their party platforms across to the populace, individuals must also take an active role in choosing a candidate who best reflects their respective points of view.

"It should be considered that it is the duty of both the candidates to engage themselves in the public sphere, but also for voters to get out there and get involved and informed," said Gallant.

He believes the debate, which was sponsored by *The Guardian*, and organized by the UPEISU, did just that. It offered the Charlottetown riding candidates a chance to get their points across, and a venue for the community-at-large to listen (Radio@UPEI broadcasted the event as well). Gallant was impressed by the amount of people who came to listen to the candidates, adding he was encouraged by the number of students who took an interest as well.

"You know, although some people may like to see some yelling and what-not, the key to a good debate is getting people engaged in the political process. I was impressed with the proportion of the crowd last night that were students, who, along with busy schedules, are attempting to get an idea of where the parties stand and of how they should vote."

UPEI President Wade MacLauchlan echoed Gallant's comments, saying good debates aren't always about who draws first blood.

"I was happy to serve as moderator (a better description than "mediator"). The format was well worked-out and the candidates were highly civil. Some might like to see more 'punches', but I think the event was informative in the right way. ... This was a good exercise. It was informative, in substantive terms and in terms of the character of the

candidates. And it was civil in the best democratic sense."

President MacLauchlan applauded the initiative taken by the Student Union in order to further inform the public and bringing their post-secondary education concerns to the forefront.

"The candidates' debate is a fine example of students, and notably the Student Union, taking a leadership role in organizing events of interest to the whole community and putting higher education issues on the public policy radar screen. Ryan Gallant and Shaun Coady are a very effective team, as organizers and as leaders."

Gallant said he was just happy to see it all come together...despite a few setbacks.

"It wasn't so much difficult to organize as it was a tedious process. A lot of things had to be in order to make sure it would be successful. I was more relieved than impressed that it actually went well. It was good to see everything come together as planned, and although there were a few glitches ... I think things went well."

He said Radio@UPEI proved themselves to be reliable... and the candidates were quite pleased to have a forum with which to share their ideas.

"The broadcast by Radio@UPEI, from what I hear, was very professional and successful. In talking with the candidates after, they were all happy to have had the opportunity to discuss these issues at length, something they had not been able to do up to this point in the campaign."

Gallant, a fourth-year Political Studies/History major, says he's not sure if he will vie for public office anytime soon.

"(Laugh) Well, I have always been interested in politics, and people have sort of expected me to become Prime Minister since about Grade 8, but no, as of yet, I have no plans to pursue public office."

Anyone interested in hearing what the candidates had to say and people's reaction can read the follow-up story in this edition of *The Cadre*.

CAREER INFORMATION SESSION -

What: A Career in Occupational Therapy:

Enter Through a MSc(OT) Degree

Where: ITEC Lecture Theatre, Robertson Library

When: Thursday, January 26, 2006

Two sessions: 11:00-12:15 p.m. & 3:00-4:30 p.m.

Who For: Those looking for a rewarding & well paying career

Presenter: Dr. Elizabeth Townsend, Director, School of Occupational Therapy, Dalhousie University

