

## Proposal to Change the Academic Calendar

**PURPOSE:** The proposal to add alternatives to the Academic Calendar is designed to better accommodate the variety of instructional modalities currently being employed by the University. Specifically, it aims to standardize the varieties of course terms from the many variations now being used; improve access for students; provide greater options for academic units; to facilitate online courses, particularly offerings in ASU Online; and provide better integration between online courses and the rest of university course offerings.

**STRATEGY:** The proposal ensures the continuation of the traditional 15-week academic semester but also adds options for two-7 ½ modules during Fall and Spring semesters, incorporating break periods during each semester and between both Summer Sessions. It further redefines the Summer Sessions as being two six week sessions (as opposed to the current 5-week sessions). It eliminates Winter Session. Calendar changes would go into effect in January 2012, with the start of the Spring 2012 semester. The proposed schedule is as follows:

- Fall term (15 week session and two 7 ½ week sessions)
- Spring term (15 week session and two 7 ½ week sessions)
- Summer term (with two 6 week sessions)

**RATIONALE:** Most academic units currently utilize some form of “Dynamic Scheduling” options, but they can cause irregular start and stop times that can undermine instructional consistency and student access, particularly in terms of online classes. Moreover, they tend to distort faculty workloads and make it difficult for academic units to create consistent schedules.

### **FACTS ABOUT THE PROPOSED CHANGES:**

1. The traditional semester will always be available for scheduling. The modified scheduling will be a unit choice.
2. Various alternative schedules already are used in some programs, the alternative scheduling being mostly used for online courses, but this is not absolute. Face to face and hybrid classes can utilize the alternative scheduling if the unit wishes.
3. There will be breaks between terms. These are not only useful for faculty, they are necessary administratively for various student record processes.
4. The use of alternative scheduling does not of necessity change the semester credits offered for a given class.
5. Regarding the elimination of Winter Session, units can certainly choose to schedule additional sections in the summer or may find that enrollment in summer classes is more robust, making those classes more profitable. Or their enrollment during Fall and Spring may increase. There is actually very little enrollment in winter session and none of the deans apparently thought this would be an issue. There are now three sessions in Fall and three in Spring, so there is

ample opportunity to offer whatever is now offered in Winter. Units will have one year to adjust to the new format.

6. With Winter Session eliminated, Spring Semester can start earlier, which adds benefit in many ways.
7. The proposed changes in no way impact the number of credit hours a student can take.
8. The proposed changes in no way impact contact hours involved in teaching. ABOR policy governs contact hours and ABOR policy will be observed.
9. The proposed changes in no way impact "Course Compression". Academic units address this now in their scheduling and will continue to do so if they choose to use shorter schedules.
10. Units may, but are not required to, participate in the shorter scheduling.

**ANALYSIS:** The proposed changes to the Academic Calendar greatly expand unit choices in a way that can be more effectively supported administratively. Academic units may modify course presentation and format without disruption or inconsistency. On the other hand, academic programs that require the traditional 15-week session (and faculty that may prefer them) can still do so. The overriding benefit will be to better provide for and integrate online instruction as a regular and predictable part of the curriculum of a unit and, in so doing, better serve students. While some things will be lost by eliminating Winter Session, the option is seriously underutilized to the point that maintaining it prevents the university from a much more orderly and efficient presentation of course offerings.

[FULL WORD DOCUMENT HERE](#)