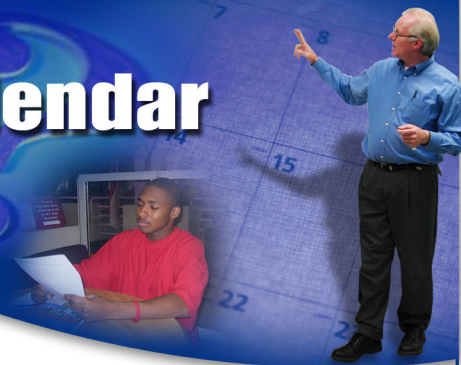


Q&A Exploring Mt. SAC's New Compressed Calendar



Beginning in the fall 2006, Mt. San Antonio College will transition to a new structure for the academic year. It's commonly called a "compressed calendar," because it features shorter semesters, retains the summer intersession, and adds a new winter intersession. This Q&A is designed to help you better understand the new structure and its benefits and how it affects you. If you have further questions, contact Admissions & Records (594-5611, ext. 4415), the Counseling Center (ext. 4380) or the Advising Center (ext. 4293).

Q1: How does this "compressed calendar" differ from the traditional academic year?

Primarily, the difference is this: the new calendar structure features shorter semesters and adds a new winter intersession. Under the traditional structure, both the fall and spring semesters were 18 weeks long, followed by two, 6-week summer sessions. Under the new compressed calendar, there will be a 16-week fall semester, a 6-week winter intersession, a 16-week spring semester, and a 6-week summer intersession.

Q2: When will classes begin and end for each term (session)?

For the 2006-07 academic year, the sequence and duration of the terms will be implemented as follows:

Fall 2006	August 28 – December 17 (16 weeks)
Winter 2007	January 8 – February 18 (6 weeks)
Spring 2007	February 26 – June 17 (16 weeks)
Summer 2007	June 25 – August 5 (6 weeks)

Q3: How long will this new structure be in effect?

While this is a permanent structure, the dates for the four-session calendar are subject to modification.

Q4: Why is Mt. SAC converting to this new structure? What's in it for me?

Because we believe it is in the best interest of our students and will promote student success. The compressed calendar enables students to fast-track their academic studies with shorter semesters and the addition of the winter intersession. The 16-week semester more closely aligns with many UC and CSU formats, facilitating the transition of transfer students. For faculty and administrators, the addition of "breaks" between semesters and intersessions will provide more time to process grades, complete prerequisite checking and generally bring closure to previous term activities before the start of the next academic term.

This major shift in academic calendar configuration is consistent with a growing trend among California community colleges—half of which have converted to compressed calendars.

Q5: Who was involved in the decision-making process?

Over a three-year period, a campuswide task force studied the feasibility of establishing a compressed calendar at Mt. SAC, evaluating the major benefits, drawbacks and challenges. As part of this comprehensive review, the task force explored a number of alternatives to the 16-week calendar, ultimately determining the 16-week configuration as the best fit for Mt. SAC. This calendar proposal was approved by the Academic Senate, the Faculty Association, the Associated Students, the President's Advisory Council, the Board of Trustees, and ultimately the Office of the Chancellor of California Community Colleges.

Q6: What are the "downsides"?

First, adjusting to the schedule changes may be difficult at first for students who are used to taking classes in certain time blocks. For example, some evening classes will start later, and that may be problematic for some. Also students will spend a little more time each week in classes than before. Second, the faculty and staff have worked hard to ensure that the admission, registration, records management, and student service delivery processes are adjusted to accommodate the new timelines. But as with all major process changes, adjustments may be necessary. All in all, we expect the new structure to yield more advantages than downsides.

Q7: Is this new structure like a quarter system?

No, the compressed calendar is different from the quarter system. Our neighbor over the hill, Cal Poly Pomona, operates on the quarter system, which has four equal terms (fall, winter, spring, summer) of 10 weeks each. Our new calendar will shorten our primary semesters from 18 weeks to 16 – not 10. And our winter and summer intersessions will last 6 weeks, just like our current summer session.

Q8: Will I have to take classes each term?

No. In order to maintain your continuing student status, you must attend both the fall and spring semesters. Attending the winter or summer intersession is optional, but by attending each term, it will give you the opportunity to accelerate your course of study, and possibly complete your program early. Please see a counselor or educational advisor to discuss your options.

Q9: Because the terms are shorter, does this mean I will be in classes longer?

Just slightly longer per week. During the semesters, your classes will meet for the same total number of hours they met before in the longer semester. For a 3-unit class, for example, you used to be scheduled for 3 hours a week in class. Under the shorter semester, however, you will be in that same class for 3 hours and 10 minutes a week.

One big difference you will notice is that some class times listed in the Schedule of Classes look shorter than they used to. This can be confusing unless you understand that we have changed how classes are scheduled. Under the 18-week semester, scheduled class time included the "passing time." So if you were in a class scheduled from 8:00 to 9:30, you were typically released at about 9:15 to allow you time to get to your next class. Under the new scheduling, the class times listed tell you exactly how long the class will last. For that same 8:00 class, it would be listed from 8:00 to 9:25, but you have to stay there until 9:25. To compensate for this, the next series of classes do not start until about 9:45.

Q10: What types of classes will be offered in the winter and summer intersessions?

Both intersessions will offer a wide variety of classes. Many general education and basic skills courses will be available. The more advanced courses for technical or business majors will usually be offered during the fall and spring semesters. However, some vocational programs will offer classes year-round for students enrolled in those programs.

Q11: Will there be class schedules published for the winter intersession?

Yes. A Schedule of Classes will be published for each of the four academic terms, including the winter intersession. However, the winter class schedule will be distributed only on campus initially and not door-to-door in neighboring communities as the fall, spring and summer schedules are. All schedules will continue to be posted online at www.mtsac.edu in advance of the printed version. For the 2006-07 academic year, the winter schedule will be available to you online around the week of October 23, while printed copies will arrive on campus around the week of October 27. That should give students plenty of time to plan for registration, which starts November 29 for both winter and spring sessions.

Q12: Is it true that there won't be a spring break?

Yes. In order to keep the end of the spring semester from spilling into July, the "traditional" 1-week spring break was eliminated from the spring schedule. On one hand this may be disappointing to some students, but on the other hand, those students who choose not to attend the winter intersession will have a 10-week break between the fall and spring terms. For example, during the 2006-07 year, the winter break between semesters will extend from December 18, 2006 through the end of February.

Those who attend the winter intersession will have a 3-week break between the end of fall semester and the beginning of the winter intersession. In addition, there is a

one-week break between the end of the winter intersession and the beginning of the spring semester (late February), as well as a one-week break between the end of the spring semester and the beginning of the summer session (late June). There is also a 3-week break between the end of the summer intersession and the beginning of the next academic year, fall 2007. So while students do lose a week in spring, they will have at least eight additional weeks of "off" time between the end of fall 2006 and the beginning of fall 2007.

Q13: Are fees/tuition for the shorter terms the same as those for the full semesters?

Yes. All fees remain the same from term to term unless there are changes imposed by the State of California. However, for the '07 winter intersession only, the Student Parking Fee and the Student Activity Fee are being waived.

Q14: How will this affect my financial aid?

Financial aid is tied to your status at Mt. SAC. To maintain your full-time student status during both the fall and spring semesters, you will still be required to carry 12 units each semester. The difference is with the winter intersession. Units carried during the winter will be counted as part of your spring semester enrollment in calculating your financial aid eligibility. For example, if you enroll in 3 units during the winter intersession, you would only need to carry 9 units during the spring semester to reach full-time status. For students receiving the Board of Governor's Waiver, the winter intersession will still be treated as a separate term. For more information, please visit our Financial Aid Office.

Q15: Will the new calendar change the maximum number of units in which I can enroll each term?

No. Students in "good academic standing" (2.0 GPA or higher) will still be able to enroll in a maximum of 18 units each semester; 7 units during each intersession. Full-time student status will continue to require a minimum enrollment of 12 units. To enroll in units beyond the maximum, please see a counselor.

Q16: Will library hours be affected by the new schedule?

The library will continue to be open during its regular hours during the fall and spring semesters; there will be no change in schedule. During the intersessions, the library hours will be limited, depending on funding. Specific hours will be posted and publicized on Mt. SAC's website and at the library. Please check with the Circulation or Reference desks in the library (extension 4260 or 4289).

Q17: Will Student Services offices and the Child Development Center still be open during the winter and summer intersessions?

Yes. All student services will continue to be provided during the winter and summer intersessions. The Child Development Center will also continue to provide child care services, and may admit the children of new student/parents during the two intersessions on a space-available basis.