

Shortened Academic Terms – Questions and Answers

Scheduling – Questions 1 & 2

How about the STEM classes that have a lab component, it is 6 hours a week now, it will be 12 hours a week with 2 labs each week. If divided into 2 classes, they will be stuffed with tough topics for 6 hours on that day. If divided to 4 days, how is it going to be for staffing? All adjuncts are teaching the modality of Mon Wed and Tues Thur, this will destroy their schedule in other colleges.

Response: Our classes meet at various times and varied durations. Coordinators will continue to identify adjuncts. We recently have moved to a year-round schedule. This would in fact help secure more adjuncts as they are aware of their schedules a year in advance and not semester by semester. It is unknown how this would disrupt their schedules at other colleges. In a hybrid modality, labs could be on ground and lectures online, shortening the time spent on ground. In seven-week classes you are not losing seat time. It's the same contact hours. Students would take 1 or 2 classes in the first seven weeks and 1 or 2 classes in the second seven weeks. Yes, they would have ample time for to address any homework.

Scheduling – Question 3

About a decade ago maybe, I think, the college made a much more minor change to class schedules, against the advice of most of the faculty and without really consulting students. It was kind of a disaster for adjuncts and students who relied on consistent scheduling, and the college switched back again after, I think, just one semester.

Response: I am not aware of the context or history surrounding this question. However, I do know that today, we have more tools and a solid data infrastructure. We are not designing academic schedules with a pencil. We are in a different place regarding how we conceive and implement initiatives. Overall, we are more sophisticated.

Scheduling Questions 4, 6, 7, and 8

Is the aim that students have the same credit load (12-15 credits full time), but it's split into 7-week terms? I don't think our students will have time to add more credits to their schedules with the classes being expedited. If the above is correct, then what are the benefits of a 7-week term?

Our goal is to provide options, where they could take two courses the first seven weeks and 2 courses the second seven weeks. Now that we see the tremendous impact summer enrollment has on persistence, we should encourage students who are able to catch up/get ahead in the summer if they cannot take 15 credits in fall/spring.

Would the classes still remain at 3 hours?

Response: Currently, if classes meet for three hours now, they will meet for the same time in the 7-week courses.

How many days would the classes meet per week and therefore how many days a week must faculty be present to teach a class?

Response: The meeting days of the week will depend on the number of contact hours. This is an instance where hybrid class format might be a benefit.

How many classes would a student take in a 7-week program? Would there be a limit?

Response: A student would take two classes in the first seven weeks and 2 classes in the second seven weeks. Possibly, they could take 3 to stay at 15 credits and/or depending on the classes. We have surveyed other schools and only 2 have a limit on credits in short terms.

Scheduling – Question 5

Where will the classes be held? This model would require every class to meet twice a week. I know there will be fewer classes per 7-week session but still could make on ground scheduling difficult. Would they be considering a hybrid model? Plus, there are classes that cannot break down this way like in ESL, that also needs to be factored in as far as classroom space goes.

Response: We have more than enough classrooms in the Center for Student Success.

Financial – Questions 9 and 10

How do we have students maintain their Pell grants? A colleague from CUNY told me that if a student is not signed up for at least one 15-week course, they are ineligible for Pell grants.

Response: The colleague is not sharing accurate information. This is 100% false. As long as the courses fall within the 15-week full semester, they are covered financially.

How do 7-week courses impact financial aid eligibility? Response: It does not impact them at all.

Accreditation and Assessment – Questions 11 and 13

It was stated previously that seven-week courses do not have all the information needed to maintain transfer and accreditation standards. How do we maintain our transfer partnerships and accreditations with four-year institutions and industry partners?

Response: Our transcripts list the course, grades, and credits. There is no way for a 4-year institution to determine the length of course or modality.

How do transfer institutions view 7-week courses, are credits equally recognized and respected?

Response: Again, transcripts do not show term length or modality. Montclair University has recently moved to shortened academic terms

Accreditation and Assessment – Questions 12 and 14

There are a few colleges that have promoted fast degrees at cheap prices and hence have devalued their reputation nationally.

Response: We are not a for profit institution. We do not have a practice or goal of promoting fast degrees at cheap price. Our programs are based on student and industry needs.

How will success or failure be measured? What are the benchmarks for continuing with the compressed schedule or reverting to the 15-week schedule?

Response: The metrics for success would not change. They continue to include: enrollment, completion, persistence, graduation rates, assessment of student learning outcomes.

Student Success and Feedback – Question 15

What becomes of our night classes? Students who take classes during the evening usually have a tight and busy schedule. One class doubles their workload. If they were taking two classes prior they now have to come to the College four times a week. For those who work full-time and perhaps have a family their schedule would become untenable.

Response: Again, we want to provide options for students. This may not be ideal for every student. This is where Hybrid is key – a student can attend two nights per week (1 night per course) on campus and complete the other work online.

Student Success and Feedback – Questions 16 and 23

After our Zoom workshop with ATD, I came away with some serious misgivings regarding the 7-week structure. The 7-week folks seemed to be co-opting the term “flexibility” in a way that did not apply to our students. The flexibility our students need (and I know this because I have been teaching them for years) is tied to their additional responsibilities - jobs, families, etc. We already have Quick Terms so the access part is covered. Faster momentum towards completion means a rapid pace, a heavier workload making time management skills essential, which is something our students seriously lack (sorry, but it’s true)! The stress and high pressure linked to this pace could/would mean falling behind. Credit recovery opportunities seem like code for, “Hey, don’t worry if you’re failing! You can just take another course 7-weeks from now! (Which, again, the College already offers.) Although as a side note: If the failed class is a major requirement chances are it will not be offered again until the next semester or the next school year. **Would this work for our students? Was this something our students would want?** The examples given during that day’s presentation featured rural colleges in North Carolina and Wisconsin. These students though were not our students. We are an inner-city school. Immediately afterwards I conducted an informal poll within my classes, and could not find a single student who thought this would be the right model for them. When I saw that once again the college was not inviting students to the latest workshop, I began to think it was because the administration did not want to know what our students think, because it was already a predetermined deal. Our students were getting 7-week semesters whether they wanted them or not! I have since conducted a second informal poll with my students. Since the administration doesn’t seem to want to hear from them, I will tell you what I have heard. They are almost unanimously NOT on-board. Here are some direct quotes from our students:

- “It sounds overwhelming.”
- “Time management is hard enough for me already.”
- “Burnout!”
- “Classes are already too long.”
- And from a student who took a 7-week course prior, “It was hell. Very, very difficult...”

- Reminder: We are here to serve our students' needs first (not to tell them what they need)! Shouldn't students be offered the opportunity to be heard on this matter, since students have other obligations as well as school? Shouldn't we know how this change would affect student's other obligations such as family and work?

Response: I agree 100% that the student voice is an important one. It has been determined that we need to strategize as a college, to learn and better understand Shortened Academic Terms, before we begin to engage students. As a part of today's agenda, we will devote time to Discussing our Communication Strategy. It's not productive to take informal polls. We will solicit and consider student feedback at the right time. Notably, we have 25 fully online programs and almost 200 Online courses that already run in this term length. Students already have similar options

Student Success and Feedback – Question 17

I am concerned about the removal or cutting down of course content that is required when converting a 15-week class to 7 weeks and the resulting lowering of academic standards and the quality of education that HCCC students will receive.

Response: We have data demonstrating students enrolled in accelerated course sections are achieving a higher Average Course Grade than those enrolled in 15-week sections.(6 week summer: 2.87), (7 week ONA/ONB:2.77); 15 week online: 2.62) and all (online courses: 2.74) Designing courses in a 7-week format is not a matter of “cutting down of course content – resulting in lowering of academic standards and quality”. In fact, we would risk our accreditation and federal aid in doing that based on credit hour requirements.

Designing courses in a 7-week format is about **effective instructional design**. Faculty don't need to learn to “teach differently”. Rather, the courses need to be redesigned so that the content and assessments are scaffolded appropriately across the accelerated time period. As we've proven with online learning – when courses are designed with the modality in mind, students can be successful. The same principle applies here in designing for the desired term length.

Student Success and Feedback – Questions 18, 19, and 24

A major concern for language learners is how the affective filter is raised as a result of a shortened term. Lowering the affective filter includes establishing a low-stress environment. In order to do so, it is advisable to avoid overcorrection and build in time for communicative/holistic practice. Without these, many learners are incapable of making progress. These can already be challenging tasks in a 15-week semester (and especially a 12-week Q term) that teaches towards a set of standardized tests. If the frequency of formal assessment increases, as it would have to in a condensed term, it would become impossible to foster a low-stress environment since instructors would need to correct as many errors as possible in one class time instead of scaffolding these errors over multiple class meetings. It has been proven that this is the space where negative washback occurs; when instructors and learners focus more on test preparation than on acquiring the language, learners often underperform and often give up. For language learners, a shortened term is not advisable. This a very thoughtful comment that makes me want to learn more. We may decide ESL is not appropriate for shorter terms. And again, students have options. Not every course/section is moving to shortened terms.

To what extent can students effectively learn and retain material in a condensed 7-week format compared to the traditional 15-week semester, and how might the shorter-term influence focus, motivation, and completion rates?

Response: Here, I refer back to our response in question #17 and the average course grades for online courses. I argue that motivation and focus is enhanced b/c students can see the end.

Will the 7-week course enable the students to master the material? I am teaching an accredited competency-based program and my students are required to complete many competencies. That necessitates longer time to learn, practice then to be observed for grading which is required by the accrediting body. Being said, the 7-week courses won't help to graduate qualified professionals ready for the competitive workplace.

This is an instance perhaps where 7-week terms may not be ideal for every student (ie Radiography and Nursing)

Student Success and Feedback – Questions 20, 21, and 22

Given the condensed schedule, what measures are in place to help students manage the accelerated workload and maintain strong academic performance without feeling overwhelmed?

Response: Students will continue to have access to all of the support services that they currently have: Advising, tutoring, library access, etc. We can increase our communication to them regarding services; progress reports and timely weekly grading/mid-term grades will also be helpful.

Are 7-week classes truly designed for student success, or are they primarily intended to accelerate degree completion statistics?

Response: It's much more than acceleration, its helping students complete on time by providing opportunities to take classes sooner if they encounter difficulty.

How do working students or those with family obligations manage the intense weekly workload of 7-week classes?

Response: Many of our students are currently enrolled in ONA and ONB, and Q Term. We want to provide an option that may be ideal for some. The same way they do with online courses currently.

Student Success and Feedback – Questions 25 and 26

How will this affect internships, clubs, etc? For courses that require experiential experiences outside of the classroom many of our students will see 7 weeks to complete the hours an obstacle. For students who have internships they have to complete 120 -135 hours at a site placement. 7 weeks will require them to work their internships as part time jobs and may hinder their ability to work and take other classes. 7 weeks can also be an obstacle for many classes that require different out of class experiences such as volunteering and attending various types of community events or groups.

Response: Additional exploration is needed regarding the impact of internships (not clubs). Those courses may not be ideal. We need to think more about this and research how other colleges address this.

For full-time students to complete 60 credits of coursework over 4 semesters, they would need to take 15 credits each semester. I have heard that because the coursework is so intensive, students should only take 1 or 2 courses at a time. If we suggest that students take 2 classes in the first 7

weeks and 2 classes in the second 7 weeks, this only allows them to take 12 credits each semester. How does this help students stay on track to graduate in 4 semesters?

Response: Students would take 2 courses the first seven weeks and two courses the second seven weeks. We would also encourage students who are able to enroll in summer terms, thus keeping them on track to finish. Students may also take 3 courses in a shortened term with proper advising; as we saw from our summer incentive, summer enrollment has a huge impact on retention.

Student Success and Feedback – Questions 27, 28, 29, and 30

The 7-week format forces everyone to learn at the same pace. How will this format work for students who need accommodations such as two extra days to complete assignments?

Response: Great question. As it relates to with our students who require accommodations, we will continue to support them and we will continue to ensure that we are supporting faculty with the necessary knowledge training and skills to support students.

Intense learning environments can produce information overload, which impacts retention. Is the goal now for instructors to simply cover information and not work towards competency of skills?

Response: No, it is not a goal now for instructors to simply cover information and not work towards competency of skills. Our goal is to always work towards competency of skills and assessment of student learning outcomes.

What is the outcome of an instructor or a student who is sick and misses two or three classes in a seven-week period? Are we to assume that a five and a half or six-week period of instruction learning is now sufficient?

Response: a benefit of shortened academic terms/7-week courses is that if a student is unsuccessful in the class they would have an opportunity to take the course the next seven weeks without waiting until the next semester.

How would the 7-week model affect students with varying needs; such as working adults and those who learn best at a slower pace?

Response: A 7-week format would actually help students. They would have less to focus on. They would not have to take 4 or 5 courses in a 15 week. Instead they could take one or two in the first seven weeks and one or two in the second seven weeks.

Student Success and Feedback – Question 31

In theory – and in my limited experience with teaching accelerated courses and taking them as a student myself - a 7-week course can offer an enhanced educational experience. Both students and instructors can experience a greater degree of focus and intensified study of a subject – which can feel very rewarding.

In my experience and from what I have read, this model and experience is more successful among students with highly developed skills and less complicated personal lives or demanding financial circumstances. In other words, although these types of (accelerated) classes have their positive aspects, they are not for everybody. They require a much quicker turnaround for assignments (two days instead of one week) and therefore demand that their students have greater skills in reading, writing, organization, and time management. Accelerated classes are

much less forgiving or accommodating to students who cannot meet these higher demands and tighter time requirements or for those who get sick or miss class, or those who discover they can't handle the level of course work after the 2nd week since the drop period is also accelerated to the first week. Also, accelerated vis-à-vis 15-week classes definitely require more (much more) "self-study" outside the classroom by the student. Many of my HCCC students work part- or full-time jobs and often can only get to their assignments during the weekend.

I am sure, none of us (faculty nor administration) want to set up students to fail or employ a one-size-fits-all model that favors and benefits those students who are already equipped to succeed but places those who cannot at a disadvantage. I also don't think any of us want to institute a model and system that inadvertently measures success by lowering standards or provides anything less than a high-quality education for our students

Response: Agreed, none of us want to institute a model and system that inadvertently measures success by lowering standards or provides anything less than a high-quality education for our students. Again, we are seeking to give students additional options. This model does not lower standards. We already teach many of our classes online (7 weeks) and in the summer (6 weeks).

Student Success and Feedback – Question 32

ATD sponsored colleges as well as on-line discussion boards have been unequivocal about the fact that 7-week/accelerated courses cannot cover all the materials and areas previously included in 15- or 16-week courses. Will this not compromise our stated mission as teachers and an institution to provide high-quality education? Response: ATD Response needed.

Mission/Incentives – Questions 33 and 37

A logic question. The last few years we have seen record graduation rates. This semester our enrollment numbers are on a serious upswing. Why blow things up? If it's not broken...

Response: I don't agree that we are blowing anything up. We want to provide options for students. We are leveraging the best practices that we already do. We are leaning into a practice that's firmly in place. For example, we had a record summer enrollment with...shorter terms.

If we are constantly breaking records for graduating classes, retention rate, enrollment rate, etc. why would we stop that progress and momentum? It seems to me that we are already achieving the dream.

Response: Let me remind everyone in the room that it is because of you that we are recognized nationally as an institution that is model of best practices for student success. We are always striving to stay ahead and better meet the needs of our students.

Institutions with a student success focus are never complacent in their work. Shortened Academic Terms is just another way we can give students options to help them minimize barriers and achieve their credential on time.

Mission/Incentives – Questions 34, 35, 36 and 38

In the age of technology and AI, we have a choice to promote our uniqueness of people over profit. If we shift away from this paradigm are we not contributing to the conveyor belt of

treating students as products rather than human beings who seek to interact, learn and grow in a more personal and meaningful way?

Response: The HCCC Mission is clear. We do not review our students as products and we never will. We focus on a Culture of Care. We enthusiastically uplift and celebrate our student's success and we proudly share their individual stories. Our students would not have coined the phrase: "Hudson Is Home" if they thought we viewed them as products.

Why can't we just have sound academic options that promote learning based on research rather than seeking fast flexibility that lacks depth and appreciation?

Response: Our goal is to constantly provide options that may be ideal for some students. The work pertaining to shortened academic terms and 7-week courses is based on sound academic research that you will learn about today. We all can agree that when thoughtfully designed none of our courses or terms lack depth or appreciation.

Why is the school considering this possibility? Shortened academic terms (7-week courses) are a student-centered scheduling strategy designed to reduce barriers to momentum and completion. By providing students with more enrollment options during the year and allowing them to focus on fewer classes at one time; these terms help students who juggle work, family, and other responsibilities to stay enrolled and accumulate credits. Scaling 7-week terms is one tool to improve momentum and outcomes.

What is our "why?" We want to provide options for our students, remove barriers, and persist, and complete on time.

Faculty Workload – Questions 39, 40, 41, and 42

I currently teach, and have for the last few years, 7-week courses and 5-week courses. Oftentimes concurrently, making the ending date of one course during the middle of another course, and so on and so forth for the 15-week semester. This makes processing final grades for one course in the middle point of another course. Therefore, I am often processing final exams and final grades every two weeks, and beginning the start of another course and preparing that material, trying to prioritize BOTH equally. Will this workload be taken into consideration with the implementation of more of these courses?

Response: This another good question. This is actually one of the reasons we want to move to shortened terms. It is not ideal for students to take a 15 week, 12, week, or 7 week sessions. Our President has been consistent: this model only works if a student can take only shortened terms and not in addition to full term classes. The same is true for faculty, so they may appreciate this.

How would the 7-week model affect faculty responsibilities, including workload, grading, feedback, and student engagement? Response: Faculty currently teach ONA and ONB? This would be managed the same way online courses, summer sessions, winter session, etc. are being managed currently.

If this requires faculty to be on campus more than three days how does that work with our PA Contract? Response: Hybrid classes would be instrumental in addressing this situation.

Will faculty and students lose their spring break in the middle of the semester? No. Montclair Univ and some other schools currently do this and they have a fall and a spring break.

College Structure and Other Concerns – Questions 43, 45, and 46

What operational and structural changes would be required to successfully implement the 7-week format, particularly in areas like course sequencing, lab scheduling, advising, financial aid, and overall program planning? Could offering 7-week courses or a flexible mix of 7- and 15-week options; broaden student access and improve overall success and retention? We already do all of this. we are already offering fully online programs/courses with a focus on advising, financial aid, course planning. We have mentioned previously, that the model of 7-week programs only works if a student can take only shortened terms and not in addition to full term classes.

Are advisors telling the students what a 7-week course consists of as opposed to 15-week courses, the difference? I teach a 7-week online course and this particular subject can work for some students. But some students do not do well and they are late with their assignments often because they cannot keep up with the material which is condensed. 7-week courses may work well for some students but not for all depending on their personal situations (work, family), maturity level, commitment to college, etc. Students who are enrolled in the early college program are enrolled in high school and college courses, and are the advisors for EC advising students of the difference. I have the experience where they did not advise the difference and the student was not successful in the 7-week English course. This is a good question and I'm sure we can do a better job of this. I will follow up with the appropriate colleague. We will also have a communication plan to ensure students know the difference between the various options.

What will be the effect on student advising, the registrar, coordinators, and others who have many processes to complete to create course schedules, staff them, enroll students, verify pre-reqs, enter grades, etc? We now have a full-year schedule published. I'm not sure how this will affect these processes, if at all. The registrar's office always works with a tight turnaround to verify pre-reqs and grades. This will not change.

College Structure and Other Concerns – Question 44

With our new basketball teams and future athletics programs, how will this impact athletes (scheduling, athletic eligibility, practice times, study halls, etc.)?

As we are restarting our Athletic Program. Please know that we will compliance, standards, and guidelines. As you know we recently hired a talented Athletic Director (John Sisk) and we all are confident that he will provide the appropriate guidance on all matters related to or student athletes.