

Green Paper: Academic Year Review

May 10, 2012

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AIR	Accelerated and Intensive Routes
AUQA	Australian Universities Quality Agency
DVC	Deputy Vice Chancellor
EAY	Extended Academic Year
GFC	Global Financial Crisis
GPA	Grade Point Average
NTEU	National Tertiary Education Union
PG	Post Graduate
QMS	Quality Management System
SES	Socio-economic Status
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TEQSA	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency
UAC	Universities Admissions Centre
UG	Undergraduate
USM	Unified Session Model
UWS	University of Western Sydney
VC	Vice Chancellor

Executive Summary

The University Executive commissioned a review of the academic year with the intention of moving to a trimester system. This paper considers the implementation of the trimester system in universities in Australia, the UK and the US. Four Australian case studies were examined in detail: Charles Sturt University, Deakin University, the University of Canberra and the University of New England. The Flowers Committee Enquiry into the Organization of the Academic Year in the UK was particularly instructive in recognizing the potential flexibility and choice for both students and staff in the context of greater institutional efficiency and effectiveness in resource management.

This report identifies the key advantages and disadvantages of the adoption of a trimester system and additionally considers the learning from the process of implementation in the Australian case study universities. Converting to a trimester system has been a tailored experience with some universities such as Bond, Canberra, Central Queensland, New England and Southern Cross Universities all running in full trimester mode while others such as Curtin and Western Australia are more selective in conducting their postgraduate business courses in that mode. Deakin runs all courses in trimester mode with the exception of the Medical School.

Some key advantages that have been identified by universities that have made the conversion are: the provision of accelerated pathways through degree programs; the opportunity for students to make up missed or failed subjects; better utilization of facilities and physical resources; improvement in the positioning of the diversity in the international student market-place; and, allowing students to have greater flexibility to combine their university work with periods of fulltime employment.

As with all systems change, there have been some disruptions to the 'normal' order of things and some potential disadvantages have been identified. One of the arguments that has been put forward against full implementation of a trimester system is the idea that undergraduate students would not be mature enough to cope with the intense rhythm of a trimester and they would not get enough time to read, reflect and absorb. Other arguments suggest that there would be: a very tight turnaround for the provision of examination results and enrollments between semesters; greater need for staff offices and facilities due to increased usage; and, an increased expense of maintaining university facilities because of constant use.

Regardless of the model that is implemented, it is important that sound assessment practices and sequential learning structures are maintained; that teaching periods allow sufficient time for depth in student learning and maturation; and, that academic staff research time and opportunities are protected especially in areas of excellence. Two key implementation issues are the critical importance of staff and students' consultation together with the need for detailed planning. Deakin University experienced serious problems with its implementation of the trimester model because of weaknesses in those areas resulting in major re-engineering of its original design and significant adverse publicity and reputational damage.

There would be internal and external risks to be managed by the University in moving to a three term academic year. In particular, there needs to be a sound understanding of the possible impacts of a trimester system on retention and completion as well the implication for student support services. The experience of Australian universities has clearly demonstrated the importance of an implementation that is properly worked through and includes detailed information and consultation with staff and students. However, with appropriate management of these issues and careful and considered configuration of the academic year, many advantages in terms of the optimization of student throughput, efficient uses of resources and flexibility for student pathways which are positive features of a trimester system would present UWS with significant opportunities at this time.

Ann Cheryl Armstrong
Director, Academic Year Review Project
May 10, 2012

DISCUSSING THE ACADEMIC YEAR REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Recently, higher education in Australia has been undergoing significant reform following the Bradley Review (Australian Government, 2008). These reforms have included: the removal of enrolment caps; student income support reforms; regional loading, international student visa review and a base funding review. The Australian government envisages that by 2025, 40% of 25 – 34 year olds will hold a Bachelor's degree, which represents a very significant increase in the number of young people accessing higher education. In the absence of additional base funding, deregulation of the higher education market and thus greater competition between universities have become the main drivers for increasing revenue. A critical consideration for higher education institutions is that of how to reduce costs and gain efficiencies through fuller utilization of resources without sacrificing quality and service. Some universities are investigating ways of exploring new revenue opportunities together with streamlining their business processes in order to improve efficiency, productivity and profitability while providing students with a more enriching learning experience.

According to the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), formerly known as Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA):

one important aspect of UWS's mission is the contribution the University can make to raising higher education participation rates in the region, which historically has had lower rates of participation than the national average. To this end, the University has informed the Commonwealth Government that it intends to increase Commonwealth-funded student numbers by 2.5 per cent per annum in the medium term. (2011, p.3)

At the University of Western Sydney (UWS), it is envisaged that this expansion will reflect a steady growth from 35,000 in 2011 to 45,000 by 2015 to 50,000 by 2020. The report also argues that the proposed expansion has revealed several issues that are of great relevance to the University if it is to deliver quality programs, namely:

- staff workload,
- the student-to-staff ratio, and
- reducing the variability of student experience.

This report presents the case for a trimester year and represents a major milestone in the move towards three academic terms. It contributes to the University's strategic planning activities in the context of the project objectives and provides a range of insights and recommendations to the Vice Chancellor and University Executive on matters relating to the project:

- Documentary analysis of reviews from other universities which have moved from semesters to trimesters and other systems in Australia, the UK and the USA.

- Discussion of options for extending the academic year through adoption of a trimester model at either an institution-wide or on a more selective basis.
- Identification of some business process re-engineering issues.

It is important to recognize that no system is inherently good or bad. What is important is having the broader discussion “of how proposed structural changes may impact on the core activities of the university (teaching, learning and research)” (Baldwin & McInnis, 2002, p.v).

The documentary analysis reveals that there are considerable opportunities for growth through moving to trimesters, particularly in the postgraduate market, and these should be explored further.

Case Studies of Universities Using Trimesters:

This report considers a number of case studies of the introduction of a trimester system at Australian universities. These include Charles Sturt University, Deakin University, University of Canberra, University of Newcastle and the University of New England. Two matrices have been provided with 2012/13 trimester dates for those universities that have implemented a trimester system:

- via a calendar year (Bond University, University of Canberra, University of Newcastle and University of Western Australia); and,
- via a non-calendar year (Central Queensland University, Charles Sturt University, Curtin University of Technology, Deakin University, Southern Cross University, and the University of New England).

In addition, the report draws on different experiences of the academic year in the UK and USA.

Trimesters: The experience of implementation

Two factors driving this process of change at the University of Western Sydney are perceived demand from students for greater flexibility in their study schedules and the desire to achieve greater efficiency in the use of expensive infrastructure. The critical internal implementation issue is that of developing a considered approach which fully involves the University's stakeholders, and in particular its students.

Australian Universities that have made the **conversion from semester to trimester** systems have argued that this allows the following **benefits**:

- Accelerated student pathways through degrees programs, saving valuable time for both undergraduate and postgraduate students who want to graduate sooner.
- Opportunities for students to make up missed or failed subjects in the next trimester rather than having to wait a whole year before re-takes.

- Restructuring the academic year could have positive implications for curriculum design and the quality in student learning.
- Greater flexibility in courses allowing students opportunities to alternate sessions of study and combine their university work with periods of full-time employment.
- Better utilization of facilities and physical resources, thus achieving greater efficiency in the use of expensive infrastructure.
- Enhanced access to inter-university exchange and credit transfer.
- More evenly distributed use of library and study facilities.
- Opportunities for staff to teach 4 out of 6 semesters in a 2 year period with the remaining 2 semesters available for focused research activity. This flexibility could create a planned extended period for research activity.
- More evenly spread out graduations thus providing a steady release of graduates into the employment market.
- Improved positioning in the international student market-place through better alignment of academic years between northern hemisphere countries and Australia. This would provide more opportunities for students to engage in international study and work integrated learning experience.

One concern that some academics express as systems change within universities is the perception of a negative impact on standards or the development of 'degree factories' with limited or uneven support services. While this may be true in some instances, it is by no means an inevitable outcome of trimesters. However, it does speak to the issue of managing effective implementation. When repositioning the University in the direction of trimesters, it is important to ensure that the quality of the teaching and support services remain high. An important consideration that is central to the success of such a transition is a targeted marketing strategy that focuses on sharpening, enhancing and maintaining brand value and awareness.

The following are some of the **disadvantages** that have been identified in various institutional implementations:

- There would be a very tight turn around for the provision of examination results and enrolments between trimesters.
- There would be a dramatic effect on the curricula and the way that subjects are taught.
- Universities cannot rent out residences and college facilities during the summer break for conferences or other purposes.
- Increased administrative burdens of registration, updating student records and selection of students for admission.
- Students would not get enough time to read, reflect, absorb and mature with negative consequences for student learning and academic outcomes.
- Increased expense of maintaining university facilities because of constant use.
- Greater need for staff offices and facilities due to increased usage as staff manage the spread out student load.
- Increase in administrative and maintenance staff due to year round operation.

Regardless of the model that is chosen or the structure that is used for accelerating or compressing the teaching periods, it is important that consideration be given to the following:

- sequential learning structures are maintained;
- teaching periods allow sufficient time for some depth in student learning and maturation;
- sound assessment practices are maintained;
- that high levels of social interaction are maintained as far as possible;
- there is rigorous monitoring of the effectiveness of intensive and accelerated programmes to 'regular' courses; and
- academic staff research time and opportunities are protected (especially in areas of excellence).

(Adapted from Baldwin and McInnis, 2002, p.vi)

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

This section of the report looks at the ways in which Universities in Australia, the UK and the USA have addressed the possibility of adopting a trimester system and some of the opportunities and challenges they have identified. The paper also considers how UWS is positioned to take advantage of opportunities for restructuring its academic year by learning from the experiences of other universities. In addition to documentary evidence on the design and implementation of a trimester system in different institutions, the paper also draws on the experience of key stakeholders and in particular the experience and responses of students.

Over the last 50 years growth in Australian Higher Education has been considerable, moving from 14 universities and accredited colleges with 80,000 students in 1964 to almost 50 universities and accredited colleges with 1.2 million students in 2011. By 2010, 17 universities had enrolments exceeding 30,000 students (Ruthven, 2011). This represents an increase of 15 times over a 47 year period. Postgraduate enrolments have been particularly strong, growing from 15% to 28% of total student enrolments. Double / Combined degrees at undergraduate level have also become very popular, accounting for approximately 13% of completions. This growth is mirrored in revenue growth in the sector where there has been a higher growth rate than in the Australian economy as a whole (Norton, 2012).

For most of this time, universities in Australia have offered their courses through a two semester system, generally running from early March to late November. More recently, some institutions have offered a trimester system, with others introducing summer schools from December to February and winter schools during June and July. As long ago as 1970, the advantages of a trimester system for Australian Universities were identified by Cochrane (1970) and later Richmond and Warren-Piper (1991). These included:

1. Accelerated speed of degrees, saving valuable time for students who want to graduate sooner.
2. Opportunities for making up missed or failed subjects in the next trimester rather than having to wait a whole year before re-takes.
3. Greater choice and flexibility for students.

However, in the report to the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee on Year-Round Teaching prepared by D. Cochrane, Professor of Economics at Monash University, disadvantages were also identified:

- Some academics might not think that their subjects were suitable for unitization.
- A trimester system may require a greater degree of modularization.
- Air-conditioning would have to be installed in the teaching rooms during summer and this would be an added expense.
- There would be a very tight turn around for the provision of examination results and enrolments.

- There would be a dramatic effect on the curricula and the way that subjects were taught. (Cochrane, 1970; Baldwin and McInnis, 2002)

When questioned about the economic implications of running year-round courses, he concluded that:

an increase of at least 15–20 per cent in annual enrolments would be required in most Australian universities to provide the social benefits needed to outweigh the net additional university costs that would arise as a result of teaching over a longer academic year. (Cochrane, 1970, p.20)

Moreover, Cochrane (1970) anticipated that academic staff would not be required to teach for longer than the current academic year.

Recently, higher education in Australia has been undergoing significant reform following the Bradley Review (Australian Government, 2008). These reforms have included: the removal of enrolment caps; student income support reforms; regional loading, international student visa review and a base funding review. The Australian government envisages that by 2025, 40% of 25 – 34 year olds will hold a Bachelor's degree, which represents a very significant increase in the number of young people accessing higher education. In the absence of additional base funding, deregulation of the higher education market and thus greater competition between universities have become the main drivers for increasing revenue. A critical consideration for higher education institutions is that of how to reduce costs and gain efficiencies through fuller utilization of resources without sacrificing quality and service. Some universities are investigating ways of exploring new revenue opportunities together with streamlining their business processes in order to improve efficiency, productivity and profitability while providing students with a more enriching learning experience.

In addition, universities are expanding their online educational capabilities, increasing the number of distance learning and multi-modal courses, improving the flexibility of internal courses as well as forging closer links with industry through work integrated learning.

While universities face some challenging scenarios, there are also many opportunities that might be pursued to improve efficiency and advance quality. One such opportunity would be to deliver undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in a shorter time frame through a trimester system.

There are several issues to contemplate when moving from a semester system to a trimester system. For example, some universities are exploring how implementing trimesters could lead to improvements in efficiency and growth in student revenues. Trimesters are appealing to Universities who now have to compete for more students in a deregulated environment. Furthermore, the international competitiveness of Australian universities might be enhanced as, at the moment, if a university operates under a semester system in Australia, international students from the northern hemisphere generally can't begin further study until the March following their

graduation in the previous June (Lebihan, 2011). However, amongst other considerations, caution might be appropriate, if Australia follows the way of Canada in linking funding to the retention of students and not merely access to higher education (Deloitte, 2011), in the absence of robust evaluative data on the impact of trimesters on graduate completion rates.

Post Graduate Students

Changes in government policy have certainly contributed to the growth in university enrollments. In addition, the slowing down in the economy during the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) resulted in many students remaining in education and training and as a result enrolment in post-graduate (PG) courses increased over the past 5 years. IBISWorld (2012) in their paper "University and Other Higher Education in Australia" argue that "...the master's degree by coursework has become the second most popular option after Bachelors degrees with enrolments up 15.5% in 2009" (p.8). In their analysis, they "expect the postgraduate market to grow faster than undergraduate student demand in the coming years. This is due to the significant numbers of older students wishing to update their qualifications or make a career change" (p. 11).

In order to support this anticipated growth, universities will probably need to consider expanding their "online educational capabilities, increase the number of external and multi-modal courses and improve the flexibility of internal courses" (IBISWorld, 2012, p.11). One possibility is to forge closer links with industries and companies.

International Students

The decline in international student numbers in Australia is due to several factors including:

- The strength of the Australian Dollar and students' perception that they would receive better deals from universities in the US or the UK together with more aggressive marketing from our international competitors in the US, UK and the Asia Pacific region. Some universities in the region (e.g. Singapore) have promoted themselves as hubs for quality higher education in the Asian Region;
- Concerns over the attacks on international students in 2009 followed closely by a decline in the Indian market which is the second largest for universities in Australia after China;
- Changes to the immigration policy in Australia that is now being revised to revitalize the industry and support the applications of genuine international students.

In recognition of the decline in international student numbers, the government has accepted the majority of the recommendations of the Strategic Review of the Student Visa Program Report (Knight, 2011). These include:

- Reducing the financial requirement for international students entering the country;

- Allowing 2 – 4 years access to post-study work visas depending on the level of qualifications for all university graduates.

It is anticipated that these strategies will reduce the barriers to studying in Australia and increase the demand from international students. We need to consider what is the value-add that we have to offer to international students at UWS.

Extending the Academic Year at UWS

Calendars change as situations change. There are examples of variations in the calendar system in many universities from those who advertise a semester system but have summer and/or winter schools to those who offer courses on a quarterly system.

UWS, with its distinctive mission, is at the crossroads in its growth and development. The University's founding Act of Parliament directs it to 'have particular regard to the needs and aspirations of residents of Greater Western Sydney', and this is reflected in its mission and other aspects of its Strategic Plan. The University of Western Sydney began operating as a single multi-campus university in 2001 and has been providing higher education opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds since then.

UWS has been commended for the focus it shows on advancing its mission by the former Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) who recognized that:

There is no doubt that UWS does have a significant impact on the region, through its education and training programs, research, community engagement activities of many types, and as one of the region's largest employers. UWS is leading the way in developing programs for engagement with an urban region with areas of low socio-economic status (SES). UWS clearly remains a 'university of the people', as it was described in AUQA's 2007 Audit Report. (TEQSA, 2011, p.3)

The Vice Chancellor in a recent address reiterated the mission of UWS by stating that she "...believes strongly that everyone with the passion and drive to succeed should have the chance to go to university".

The University is currently reviewing its strategic directions in response to the 'demand-driven' higher education policy environment and investigating ways by which it can provide improved quality service and opportunities for the anticipated growth in the student body.

The UWS student profile shows:

- The University has the largest number of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds of any university in Australia;
- 70 per cent of students are from Western Sydney;
- 16 per cent of UWS students come through the Vocation Education and Training system;

- 33 per cent are over the age of 25;
- 6.4 per cent are from non-English speaking backgrounds, representing 150 different nationalities, compared to 3.6 per cent across the sector; and,
- Many of our registered fulltime undergraduate students are in paid employment because of their economic circumstances. This creates added risk of disengagement and non-completion.

According to TEQSA (2011):

[O]ne important aspect of UWS's mission is the contribution the University can make to raising higher education participation rates in the region, which historically has had lower rates of participation than the national average. To this end, the University has informed the Commonwealth Government that it intends to increase Commonwealth-funded student numbers by 2.5 per cent per annum in the medium term. (p.3)

At UWS, it is envisaged that this expansion will reflect a steady growth from 35,000 in 2011 to 45,000 by 2015 to 50,000 by 2020. The report also argues that the proposed expansion has revealed several issues that are of great relevance to the University if it is to deliver quality programs viz:

- Staff workload,
- The student-to-staff ratio, and
- Reducing the variability of student experience.

With regard to its planned expansion, the University has implemented the following strategies where they have:

- Developed a new set of workload principles and agreements.
- Been very strategic in its approach to hiring full-time academic staff to support the recent increase in student enrolment as well as the planned future growth.
- Paid special attention to the quality of academic programs through an extensive quality management system (QMS) focused on numerous surveys of student and graduate satisfaction and have displayed adequate responsiveness to qualitative feedback.

Another strategy that the University is contemplating is the implementation of an extended academic year focusing on the strategic expansion of the capacity of the University through more efficient utilization of the existing infrastructure and resources without commitment to major capital expenditure.

UNIVERSITIES IN AUSTRALIA

Comparing Australian University Trimester Schedules

Table 1 under presents the basic number of weeks per semester for each of 10 **universities that operate some form of a trimester system** in Australia.

Table 1:

Australian Universities Trimester Schedule 2012/2013				
University	No. Weeks/Trimester			Total Weeks/Year
	Trimester 1	Trimester 2	Trimester 3	
Bond University	15	15	15	45
Central Queensland University	14	14	14	42
Charles Sturt University	15	15	13	43
Curtin University of Technology	16	16	13	45
Deakin University	14	14	14	42
Southern Cross University	14	14	15	43
University of Canberra	17	9	17	43
University of Newcastle	14	14	14	42
University of New England	15	13	13	41
University of Western Australia	14	13	13	40

NOTE: No of weeks per semester/year includes orientation, classes and examination periods but excludes the mid-semester breaks

Appendices A and B outline the timetables of universities that operate **some form of a trimester system** in Australia. The extended tables provide details regarding dates of 2012 trimesters, the number of weeks/days of trimesters, study weeks and examination periods as they work through:

- A calendar year (**See Appendix A**) ; and
- A non-calendar academic year beginning January/February and ending in February/March or the following year (**See Appendix B**).

The total number of weeks in the academic year varies from 40 weeks (Western Australia) to 45 weeks (Bond & Curtin).

Calendar Year or Non-Calendar Year

Australian universities adopting the trimester system operate the system in one of two ways: either over the calendar year or over a non-calendar. The following is an overview of how the different universities operate their academic year:

Universities Operating the Trimester System over a Calendar Year

See **Appendix A** for details of their calendar year.

- **Bond University:** Bond University is located on the Gold Coast of Queensland and is Australia's first private, not-for-profit university. It is located on a single campus. The University began teaching in May 1989 with a student population of 322. The difference between Bond and other Australian universities is that since its inception it advertised and implemented a trimester system with three teaching terms of equal length commencing in January, May and September. There have never been any issues related to conversion from semesters to trimesters and in fact Bond sees their system of trimesters as part of their attractiveness. Bond schedules three semesters each year, commencing in January, May and September, allowing a six-semester degree to be completed in two years, instead of three, without increasing semester workloads.

Bond consists of 4 Academic Faculties and 1 Institute, namely:

- Faculty of Business
 - Faculty of Health Sciences & Medicine
 - Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences
 - Faculty of Law
 - Institute of Sustainable Development & Architecture
- **University of Canberra:** The University of Canberra is explained in detail as a case study. See page 31.
 - **University of Newcastle:** The University of Newcastle comprises 4 campuses in Australia and 1 in Singapore. **Only the Business school runs in trimester mode.** Intakes (for 2012) for students studying within the trimester system were scheduled for January, May and September, with an early intake planned for Trimester 2. This, combined with the two intakes scheduled for students studying under the traditional semester system, results in the university operating 6 intakes over the course of the year. Examinations for trimester three will be completed in the first week of December.
 - **University of Western Australia:** The University of Western Australia (UWA) is the oldest university in the state of Western Australia and the only university in the state to be a member of the Group of Eight which is a coalition of leading Australian tertiary institutions, intensive in research and comprehensive in general and professional education. It is located on a single campus and began teaching students in 1913.

The University consists of nine faculties:

- Architecture, Landscape and Visual Arts

- Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
- Business (Business School)
- Education
- Engineering, Computing and Mathematics
- Law
- Life and Physical Sciences
- Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences
- Natural and Agricultural Sciences

The trimester system is limited to the Master of Business Administration (MBA) program offered by its Business School and the Master of Pharmacy. The MBA and MBA (Advanced) are taught within a trimester system of 12 weeks of teaching. The different terms commence in January, May and September each year. The **Master of Pharmacy** provides two years (six trimesters) of full-time intensive instruction in the areas of:

- Pharmacy practice
- Clinical pharmacy
- Pharmaceutics
- Medicinal chemistry
- Biomedicine and population health
- Research

It also includes clinical placements in a community and hospital pharmacy.

Universities Operating the Trimester System over a Non-Calendar Year

See **Appendix B** for details of their non-calendar year.

The following lists the different universities operating a trimester system where the academic year *does not* align with a calendar year:

- **Central Queensland University (CQU)** is an Australian public university with six campuses in regional Queensland. Its main campus is in North Rockhampton with other campuses in Bundaberg, Emerald, Gladstone, Mackay and Noosa. The university also maintains international campuses at other locations on the east coast of Australia (Brisbane, Gold Coast, Sydney, and Melbourne) and in Fiji (Suva) and also conducts teaching programs in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia. It was envisaged that in 2012, some of these metropolitan campuses will also offer degrees to domestic students. At **CQU** all courses are run in trimester mode at the university's two faculties:
 - Arts, Business, Informatics & Education, and
 - Sciences, Engineering and Health.

- **Charles Sturt University:** 12 study locations in Australia and 1 campus in Ontario, Canada. **Not a uniform trimester schedule** but a close match to it for all courses. Charles Sturt University is explained in greater detail as a case study. See page 20.
- **Curtin University of Technology** is based in Western Australia. Its main campus is at Bentley where the majority of courses are offered. Other Campuses in Western Australia offer the following opportunities:
 - Kalgoorlie Western Australian School of Mines
 - Margaret River Viticulture and oenology
 - Northam (Muresk) Agribusiness, biosciences, environmental biology
 - Perth Postgraduate Business courses
 - Shenton Park Four Health research institutes

This university also has campuses in Sydney, Malaysia and Singapore. In addition, the university offers select courses in humanities and business through regional centres including Albany, Armidale, Esperance, Geraldton, Karratha, Midland and Port Hedland.

Only the postgraduate Business courses are run in trimester mode at the main campus in Bentley. This is not a uniform trimester system but a 2-semester system and a third summer session.

- **Deakin University:** 4 campuses. **All courses run in trimester mode, except the Medical School.** Deakin University is explained in greater detail as a case study. See page 24.
- **Southern Cross University (SCU)** is a regional university and Australia's seventh-largest provider of distance education. It is located on the east coast of Australia on the North and Mid North Coast of New South Wales. The University has three campuses, in the cities of Lismore (Site of its main campus), Coffs Harbour and Tweed Heads. A new campus at the southern end of the Gold Coast will open in early 2010.

Southern Cross University offers courses in arts, education, social sciences, business, tourism, law, health, indigenous studies, and environmental science. It will offer civil engineering in 2013.

All courses run in trimester mode.

- **University of New England:** 1 campus in Australia with eight regional study centres equipped with information technology infrastructure. All courses run in trimester mode. The University of New England is explained in greater detail as a case study. See page 34.

Summer/Winter Programs

In addition to the universities listed above that operate a true trimester system, there are a number of universities which might be viewed as operating a quasi trimester system by offering a substantial academic program over the summer and/or winter break. The summer session or summer semester as it is sometimes called is an important addition to the academic calendar at these universities. Some run a semester system with summer and winter schools while other universities run a trimester system with summer schools only. The following is a snapshot of the differing lengths in teaching weeks of the summer sessions offered by Australian Universities in 2007.

Table 2:

Differing Length of Summer Sessions Offered by Universities in October 2007	
University	No. of Teaching Weeks
Deakin University	8
Edith Cowan University	9
Murdoch University	6
Queensland University of Technology	12
University of New South Wales	12
University of the Sunshine Coast	10
University of Tasmania	8

Marketing Summer / Winter Programs

Some universities in Australia such as Macquarie University, The University of Adelaide, The University of Sydney and Victoria University have not moved to a full trimester system but have offered students access to extra units over the summer and winter periods and market these periods using similar arguments to those used for conversion to trimesters. Following provides a synopsis of some of the marketing strategies and language used by each of these universities:

- **Macquarie University:** Macquarie University captions and promotes its summer program as "Session 3", publicizing how the program can help students to fast-track their degree and graduate earlier, catch up units, or reduce their workload for the next year.

The program is described in promotional material as "intensive". Beginning early January, the program runs for seven weeks which includes six weeks of teaching and one week of examinations. Students may take a maximum of two "Session 3" units at once. The program is touted as an opportunity for students to accelerate their studies by taking one or two units during summer. Units offered in Session 3 have "identical learning outcomes, means of assessment and prerequisite structures" as their equivalents offered at other times of the academic year. Units are delivered using online or group sessions, as well as face-to-face teaching.

The advertising copy further extols:

The summer months are a great time to enjoy the campus and make the most of the University facilities. The library, study skills support team, food and beverages facilities, disability support services, English language help, mentoring and other student services will be available.

- **The University of Adelaide:** The University of Adelaide offers a Summer and a Winter school targeted at both existing students and the public. A range of intensive credit-bearing undergraduate and postgraduate courses are offered during the semester breaks. Their promotional material cites the following benefits for participants:
 - Accelerate your study
 - Catch up on missed subjects
 - Spread your study load over the whole year
 - Broaden your educational experiences
 - Spend a summer in Australia studying at world-class institution
 - Build upon practical experience
 - Get ahead of peers in the workplace
 - Enjoy learning in an intensive mode course structure
 - Learn for personal interest
- **The University of Sydney:** The University of Sydney offers a Summer and a Winter school. The Summer School is offered over three sessions from December to February and the Winter School in July. The programs are advertised as "intensive" and it is claimed that the University of Sydney's "academic excellence attracts students from around the world" to take part. Publicity material describes how students can accelerate their program, catch up a failed subject, balance their timetable or study subjects outside their current program. In addition to current students, the programs are also targeted at recent high school graduates who "can enrol in first year subjects".
- **Victoria University:** Victoria University offers a Summer and a Winter school so that students can undertake elective units during the two main semester breaks. Units are offered at undergraduate and postgraduate level from various schools within the Faculty.

AUSTRALIAN CASE STUDIES

Four case studies are presented of Australian universities that have transitioned to a trimester system: Charles Sturt University, Deakin University, the University of Canberra and the University of New England. They provide insights and points for consideration as UWS moves towards a system of three academic terms.

Case Study 1: Charles Sturt University

Charles Sturt University (CSU) is a multi-campus, inland university in New South Wales, Australia. It is the largest provider of distance education in the country and has five main campuses (Bathurst, Wagga Wagga, Albury-Wodonga, Orange and Dubbo), as well as four specialist centres and study centres in the main cities such as Melbourne and Sydney. There is also a campus in Ontario, Canada, as well as links with international partner institutions in China, Malaysia and the UK. CSU has approximately 32,000 students, two-thirds of whom are enrolled as distance education students. CSU is responding to changes in the broader higher education environment (Charles Sturt University, 2006) and is currently undergoing significant and transformative change (Andrews, 2008). Amongst the many other initiatives was a restructuring of the faculties and supporting Divisions (Buchan, 2010).

The Unified Session Model (USM) project is the name given to the project of implementing trimesters at Charles Sturt University (CSU) which commenced in 2007. The following are issues raised in the USM Steering Committee Report to Academic Senate and Senior Executive Committee (Walker & Mackinnon, 2008).

Charles Sturt University introduced changes to a trimester-based teaching system using a non-calendar academic year in 2010. Their trimesters for 2012 are as follows:

- **Trimester 1** runs from 20 February 2012 to 15 June 2012
- **Trimester 2** runs from 9 July 2012 to 26 October 2012
- **Trimester 3** runs from 12 November, 2012 to 15 February, 2013

See **Appendix B** for greater detail.

A number of discussion papers and reports were released to staff and students and feedback sought. The university recognized that staff and student involvement and feedback was essential to the development of the trimester model and set up a website for keeping them informed of its development.

The arguments put forward for support of the USM (Charles Sturt University, 2012) are:

- The calendar provides three sessions of study and is designed to help students manage the pace of study in their selected course. In some cases it may also allow students to fast track their studies.

- This is about giving all students' greater choice and flexibility over time and pace of study.
- The current semester timetable with summer sessions in between is complicated to manage, inflexible for students and expensive to administer.
- Improvement in academic staff to student ratios.
- Reduction in the number of subjects taught.
- Changes to course architecture.
- Consolidation of the discipline profile of the university.
- The provision, for academic staff, of a minimum time free from teaching related duties (the equivalent of 10 weeks per annum was suggested).

The potential benefits of the USM specific to learning and teaching identified by the Taskforce include:

- It provides a stimulus to reconsider taken for granted assumptions about student learning.
- There is potentially more flexibility for students to balance work/life.
- The longer summer break will create more opportunities for students to engage in international study and work integrated learning experience.
- With appropriate course design and expectations of students, the summer work opportunity has the potential to encourage internal students to concentrate their semester time on study and university life.

The Taskforce admitted that the process of consultation was running later than scheduled. The options were to either delay the implementation of the process as a whole and implement it across the university at a later stage or start implementation at the original scheduled date with phased out implementation, which means faculty wise or course wise. However, they expressed a commitment that the university would ensure that the quality of students' education and their teaching and learning outcomes would be maintained with contact hours meeting the same quality standard for academic preparation and professional accreditation.

The following key issues were identified with the new trimester system:

- Infrastructure constraints.
- Staffing constraints.
- The majority of distance trimester students see it as a disadvantage.
- Timetabling resources required to enable optimal use of laboratories.
- Practicum placements would have to be rescheduled. Concerns that this might affect particular disciplines more than others, namely: Pharmacy, Medical Imaging, Nutrition and Dietetics, Nursing, Podiatry.
- Timeline for implementation may be too short so the process could be rushed.
- Operations and administration issues.
- Risk factors or unknowns that could occur during the implementation and could delay the process of converting to trimesters. The potential risks and concerns identified were:

- Shorter subject delivery periods and reduced inter-session breaks may increase pressure on students at risk and lead to a higher failure rate.
- Adequate resourcing is required to support the implementation of changes to learning and teaching to maximise the advantages of the trimester system.
- The loss of a week between the two major sessions may reduce the opportunity for academics to reflect and to redevelop material that in turn impacts on the quality of the student learning experience.
- The compression of the mid-session break to 1 week for those courses (principally science) that have residential school and practicum placement to reorganize. Contingency options were identified and discussed. It was suggested that the most realistic approach for an initial introduction of a USM calendar was the adoption of a 2 week fixed time residential school period at least for the Wagga Wagga campus where the demands for residential schools were unlikely to be met with the available infrastructure for laboratories and student accommodation. Other constraints included the risk that a lack of experience with alternative proposed approaches to subject delivery such as blended or integrated internal and distance teaching would render this a dangerous approach to adopt at least in the initial term. This implies the necessary compression of internal class timetables from 13 to 12 weeks to create a 12 + 2 (internal + distance) teaching session timetable.

The Taskforce made the following observations:

- The concept of a fast track degree program requires both acceptance and recognition by employers, the community, professional accreditation bodies and quality assurance agencies. A reputational risk may exist if a three-year degree offered in a fast track two-year format was to be perceived to be at two-year course and hence sub-degree level.
- The university did not have access to robust market information that would assist it in predicting student response to the proposed system.
- The successful implementation of the USM would rely on the University's willingness and capability to pursue innovative approaches to teaching and learning and the achievement of efficiencies in key academic administration systems and processes.
- For optimum use of the third semester and of the facilities of the university in that period, the faculties would need to offer a better mix of critical core courses and popular electives.
- Many studies of the short-term outcomes of intensive courses provide strong evidence that these courses yield equivalent – and sometimes superior – results in comparison with traditional-length courses.
- It has been suggested that accelerated programs will principally attract and benefit highly motivated, older students with an instrumental view of education related to career advancement.
- The potential benefits of a trimester system need to be tested against key principles for effective undergraduate teaching and learning, moderated by the judgment of academics in the discipline, for example:

- The curriculum should be designed to develop knowledge, skills and understandings in a sequential, cumulative and coherent fashion;
- The design of the academic calendar should support sound assessment practices;
- Where social interaction is considered an important part of a learning experience, this is equally supported in all teaching periods;
- Where cohort information is seen as a valuable aspect of the student learning experience, this is supported by administrative structures and arrangements; and,
- It is essential that calendar reforms are compatible with, and support, improvements to the quality of learning and teaching.

The five key areas that were identified as needing further work and analysis in assessing the feasibility of the new system were:

- Partnership and offshore academic calendar arrangements;
- Course and subject availability listing;
- Managing compressed inter-session breaks;
- Blending on-campus and flexible (distance) learning; and,
- Residential schools, practicums, and laboratory based teaching.

Case Study 2: Deakin University

Deakin University is a public university named after the nation's second Prime Minister, Alfred Deakin. There are approximately 30,000 higher education students studying at five campuses: two in Melbourne, two in Geelong and one in Warrnambool in the state of Victoria. In addition to traditional campus-based teaching at these locations, Deakin also provides flexible learning options.

In 2008 Deakin transitioned to a trimester-based teaching calendar. In that year, Deakin accepted enrolments in four teaching periods (summer semester, Trimesters 1, Trimester 2 and Trimester 3). As a result of concerns regarding the trimester system when it was first introduced, the system was revised and now the trimester 3 teaching period is the same length as trimesters 1 and 2, and there is a greater selection of units available in trimester 3.

Trimester dates for 2012 are as follows:

- **Trimester 1** runs from 5 March 2012 to 15 June 2012 (teaching period ends 1 June 2012)
- **Trimester 2** runs from 9 July 2012 to 19 October 2012 (teaching period ends 5 October 2012)
- **Trimester 3** runs from 12 November, 2012 to 22 February, 2013 (teaching period ends 8 February 2013)

See **Appendix B** for greater detail.

As a university, Deakin has been described as having a strongly competitive culture and is operating in the crowded market of metropolitan Melbourne. They lack the status of Melbourne and Monash but have nevertheless grown very rapidly in their Melbourne market (less so at Geelong) by being more accessible and flexible, offering a comprehensive range and more pathways and online options and by investing substantially in marketing. One of those flexibilities that has given them an edge is allowing students to finish more quickly or spread their load over the full year by having genuine options for doing three trimesters. Deakin's moved from two 13 week semesters and a 10 week summer session to trimesters of 12 weeks each.

The previous VC, Sally Walker, initially implemented trimesters as a trial. Although the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) was opposed to the change, the new VC, Jane den Hollander has continued with that model because of its perceived business benefits. According to The Australian newspaper, the VC at Deakin believes that having trimesters better fits with the needs of modern students (Trounson, 2011b).

On their website Deakin listed the advantages of trimesters in the following way.

The trimester system will:

- Provide students greater flexibility to plan study around work or lifestyle commitments;
- Create options for students to commence a degree sooner or at a more convenient time of the year;
- Enable students to fast track study by taking extra units throughout the year;
- Allow students to take a trimester off to work or travel then catch up later;
- Enable students to study in any combination of trimesters (subject to availability of units); and
- Also offers staff more flexibility in allocation of teaching load.

The trimester system is pitched to future students using the following marketing copy:

- You can commence certain Deakin courses in any of the three trimesters providing added flexibility.
- You could fast-track your degree by studying in three trimesters per year and complete a three year bachelor degree in two calendar years.
- You could choose to study in Trimesters 1 and 3 and use Trimester 2 to travel to Europe in the northern hemisphere summer or to go skiing in Australia
- You could choose to study less than four units per trimester over three trimesters, reducing your workload and potentially allowing more time for part-time work.
- You could use Trimester 3 to catch up on units disrupted by illness or other events.

Feedback from one former employee of Deakin interviewed as part of the UWS project suggested that in terms of challenges, their observation was that aligning other university processes so that they fully reflect the trimester system, is not fully complete. For example, they don't seem to have a mid year intake or course transfers mid year so students who would like to take a reduced load in order to work and/or study or, in order to ensure they have a sufficient GPA to upgrade to another course will often find themselves missing the deadlines for these processes. This is pretty much the same phenomenon that happens for students who commence mid year and find themselves out of sync, but similarly the same solutions can be applied for implementing trimesters.

Overall, having a trimester system is a student friendly option but subject offerings need to be carefully scheduled to ensure students can progress smoothly and that there are sufficient options available for them to pursue in each trimester.

PricewaterhouseCoopers Report

A PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) Report commissioned by Deakin into the implementation of their trimester system found that “the trimester system was introduced with a lack of strategic clarity and incomplete consultation, planning and change management which has led to significant flaws in execution ... [and so far] has benefited only a few students and staff while ‘adverse impacts’ have been widely felt” (Trounson, 2011a, p.31).

The review notes that there is “evidence that students are under increased pressure, with less time to reflect and undertake the learning expected of them, resulting in

greater use of counseling and advocacy services" (Trounson, 2011a, p.31). There is increased pressure on students, especially during the shortened exam period.

The report warned that "inaction will result in continued misalignment with University strategy and processes, and erode staff and student support" (Trounson, 2011b, p. 26). The review however suggested persisting with a revised version.

The PwC's report recommended a compression of trimester teaching to just 10 weeks from 12 weeks. The PwC suggestion was aimed at fitting the trimester into a calendar year and freeing up more time for assessment and exams but would have necessitated an earlier start in late January or during the first week of February. This recommendation was rejected in a move that would relieve concerns that the cut would have threatened quality. In one of her interviews, Professor den Hollander said "I'm not keen on shortening the trimester particularly any more than we have at the moment" (Trounson, 2011b, p. 26). Instead, she undertook a review of assessment and examination timetabling to alleviate some of the problems and boosted management oversight. She also identified areas in which efficiencies could be gained, for example, in the way electives were delivered and was examining whether students could take electives from other disciplines to allow breadth and reduce duplication.

The PwC report found that the third trimester accounted for only 7.5 per cent of equivalent full-time student load. To counter this, Professor den Hollander expected that eventually there would be offerings of core units across the board available in the third semester. A key challenge was to ensure students could "flow" through the trimesters and not have to wait to take units, offering a flexibility that she hoped would differentiate Deakin from other universities.

In response to the concerns of the NTEU, the students and the staff, the DVC Academic argued that:

- 3 semesters would strengthen research capability, e.g. Academics could potentially teach for the first 2 trimesters one year and take the summer trimester off, then the following year take the first trimester off and teach the last two. This flexibility could create quite an extended period for research to be completed.
- If students wanted to accelerate their course they can do so and if they have failed a subject they can repeat it during the summer trimester without delaying their graduation.
- There had not been enough time between the end of semester 2 and the beginning of the next year's semester 1 to fit in a full summer session.

The student body felt that they did not have enough information, so the DVC and others agreed to hold forums so the students could raise their questions.

While it has been argued that with a trimesters system, students who wished could complete a 3 year bachelor degree in 2 years by taking up the third semester during summer, it is envisaged that most students would only study for 2 of the three trimesters.

NTEU Arguments

Arguments against moving to a trimester system put forward by the NTEU with regard to Deakin University are as follows:

- It will diminish teaching and learning time, and place unnecessary pressure on academics and students (Rowbothan, 2008a, p.23).
- Senior Management had “completely disregarded proper staff consultation processes and imposed on already overworked staff a teaching period over the Christmas holiday period” (Rowbothan, 2008b, para.2).
- Reducing teaching weeks from 13 to “effectively as little as 11” (Rowbothan, 2008b, para.3) would diminish the quality of teaching and that students would get less teaching for their fees.
- The “summer break is a break for students only, staff get your average 4 weeks holidays a year so many use the non-teaching time to conduct their own research, complete grant applications and take their leave which they can't take during teaching time ... There won't be time for staff to do this if they are teaching over summer” (Kinsella, 2008, para.5-6).
- “3 ten- week trimesters within 1 calendar year threatens educational quality, curriculum delivery and time for student reflection and absorption of material” (Evans, 2011, para.4).
- Deakin will only be a teaching university with no claims to any serious research capabilities (Kinsella, 2008).
- The NTEU Branch President suggested that “the only reasons that staff could glean from university material on the topic was that Deakin wanted to be perceived as more flexible and hopefully raise more revenue” (Rowbothan, 2008b, para.6).
- Staff through their union argued that in a trimester system academics would have to rush through course material thus cramming the amount of study for students into a shorter time frame (Sinnot, 2010).
- Staff were also concerned about students loss of Swotvac – when students prepare for exams (Rowbothan, 2008b).
- If students want more units run in Trimester 3, then they won't be offered in Trimester 1 or Trimester 2. Academics and staff are arguing (and striking) based on the fact that the trimester system is forcing them to work all three trimesters without a break. Most full time academics are juggling teaching and research as well as assessments. You have to look at it from both perspectives, not just that of student. Staff are EQUALLY frustrated by this system and until the 'kinks' are ironed out, there is going to be a lot of frustrated people at the University. Adding more units in T3 is only one issue in this debate. The major and MOST significant factor is the shortening of the teaching period with lack of a study break before exams. This MUST be the primary focus of any significant changes to the system.

Students' Views - CONS

Students launched a Facebook protest site titled "Deakin trimesters are sh__" which at one point had attracted 1,235 members (the site has since been removed). Posts on this site argued that:

- There was not enough time to study and they were forced to deal with unrealistic workloads.
- There was a possible disadvantage arising from a shortening of the mid-term break and the prospect of dropping from 13 teaching weeks to 11. This they explained put pressure on students who supported their studies by working in the mid-term and summer breaks.

The following are verbatim Facebook posts that students were sending to each other saying:

Exams periods will [now] last only 7 days, down from 14 days last year – Night exams have also been introduced., leaving open the possibility that some students will be scheduled to sit 3 exams in one day.

Hi Guys WE ARE HAVING NIGHT EXAMS due to the trimester system, student could possibly have 3 exams in one day. If your pissed about it email the DUSA President so we can get a system that works best. If I don't get your feedback I cant do that much!

Although I did my course in Deakin at T2 2009,I did not fully agree that Trimester system is a good idea. As those courses available in T3 are not much & most of us are only able to study some elective unit. Then , most of the assignment were due in the same week ><". It's hard for students to handle it. Yes Yes Yes , Trimester system will make student graduate/finish their studies a bit early. But teaching quality is also important (@ some of the staff are not helpful and responsible).

Accept no "compromises". We deserve a full study week. We deserve a full mid term break every semester. And we deserve a FULL THIRTEEN WEEKS OF CLASSES.

Its not just the study week, its the rest of the semesters that suffer as well, subjects being crappily taught, practicals not relating to the content been covered but on content not covered, still costing us the same amount but 5 less weeks, how can they get away with it? we are their customers, they rely on us for business, how are we letting them get away with it? I feel like deakin teaches me nothing, im applying else where for 2010 making sure they have semesters. Trimester kiss my ass.

Lecturers were not prepared and as a result topics have been rushed and covered superficially. As a result (and as proof of this) whole sections of the syllabus for MPE 781 Economics for Managers had to be removed from the

exam. Not only that, the exam was so hastily prepared that I counted over 7 mistakes including missing words from sentences and phrases that don't make sense in English. I hope I get bonus marks for interpreting the paper. Also a highlight was the "revision weekend" - a three hour session in the middle of the trimester to revise the whole subject before we had even covered half the content.

Not enough subjects offered in trimester 3. They must be drawn from ALL faculties.

Careful planning is required for subjects like nursing and others with clinical placements – They could face a situation like they did in Deakin where they had classes the week before exams, a major assignment worth 40% due and were also on placement for the week. This resulted in an extremely stressful situation.

The absence of a break in Semester 2 meant that engineering students had to make different arrangements for their Professional Practice Units.

If we could all afford not to work and study full time, then maybe the lack of swot vac would be LESS problematic... I think that for the majority of students the reality is that they have to work- Uni is not the only priority time wise.

The week of swot vac is so important for us to get ourselves prepared for our exams- my Equity exam is tomorrow morning and I literally finished the course content yesterday. I've been forced to drop back to part time to accommodate all of my commitments, not something that I'd wanted to do as I'm now looking at extending my course for at least another six months because I have to have the summer break in order to fulfill the professional experience requirements of the LLB. I'm pretty sure stress levels are up for students and lecturers, results are probably going to suffer and clearly the student population is not happy. One question- why was the system introduced when the student body AND staff clearly never wanted it?

Between finding out that RMIT students get 160 teaching round days compared to our 80 and this I am NOT HAPPY with Deakin!

It was not only for the fees, it was also to be more in coordination with international universities especially in the northern hemisphere since everything is inverted (season wise) therefore when we have our summer they're still at uni and vice versa.

I don't believe that the trimester system would be an issue if the two issues of SWOT VAC and intertrimester breaks were looked at. Once these issues are addressed, the introduction of more units in T3 could then be assessed as this is a more complex issue as it involves staff workloads.

The loss of swot vac doesn't really impact education students, who have only one or 2 exams in 2nd year and none in 3rd or 4th year - so the real impact to us is that 100% of our assessment is due within the 12 weeks (with one or 2 exceptions), we have lost 1 teaching week and the mid sem break - and we somehow have to cram in 3 weeks + of rounds within that 12 weeks. This semester has been a joke - and worse to come next sem with not even a break to re-group, get assignments done etc. I was finished as of last Friday - it nearly bloody killed me getting everything done. Great to hear swot vac is being re-considered but it's not the only issue. Loss of 1 teaching week and mid semester break are just as important.

The main issues for students were:

- Having enough time to study;
- Coping with workloads;
- Extra pressure on students who supported their studies by working in the mid-term and summer breaks due to a shortening of the mid-term break and the prospect of dropping from 13 teaching weeks to 11;
- Having enough time to revise before exams;
- Making sure that assessments are spread out and marked fairly;
- And ensuring that a wide range of units are offered in semester 3.

Some felt that the lecturers were unprepared and this had a negative impact on both the learning and the examination process.

Students' Views - PROS

There were a few positive comments which were reflected thus:

- A few students felt that night exams were a great idea.
- The restructure would offer the prospect of more students completing their courses at an accelerated rate so students being able to fast-track their degrees.
- If done properly, the result would be spreading the workload throughout the year making it easier for people to earn a living and study fulltime as well.
- The upside is though that while the T3 unit offerings are limited, prior to this year you had to pay full fees to do them, which really only appealed to International Students and students with lots of cash or bank of mum and dad. Now that full fee places are no longer available, it means we can do T3 units without having to pay for them up front. (One of the few perks to this system)

Case Study 3: University of Canberra

The University of Canberra main campus is situated in the national capital with a second campus established in Brisbane in 2002. More than 12,000 students currently attend the University. Approximately 1,600 of them live on the main Canberra campus. They come from local and regional areas, every state and territory in Australia and 90 other countries. There are six faculties:

- Applied Science;
- Arts and Design;
- Business, Government and Law (There is now a School of Law within this Faculty);
- Education;
- Health; and,
- Information services and Engineering.

The University of Canberra introduced a trimester-based teaching system using a calendar academic year in 2010. Their trimesters for 2012 are as follows:

- **Trimester 1** runs from 30 January 2012 to 1 June 2012
- **Trimester 2** runs from 12 June 2012 to 10 August 2012
- **Trimester 3** runs from 6 August 2012 to 7 December 2012

See **Appendix A** for greater detail.

An interview was conducted with an academic member of staff at Canberra University to obtain a practitioner's perspective for this UWS review.

The interviewee felt that the process has not worked well from a lecturer's perspective and the students don't like it. She explained that at Canberra, the trimester system operates within **a calendar year** from the end of January to 20th December every year as follows:

- Semester 1 - 14 weeks – full size in the beginning
- Winter Term or Half size trimester in the middle – 8 weeks
- Semester 3 – 14 weeks – full size at the end

Students are frustrated because there is a shortage of units in winter term. There is a limit to what they can get to do.

There was no consultation with staff. They were simply informed that it was being implemented and they needed to put up units to run in the winter term.

She feels that consultation may have improved the way it was done and maybe the outcomes would have been a bit better so that people could work through some of the issues before you implement them – speaking with other people who have been through it is a smart thing to do so that hopefully we can avoid this pitfalls.

When questioned about what prompted the move, the following were her responses:

- Increase their student numbers;
- To make it more attractive to international students who can complete their study in a shortened period of time; and,
- As to what the actual motivation was - she doesn't know. She only heard the official line.

I asked whether there was evidence of an increase in the international numbers. She indicated that "although this year the university has experienced a drop in international students, their drop has not been as dramatic as a lot of other universities but it [the trimester system] has not necessarily boosted our International Student population and I don't know whether this is responsible for the less severe drop in International students or not."

She felt that data collection and analysis on this is required.

She is not sure that strategy is working but feels that an evaluation is needed now at UWS to see what affected the decision of International Students to join UWS and another evaluation once a trimester system is implemented to see whether they have changed their perspective on the University or not.

This academic began working at Canberra before trimesters were introduced. When asked about the strategies that the University put in place to deal with the challenges, she replied:

[T]here was none visible to those who were teaching, that is none that affected their workload. The official line is 2 semesters of teaching per year is required. However, there is an incredibly strong push for academics to teach all 3 and maintain their research. Management will never say that you are required to teach 3 because of the current enterprise bargaining agreement. Those who teach 3 are treated more favourably than those who teach 2. This is a very thorny issue. The pressure is applied to staff on a weekly basis to teach 3 semesters.

She further explained that:

In Canberra there is the availability of casual staff and a policy on the hiring of casual staff; however, the issue is the funding. Because it cost money to pay casual staff the university is reluctant to pay casual staff to teach in the winter term. I don't think there would be a major difficulty in my area but they would rather use full time permanent staff to do that teaching. Staff do not get additional remuneration for work that they do in addition to their normal workload.

Graduations have moved from July to September and from December to April/March so that provides some ease with marking. This was instituted because you cannot have a graduation in the middle of a semester - And there has always been fairly tight turn around times for marking. If you have an exam during the last day of the exam period, you have 3 days to get your marks in.

She felt that it was important to educate students about ways of studying, explaining:

Some students become very enthusiastic about completing their degrees as quickly as they can – they do the 3 trimesters and they want to do a summer school perhaps through another university for a unit or two. You need to explain to the students that they do need a bit of down time during the year. They need to plan to take a few weeks off within a trimester. They shouldn't move from a trimester to a summer school to week one of a new year. In the trimester system you move from teaching and learning sessions to exam periods in cycles. Doing it for 4 periods in a year seems to leave them a little bit burnt out. They could do it for three but shouldn't do it for 4. It's a marathon not a sprint.

Studying should be a bit like your normal day – There are three parts to a day: morning, afternoon and evening. You work for 2 and then have the other one off (whether you relax, do social things) – you need to have some downtime. You can't do the whole thing continuously. If they have the opportunity to do four – they should be educated to do three and not 4. That's not the way you want to do the whole degree.

Students must have time to absorb the material and have some relaxation with family/friends / whatever. This applies to both UG & PG – everybody – no variation.

Students complain about the winter term. If they want to take a holiday, that's not when they would rather take it. They lose part of their summer in terms of study period and they go an extra time in winter where they do not really care if they are studying.

Students who come straight from school do not handle the trimester system as well. Mature age students handle it very well because they are quite reflective at work and they know how to plan their work. At school they get long summer holidays and reasonable breaks between terms then they go to 14 weeks, 2 exam weeks, 8 weeks 2 exam weeks, 14 weeks 2 exam weeks at University – It's actually a very long time. **It may be that you limit the number of options for first year students.**

Case Study 4: University of New England

The University of New England (UNE) was the first Australian university established outside a capital city. Since 1955, teaching off-campus students by distance education has been an important part of the University's activities. UNE is now Australia's longest continuous provider of distance education and is still one of Australia's major providers of awards to off-campus students. Increasingly, the flexibility offered by external study is proving a significant attraction to those pursuing a tertiary education.

UNE is a smaller university than UWS with more than 12,500 of its 17,000 students studying via the Internet through communication technology. UNE in partnership with the New England Institute of TAFE offers access to communication technology and tertiary education opportunities in the New England region through eight Regional Study Centres equipped with information technology infrastructure. The University uses the Centres which are located on current TAFE campuses to offer flexible learning options to those who wish to study or extend their qualifications within their community, work or home environment. There are two faculties each with 5 schools as shown below:

- Faculty of Arts and Sciences
 - School of Arts
 - School of Behavioural, Cognitive and Social Sciences
 - School of Humanities
 - School of Environmental and Rural Science
 - School of Science and Technology
- Faculty of the Professions
 - School of Business, Economics and Public Policy
 - School of Law
 - School of Education
 - School of Rural Medicine
 - School of Health

In June 2010 the Vice-Chancellor of UNE announced that the University would introduce a formalized trimester academic calendar by 2012. In moving to a trimester system, a Project Team was established to consult widely with the UNE community and other stakeholders. From these consultations a Discussion Paper was developed and feedback used to produce a Report that recommended the implementation of a trimester model that best suited the needs of the UNE community. Policies were developed and implemented for every aspect of the transition. Administrative staff were included in the discussion and they were required to develop an implementation plan. New administrative systems were developed in order to transition to a new calendar year and new timetabling software was introduced. Academic staff were also expected to contribute to the transition by refining their courses and delivery styles. In 2011, a governance process was put in place to manage the change so that

implementation could begin in 2012. Intensive schools related to their distance learning programs were conducted via 2 blocks of residential schools for off-campus students during breaks.

This is how the University of New England represented the benefits of a trimester system to its clientele:

What are the benefits of trimesters at UNE?

The new trimester system will formalise the summer teaching period and extend its use beyond the small number of current unit offerings.

Trimester 3 may be used to:

- accelerate your progress through the course;
- spread your study load across the 3 trimesters; and/or
- re-take units

Depending on your course, this may give you the flexibility to spread your load across all three teaching periods, or to re-take units that have been failed and therefore keep up their progress.

UNE is not the first university to introduce trimesters. In recent years, a number of other Australian universities have added a third teaching period into the year in response to student demand for choice and flexibility. Often when students are studying part-time and combining work and study, they are looking for ways to maximise the amount of study they do in a year. The long summer break is a significant downtime for these students. Trimesters will give some students the opportunity to take more units in a year, and may help them to complete their course earlier.

In 2012, there will be a number of units across a range of courses offered in the third teaching period, while from 2013, the third trimester will become an intake period for some courses, allowing students to begin their course in this teaching period. (University of New England, 2012)

How the Trimester System Works at UNE

UNE operates a trimester system over a non-calendar year with three formal teaching periods as follows:

- **Trimester 1** runs from 13 February 2012 to 8 June 2012
- **Trimester 2** runs from 21 June 2012 to 15 October 2012
- **Trimester 3** runs from 29 October 2012 to 11 February 2013

See **Appendix B** for greater detail.

Each trimester has a two-week break in the middle, which in T1 and T2 are used for

intensive schools. Each trimester also had a two-week exam block. On it's website UNE explains that not all courses will offer units for study in the third trimester. Some will continue to operate on a two-trimester timetable. The site informs the students that they may also choose to continue to study in Trimesters 1 and 2 only or take more units in a year, or spread the load over three trimesters rather than two, depending on the availability of units in the chosen course.

In 2012 there is a range of units offered in the third teaching period, and some courses will start to admit students in the third trimester.

Students' Views – Pros

The following are some of the more positive and progressive comments made by students at UNE:

As an external student, I would love the option to study in a third trimester, and have been considering changing to my local university (CSU) so that that option may be available.

*This is not because i want to 'rush' my degree, although the option would be nice, but rather because i'd enjoy a lighter study load enabling me to fully immerse myself in the units, while at the same time making steady progress on my degree. It would also mean not having to compromise employment and parental commitments.
...best of both world's i think!*

I believe that an optional trimester model will be beneficial for those students who wish to study in summer and are faced with very limited subjects available. I work full time and study three subjects, however and yes I am trying to finish my degree as soon as possible for career progression reasons. I don't believe that by having a trimester model we will lose too much in the way of learning quality, however it will be imperative to ensure that each semester is the same amount of weeks and there is a break of around 3 weeks or more. I often feel that it is a difficult to get back into the routine of study after such a long summer break (not that I am complaining about the break), so the option to continue into a 3rd semester would be nice.

I would love the opportunity to complete my studies earlier. Heaps of universities are currently using the trimester system however some make the third trimester optional. It is interesting to note that the business school is currently using the trimester system. Personally I find that the summer break is way too long and it takes a little while for me to get back into the habit of studying come the following year. I would love to continue studying over summer. I can understand some peoples hesitations so maybe an optional third semester, so that only the students who want to and can handle studying all year are able to do so.

Students' Views - Cons

I agree with the external student, distant education is often lacking, it is very difficult to engage in deep and critical learning when some subjects don't even provide lecture podcasts. UNE should consider mandatory podcasts for all subjects if they decide to move to the trimester model.

Summer semester would undermine the quality of learning opportunities offered at UNE. University education is much more than a vocational 'ticket' into the workforce. UNE should not drop its academic standards for the sake of mass-consumer education.

The third trimester will mean lecturers and markers will be continually rushed to pump out courses and marks with no time to allow students to develop deep, critical knowledge. This is the case at universities with third semesters. Based on what colleagues have told me I would never study at Southern Cross because the lecturers never have any time for their students. UNE will lose its reputation as an excellent provider of external education. External students who care about the reputation of their qualifications will be forced to look interstate or to the US.

If there is going to be a third semester it should be full-fee to ensure UNE can employ more lecturers and staff to administer the courses.

I used to think that a trimester model would be bad but after looking to do cross institutional study during the summer semester and looking at the deplorable offerings at other universities nationwide via distance education, perhaps a trimester model at UNE wouldn't be so bad. I found most of the units either had intensive sessions or res schools interstate or they had exams at centres I wouldn't be able to travel to.

I agree that the 3rd trimester should be optional for students and that staff should only be required to teach 2 of the 3 trimesters but I hate the long break over summer – if I could make it more productive, I would be much happier.

I don't agree that 3rd trimester should be full fee-paying. One of the reasons I like UNE so much is that it allows for Commonwealth Supported Post-Graduate degrees. Also, I think the Arts subjects available currently during the summer semester here at UNE are terrible – they don't leave any room for post-grad students to study in areas like HIST or PAIS or some of the other liberal arts areas. It's all LW or ECON subjects. We need a better variety open to more students, PLEASE!

If we were going to have a 3rd trimester, for people like me who will return to work before the examination period, perhaps the uni can look at "take-home exams" similar to that which are offered by Charles Sturt Uni for some of their distance education subjects. This way UNE doesn't have to worry about

providing assistive technologies for special needs students – we just submit our “take home exam” like we do our assignments, i.e.: through e-submission.

Comments from Off-Campus Students

The trimester system is fine as long as the semester period remains 13 weeks as making externals do the same study in less time each semester would be impossible (as an external). Secondly, the “third” trimester should not be a compulsory semester (i.e any part-time course completion rules should NOT factor in the third trimester) as an external if you work long hours it is not possible to study year round without a meaningful break.

UNE is spouting that by turning to a trimester model that shortens the teaching period – putting MORE stress on students and lecturers especially those students who work full time and are trying to study full time – that then gives you an extra teaching period so in theory, the degree could be fastracked.

BUT, Tri 3 for most faculties is being treated as a voluntary summer semester, rather than a regular teaching period – it's useless!

This is frustrating! I am enrolling in only one unit per trimester and doing BIOL110 this Trimester. If I knew I could do it in Trimester 3 i would of held off and chose another unit this trimester. Now I still can't get through my studies any quicker! Also there does not seem to be a lot of choice for Trimester 3 subjects when you are doing a Science related degree.

Its good to see more units being made available but its still a case of anyone doing any of the sciences being severely short changed. Apart from a couple of introductory subjects, there is only ONE third trimester subject being offered over physics, chemistry and maths departments. Useless to anyone in any of those disciplines.

I would like to have a trimester system where the trimesters are as close to as equal in teaching time as possible so I'm not losing any valuable learning time.

I would also like a better range of summer semester subjects because the current offerings with this uni leave a lot to be desired. They only seem to cater to certain schools within the uni.

The other problem that could be avoided with the summer trimester is the bureaucracy attached to wanting permission to enrol elsewhere (PTEE). It appears to me to be very difficult to gain approval for PTEE at this uni and having a wider range of summer subjects (or repeating popular subjects in more than one trimester) would be beneficial for students and the uni administration.

As someone who works full-time in quite a demanding job I would hate to have my whole year swallowed up by uni also. Summer holidays are the only break I

get!!!! Plus its summer who wants to study. I dont think rushing a degree is the way to gaining knowledge better to take it slow and do it properly – that way we can avoid nervous breakdowns. Distance education all year round would be so hard for me and I would seriously look at taking my course elsewhere if I was forced to study over summer.

A trimester would be great for those wishing to make use of their summer holiday season. I am one of those external students studying primary education whose units are not offered over the summer semester. This summer I will find myself with no study for 4 months, which is time i could be using to finish my degree sooner. I am a single parent and the sooner I start teaching the better, as my family will be better off.

Lessons from the Australian Case Studies

- Before moving to a trimester system there is a need for strategic clarity and consultation.
- Careful planning and change management procedures are required to avoid flaws in execution.
- Identify inefficiencies in the way electives are currently delivered and explore whether students could take electives from other disciplines to allow breadth and reduce duplication.
- Explore the option of having core units across the board available in the third semester. Ensure that there are systems in place to allow students to "flow" through the trimesters and not have to wait to take units, offering maximum flexibility.
- Offer more units or fulfilling projects in 3rd trimester, making them widely available to the various courses.
- Review assessment and examination timetabling to alleviate some of the problems and boost management oversight of these.

HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE UK: PILOT STUDIES AND POLICIES

In the UK summer sessions were mostly used as bridging programmes that were associated with foundation type programs used either for acceleration or remediation.

In 1993, a report from the Committee of Enquiry into the Organisation of the Academic Year chaired by Lord Flowers challenged the notion of not teaching in summer and recommended that: higher education institutions should consider introducing a third semester during that period and that the Higher Education Funding Councils should provide funding for a number of pilot projects to explore the implications of operating year-round teaching (Higher Education Funding Council for England [HEFCE], 1993).

One of the pilot studies was undertaken at the University of Luton. Fallows and Symon (1999) in their evaluation paper entitled '*Year-round university education: an experiment to extend the teaching year*' argued that:

The University of Luton EAY [Extended Academic Year] experiment has shown that there is a demand for year-round learning; this demand is particularly strong amongst those who are studying on a part-time basis. It should be remembered that our EAR participants are largely mature students in full-time employment. (This was, of course, the group for whom the Luton summer programme was provided.) However, there is no evidence to indicate that the provision of year-round learning will attract additional students into higher education – it may, though, offer an improved opportunity for those able to take advantage of faster progress to graduation through year-round study.

However, the three-year experiment has highlighted the fact that a significant proportion of the academic staff have fears that the extension of teaching into the summer months will impose unacceptable workload burdens. It is widely believed that this will lead to a diminution of time available for research, publication and general academic updating. However, any shift to year-round teaching will require a significant culture change amongst the academic staff that will only be achieved through careful human relations management. (p.227)

Some of the Flowers Committee's (HEFCE, 1993) conclusions (cited in Baldwin and McInnis, 2002) which are of particular relevance to the current discussion at UWS are:

- A trimester system offers the potential for greater flexibility and choice for students, and opportunities for staff to make more effective use of their time;
- It also offers the opportunity for more efficient 'throughput' of students and thus improved utilisation of facilities;
- However, for efficient planning and management of resources, institutions would need to be able to manage the number of students attending in each semester (equalising them) and therefore would have to limit the students' exercise of choice;

- Efficient management would also depend on multiple intakes and this presents major challenges for timetabling, especially in those areas which emphasise sequential learning;
- Benefits to staff would depend on their teaching for no longer than they do in the current system;
- Undergraduate students other than those on accelerated degree courses would continue to attend for around 30–36 weeks in any given year;
- Students on accelerated programmes should study specially designed 'fast track' courses, using new teaching methods, rather than current courses scheduled over three terms a year;
- Only a small minority of undergraduate students will wish to follow accelerated degree courses; and
- Not all institutions would wish to introduce an extended undergraduate teaching year—for example, research intensive institutions might decide against changes which would reduce the time or facilities available for research.

Sir Ron Dearing's inquiry into higher education (National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education [NCIHE], 1993) made no mention of the academic calendar in their recommendations on higher education. They did however hint that the long summer vacation would probably become increasingly inappropriate. The report did however welcome the way in which the expansion of higher education in the mid 80s to mid 90s was associated with increased participation by women, mature students, students from lower socio-economic groups, students with new kinds of entry qualifications from polytechnics and further education colleges (TAFE equivalents), and students from ethnic minorities.

The Accelerated and Intensive Routes Programme (AIR) was established typically as a 45-week academic year in response to a Government focus on developing more flexible approaches to course structures such as the creation of intensive type courses (HEFCE, 1993). This had the desired effect in allowing candidates to complete their programme of study faster than usual completing up to a year of the 'normal' course time. The actual length of the teaching weeks (i.e. 90 weeks for a 3 year course) remained the same. The time taken to complete the course was shortened because a term was added during the summer vacation together with a reduction in the holiday periods.

The AIR Programme was **not** developed for the mainstream undergraduate. As the Evaluation commissioned by the Higher Education Academy on behalf of the Department for Education and Skills and the Higher Education Funding Council for England explains:

They are not designed to replace existing traditional degree programmes, but to add to the range of options open to students. In many cases, especially in Europe and the UK, acceleration is for the more able students; i.e. those of sufficient maturity, with motivation and commitment to handle the additional workload. Therefore fast-track degrees are applicable in specific circumstances,

including students' life circumstances. (McCaig, Bowers-Brown & Drew, 2007, p.30)

Baldwin and McInnis (2002) suggest that:

of particular interest to Australian universities may be the staff apprehension that the AIRs would be a device for dividing elite research-based universities from basic undergraduate teaching universities, which would be the sole providers of the two-year track. (p.8)

Another significant finding of the review was that there was an 'overall conviction' in the universities involved that the AIRs could never really be cost-effective "when they are run in isolation and all other provision is on a two semester basis" (Sims & Woodrow, 1996, p.12) Nevertheless, the reviewing team concluded that 'the success of the AIRs students bears witness to the effectiveness of additional resources, judiciously targeted to meet the learning needs of a particular group of students' (p.12).

It is difficult to determine the success of the AIR programme. Of the 10 pilots, only 5 decided to continue beyond the trial period. Pilot institutions recommended the continuation of AIRs with three provisos – that there be: a small, dedicated, mature student intake; adequate funding; and prior professional recognition.

The following is an abstract from an article entitled "Variation in the length of an undergraduate degree: participation and outcomes" written by Davies, Slack and Howard (2012):

Recent policy in England has advocated the introduction of fast-track degrees to provide an alternative, shorter route to a bachelor's degree. It has been argued that this will widen participation in higher education and increase labour market flexibility by providing an option in which undergraduates spend one fewer years out of the labour market. Critics have suggested that the outcomes from this new undergraduate option will be worse than those for students following the standard length of undergraduate degree (which is three years for most subjects studied at universities in England). This criticism is based on a belief that students on the shorter degrees will be encouraged to 'cram', having less opportunity for reflection that will foster a deep understanding. These arguments are evaluated using data which compare students following two and three year degrees in the same subjects at the same university. (p. 431)

With regard to resource implications, the initial concept (suggested by Flowers) was to utilise physical resources that would otherwise lay idle. Fallows and Symon (1999) believe this to be an over-simplified view and made the following observations which may be pertinent to the UWS situation:

- The greatest cost in operating any university teaching programme is salaries. If summer teaching can be absorbed into the expected workload of existing staff ... there will be no additional costs but otherwise it will be necessary to take on

additional staff or to pay inducements to existing staff.

- Academic services such as libraries and computing facilities will require longer opening hours than may be conventional during the summer period – thereby incurring costs.
- Provision of self-financing services such as catering may not be viable if numbers are low.
- The summer period is often utilised for refurbishment, relocations and similar disruptive activities such as stock checking in the library. The time when mainstream students are not on campus should not be regarded as a time of inactivity.

The Historical Use of Trimesters in the UK

Cambridge University was formed in 1209 after a break away from Oxford University. It is the second-oldest university in the English-speaking world (after the University of Oxford), and the seventh-oldest in the world. It is a public research university located in Cambridge, United Kingdom. There are six Schools, which each form an administrative grouping of Faculties and other institutions. They are: Arts and Humanities, Biological Sciences, Clinical Medicine, Humanities and Social Sciences, Physical Sciences, and Technology. There is a Council of each School – including representatives of its Faculties and Departments. The Schools are represented on the General Board.

The University of Cambridge does not operate a modular system. The academic year is divided into three Terms (Michaelmas: October to end November/early December; Lent: January to early March; and Easter: April to mid-June). Their courses run for the entire academic year, usually with exams in the third term. The Academic year commences on 1st October and finishes on 30th September each year. One of the most distinctive characteristics of Cambridge courses is that they cover the subject very broadly in the initial years and then become more specialised and offer a wide range of options in the later years.

Table 3 under shows the University of Oxford also operates on a term system but like Cambridge their terms only operate for 24 weeks of the year unlike the Scottish universities which range from 44 to 45 weeks.

Table 3:

UK Universities Trimester Schedule 2012/13

University	Trimester 1	Trimester 2	Trimester 3	Total Weeks/Year
Edinburgh Napier University	15	15	15	45
Glasgow Caledonian University	15	15	14	44
University of Cambridge	9	9	8	26
University of the West of Scotland	17	16	12	45
University of Oxford (Lincoln College)	8	8	8	24

Appendix C provides greater details of the trimester system, including various dates, for each of the UK universities listed above. It should be noted that the Scottish universities come closest to year round university education.

HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE USA: FROM TRIMESTERS & QUARTERS TO SEMESTERS

The majority of American universities operate on two regular 15-week semesters with a summer school which is usually shorter than other academic sessions/terms and have been very popular since their inception in the 19th century. Summer schools vary between 5 and 10 weeks and serve many interests viz:

1. Outreach programs for the community;
2. Professional development or general education courses; and,
3. Regular term for enrolled university students offering credits for courses that are offered during semesters.

Most summer schools have a separate administrative unit within the university and staff are employed separately for teaching. They could be a mixture of tenured academics (who are only employed by universities for 9 months of the year), retired academics, visiting academics or contracted employees. Teaching in summer sessions is not part of an academic's standard contract (9 months of the year) so they could legitimately be employed wherever there is available work.

In the 1960s and 1970s the semester was perceived by some to be a logical conclusion to the summer school so some universities opted for terms of equal length but it never fully became a nationwide trend. At the height of its popularity 1967-68, only 4% of colleges and universities implemented the system. By 1985-86 only 2 percent were using trimesters.

In the 1960s the following points were put forward supporting trimesters or multiple semesters:

- The inconsistency in slow college graduation rates alongside industry's need for an increased pool of trained professionals. The trimester plan promised both quality and efficiency.
- Reduced costs of living due to reduced study time.
- In order to develop human resources to the fullest we must devise graduated, flexible and varied programs.
- It is inefficient to close the university for a quarter of a year.

And in the 1970s, universities perceived the advantages of year round operation thus:

- Increase in number of students serviced in an year
- More students graduating every year due to accelerated degrees
- Students who have fallen behind the normal schedule because of economic difficulties, family problems, illness, the failure of courses, and other disrupting factors, should be able to regain lost time and graduate on schedule.
- Flexibility in terms of entering and exiting degree and university studies.

- Full utilization of teaching personnel lead to additional employment and compensation for faculty.
- Flexible opportunities for leaves, study, travel, or teaching elsewhere for teaching staff.
- Better academic performance due to continuity of studying.

Schoenfeld's (1973) proposals for strengthening summer programs, which he noted as extra income earners, are:

- Better curricular offerings during the summer.
- Greater rewards and incentives for faculty to stay.
- Financial aid for summer students.
- Emphasis on research activities, primarily outdoors.
- Using the campus as a site for wide continuing education program.

However, the points mooted against trimesters or multiple semesters were as follows:

- They were the results of rash moves without total planning for budget, space, and curriculum. (1961)
- The trimester plan is said to be inadequate because it purports to do in 30 weeks exactly what 36 weeks of classes under a semester system would accomplish. It leads students to believe that they are getting the same education in one-sixth to one-quarter less time. (1967)
- As per students, trimesters led to:
 - Reduced length and material of assignments. This viewpoint from the students is fostered due to concerns about the shortened length of the semester. The underlying belief being that the assignments will either be made smaller or the intensity of the questions would be decreased to enable students to be able to attain passing scores. There was also another viewpoint that the academics might be asked to grade more leniently, in order to allow students to maintain a similar scoring level as in the semester system to avoid a backlash.
 - Students experiencing greater level of stress.
- In 1965, the University of Pittsburgh showed a mammoth budget deficit as a result of poor planning for the summers and abandoned its trimester plan.

And in a survey at one particular college conducted in 1969, 45% of the students felt that in a semester system, courses were too long to maintain interest. 35% said that time was not utilized to its fullest advantage.

More recently, though, Scott (1994) has argued that trimesters foster:

- Greater continuity of learning
- Greater concentration/focus on learning
- Non-prioritized learning
- Better opportunities for scheduling and planning
- Longer Class sessions fostered more in depth and meaningful discussions

- More mental investment and commitment
- Better performance
- Short duration
- Retention and understanding
- Closer student teacher relationship

Current trends

The trend in the US is to move to or maintain a semester system. More recently, headlines suggested that seventeen Ohio universities and community colleges now on the quarter system are ready to switch to a semester-based calendar in a move that officials say will help students transfer more easily between schools. Ohio State University, Ohio University and the University of Cincinnati are some of the largest universities affected. Some of the smaller institutions include Wright State University and Sinclair and Clark State community colleges. In the fall of 2012 Ohio University will be moving towards a semester based academic year from a quarter system. The reasons given for this move are:

- It allows for additional class time for the faculty to explore in greater depth the topics of study. This also gives students more time to absorb the class material and build a more solid base of knowledge to assist in future classes and careers.
- It is often hard to finish major projects and papers in 10 weeks. Semesters give students greater breathing room in doing more in-depth work.
- The chance to be more competitive for internships and permanent positions because of an earlier end to the academic year.
- Greater ease of transfer between institutions and academic exchange programs, with an academic calendar consistent with the majority of colleges and universities in the United States, in Ohio, and around the world.
- Switching to semesters makes it even easier for students to transfer academic credits between colleges and universities across the state and across the country.
- Provides more time for students to learn and experiment with course material
- Reduces registration, financial aid activity, book purchasing, etc., from three times to two times per academic year
- Provides an opportunity for faculty to review, redesign and update course curriculum and program requirements
- Brings courses in line with most textbooks, which are written on the semester calendar
- Provides an opportunity for faculty curricula innovation
- More than 90% of American universities use a semester calendar. Thus, the move helps in aligning the system to most universities.

This statement below was in the "Strategic Plan for Higher Education 2008 – 2017" of the Ohio Government:

Given the significant benefits of a common academic calendar, the universities currently operating on a quarter system should give strong consideration to

making the transition to a semester academic calendar. Once a timetable has been established by the universities for this transition, the community colleges not on the semester calendar should consider making the transition. (University System of Ohio Board of Regents, 2008)

Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) more recently has decided to move to a trimester system, citing many reasons for the decision, all of which have been discussed within the RIT community over the past year. Of these, the most important by far are those that have the potential to positively impact the quality of the educational experience that their students receive. The following reasons were given by the President of RIT (Rochester Institute of Technology - The President, 2012) for the switch of RIT from quarters to semesters effective Fall 2013:

- The rapidly diminishing number of colleges and universities operating under a quarter-based academic calendar has put RIT in an increasingly isolated position that clearly complicates our interactions with other institutions in such areas as credit transfer, student exchange and study abroad opportunities.
- There is a potential for improved student retention and graduation rates because of a) a somewhat slower academic pace in each course, b) enhanced opportunities for students to recover from illnesses and other interruptions in their studies since semesters are 5 weeks longer than quarters, c) fewer courses taken each year (albeit of longer duration) and fewer final exams each year and d) the elimination of a winter quarter disrupted by the holiday break.
- A semester calendar would allow for the possibility of a true Rochester area academic common market as all other institutions in the area are on semester calendars.
- The proposed calendar would allow for the offering of an optional January mini-semester for students who fall behind in their programs, want to shorten their time to degree, want to earn some extra money to help pay for their education, or want to work intensively on student projects. This optional mini-semester will allow students to take one course in an intensive manner over a period of about four weeks.
- A semester calendar would better align our calendar to that of most other colleges and universities and allow the scheduling of winter and spring breaks at times similar to those adopted by other institutions. Our students would then have a better chance to see old friends during the academic year and to participate in cross-institutional education and public service programs that are increasingly offered during these break periods.
- The recent move of several other universities (e.g. Cincinnati, Northeastern) with strong co-op programs from quarters to semesters provides persuasive evidence that the move can be accomplished without damaging this critical element in most of RIT's educational programs.
- A semester calendar would afford the opportunity for students enrolling from warmer states and nations and who do not participate in the January mini-semester to escape the Rochester winter for the month.

Below are some of the interesting comments from students on a blog (Front Row Crew Forum, 2012) regarding the RIT move from quarters to semesters:

This, seriously, greatly reduces my recommendations to anyone to attend the school. The quarter system was responsible for many of the student fail-outs, and was a big part of what made RIT a challenging and rewarding institution. It allowed far greater specialization and class granularity, and forced students to maintain a terribly rigorous regime. It was also one of the main things that drew me to the school initially.

Semesters mean either more time spent getting a degree, reduced curriculum, or more lenient testing (as people don't complain as much when it's just a 3 month setback rather than 6).

I went to a semester school for undergrad, and now doing grad school at RIT, and I've loved the quarter system. It's a lot more work, and it keeps you busy, but I feel like I've learned a whole lot more. Basically my feelings are along the same lines as Rym's.

Quarters really force you to learn how to prioritize your workload, and where to put your efforts. That's why RIT has been one of the best schools for professional workforce preparation. I also think that a quarter system keeps your education more engaging; since you change classes more often than with a semester system, you get fresh information more frequently. Also, as Rym said, it allows for much greater specialization and a great degree of customization in your course load.

The weird thing is that most students (85%) were in favor of the quarter system, and student government officially voted (all but one or two Senators) to recommend not switching. However, in a "secret" vote for "curiosity only," every member of Student Government recommended switching. This vote, which was explicitly explained as "only for curiosity's sake," was sent to the President in their recommendation letter.

I was reading over the news announcement for this, and decided that I would simplify the bullet points. As Einstein said "Everything should be made as simple as possible, but no simpler". Simplified bullet points for change to semesters:

- 1. We want money from students transferring in, and from student exchanges.*
- 2. We want less students dropping out so we can make more money.*
- 3. We want U of R and MCCC transfer money.*
- 4. We want money from students stuck in Rochester during the winter break.*
- 5. We want summer class money.*
- 6. Everyone else is doing it!*
- 7. Grasping at straws.*

Regardless of whether or not employers notice or care that you went through a grueling RIT quarter system, the fact is that the quarter system is better value for

students. For the same amount of tuition, you get 33% more education. If they want semesters, they should lower tuition by at least 25%.

Well, I will say that the quarter-based system definitely makes one more apt to rapid decision-making and gives one an excellent ability to self-prioritize their work. RIT grads are adept managers. However, they don't produce a lot of Nobel Prize winners or other groundbreaking thinkers. RIT provides you with the tools to succeed handily, but not to excel necessarily. Instead of producing a handful of A+ students and an army of C+ students, RIT produces a large supply of B+ students with some A-guys to spice things up. That's the way I see it, anyhow.

Table 4 below provides a snapshot of some of the American Universities who operate under a trimester system, some of which also offer a summer session.

Table 4:

US Universities Trimester (Quarter) Schedule 2012/13					
University	Trimester 1	Trimester 2	Summer Session	Trimester 3	Total Weeks/ yr
DePaul University	11	11	10	11	43
Harvard University	16	15	N/A	7	38
Portland State University	11	11	11	11	44
University of California (Irvine)	12	12	10	12	46
University of California (Los Angeles)	12	12	10	12	46
University of Denver (Sturm College of Law)	18	17	N/A	9	44
University of Washington	12	11	8	11	42

Appendix D provides greater details of the trimester system, including various dates, for each of the US universities listed above.

CONCLUSION: MODELS AND CONFIGURATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Moves towards a three term academic year have generally been driven by opportunities for growth in student numbers, more efficient use of expensive infrastructure, greater flexibility in the use of staff time (including focused research time) and a perceived demand from students for flexibility in their study schedules. A judicious implementation of a trimester system could create opportunities for the University in each of these areas. The case studies identified in this report and discussed in greater detail in this paper have generated a strong evidential base which both demonstrates the advantages and the pitfalls of the trimester system and its implementation.

A system with a three term academic year can take different forms and the University will need to consider various options and models. The following are three illustrative models:

Model 1: Conduct a pilot in the first instance with later conversion of all postgraduate programs and a selection of UG courses.

Model 2: Year 1 Semester followed by Trimesters from Year 2 onward

The first year UG program is constructed on the basis of semesters and then switches to trimesters from year 2 onwards. The first year experience would help prepare students for an accelerated program of study in the following years.

Model 3: Full move to a trimester system. See Systems 1 and 2 over.

Model 3: System 1

A Trimester System Conducted Over a Calendar Year: 2014

The Calendar Year 2014 option presented below has been developed by the School of Business and comprises three 13 week trimesters timed to be completed within a calendar year. **(See Appendix E)**

The arrangement provides alignment between UWS (School of Business) and UWS College which is an important component of the UWS strategy. Features of this option are:

- Ten scheduled teaching weeks;
- Mid-session non-teaching week for examinations and intensive face-to-face sessions;
- Two week formal examination period;
- Saturdays can also be included as examination and break days;
- Three week intersession break;
- Census date is set in week four of the teaching session providing time for an initial assessment after completion of 30% of the scheduled learning activities; and,
- Results processing to occur at the beginning of week 16 (usually on Monday).

It is noted that while the UWS College trimesters will commence at the same time as UWS School of Business the proposed teaching weeks may vary.

There are a number of benefits of this calendar year, some of which are outlined below. This model provides:

- Alignment and facilitates transition between UWS School of Business and UWS College;
- Alignment between UWS School of Business undergraduate courses and postgraduate courses, currently taught in semesters and quarters respectively;
- An opportunity for Trimester 1 to be timed so that it commences after the main round that University Admissions Centre (UAC) offers, thus enabling UWS School of Business to continue to participate in the UAC process; and,
- An opportunity for Trimesters 2 and 3 to commence prior to and following the UAC mid-year intake thus providing further opportunities for new students to commence. This non-standard timing provides opportunities that are counter-cyclical to our main University competitors.

The trimester-based calendar year will also provide opportunities to structure academic work differently by providing opportunities for research active staff to shift teaching workload into two semesters. Teaching focused academic staff will usually teach in all three trimesters and will usually take annual leave in January each year. The three 13-week trimesters also provide 5 non-teaching weeks for shorter annual leave breaks for these staff. The following is a simplified version of **Appendix E**.

Trimester 1 - 13 weeks: 3 Feb – 2 May 2014

Teaching:	3 Feb – 7 Mar
Mid Trimester Break	10 Mar – 14 Mar
Teaching:	17 Mar – 17 Apr
NSW Primary School Holidays:	14 Apr – 25 Apr
Public Holiday Easter:	18 Apr – 21 Apr
Public Holiday Anzac Day:	25 Apr
Exams:	21 Apr – 2 May

Inter- Semester Break: **5 May – 23 May**

Trimester 2 - 13 weeks: 26 May – 22 Aug 2014

Teaching:	26 May – 27 Jun
Mid Trimester Break	30 Jun – 4 Jul
NSW Primary School Holidays:	30 Jun – 11 Jul
Teaching:	7 Jul - 8 Aug
Exams:	11 Aug – 22 Aug

Inter- Semester Break: **25 Aug – 12 Sep**

Trimester 3 - 13 weeks: 15 Sep – 12 Dec 2014

Teaching:	15 Sep – 17 Oct
NSW Primary School Holidays:	22 Sep – 6 Oct
Mid Trimester Break	20 Oct – 24 Oct
Teaching:	27 Oct - 28 Nov
Exams:	1 Dec – 12 Dec
NSW Primary School Holidays:	22 Dec 2014 – 27 Jan 2015

Inter- Semester Break: **15 Dec – 30 Jan 2015**

Model 3: System 2

A Trimester System Conducted Over a Non-Calendar Academic Year: 2014-15

Tentative Dates for the 3 semesters are as follows:

Trimester 1 –	20 February to 8 June
• Break:	6 th April to 22 nd April
• NSW Primary School Holidays:	14 Apr – 25 Apr
Trimester 2 –	25 June to 12 October
• NSW Primary School Holidays:	30 Jun – 11 Jul
• Break:	11 th August to 26 th August
Trimester 3 –	29 October to 8 February
• NSW Primary School Holidays:	22 Sep – 6 Oct
• Break:	22 nd December to 6 th January
• NSW Primary School Holidays:	22 Dec – 27 Jan

Possible Configuration of Intensive Courses

There are several ways in which subjects/units could be configured to support the use of an intensive format. It would be possible to accelerate or compress courses and subjects based on their internal academic structures or accreditation regimes. Finger and Penney (2001) have identified the following common configurations:

- **Week-long mode:** 5 or 6 consecutive days from 8.30-4.30 pm (Clark & Clark, 2000; Grant, 2001);
- **Two or Three Week-long Mode** (Petrowsky, 1996; Van Scyoc & Gleason, 1993);
- **Weekend mode:** e.g., weekends either during the length of semester (e.g., in weeks 3, 6 and 9) or condensed into one half or one third of the semester;
- **Weekend and evening mode:** a mixture of weekends and allocated evening classes; and,
- **Other modes:** 3 hours per day for 18 days (Gose, 1995); weekly classes of 3 hours (Henebry, 1997); 4 hours per week for 5-10 weeks (Jonas, Weimer, & Herzer, 2004).

Sometimes it's just a matter of being creative as shown by MIT. The Engineering Faculty at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) complained that the Academic year was too short. The MIT Senate adopted a plan to add 5 instructional days to the academic calendar and allow departments to offer required courses during the 19 day instructional period in January. The short term is offered to students at no cost. Students who enroll in the short term typically take electives, work on research projects or attend special lectures sponsored by various departments.

ASSESSING INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL RISKS

There are internal and external risks that would need to be fully assessed and managed by the University in moving to a three term academic year. Among the external risks are the possible implications of a re-introduction of enrollment caps for Commonwealth Supported Places especially since the growth in Higher Education enrolments has been significant and may have budgetary implications. Moreover, the Government has given indications that it is looking at retention and completion rates in addition to access in the funding of universities. A good understanding of the possible impacts of a trimester system on retention and completion as well as the implication for student support services will be critical. Perhaps the major internal risk that the University would need to manage, based on the experience of those Australian Universities that have adopted the trimester system, is an implementation that is rushed, based on inadequate consultation with staff and students.

One of the main reasons for moving to a trimester system would be the anticipated gaining of efficiencies. However, if these are to be realized, other support systems need to be in gear. For example: the ICT systems, the admissions systems and the promotion pathways and performance management systems.

An important consideration as highlighted by AUQA suggests that:

the major risk the University will face as it implements its growth agenda will be the potential for further expansion to exacerbate the variability in the student experience, which needs to be diminished. Both the Board of Trustees and University management should make consistency in the student experience and in program delivery a priority for improvement. Reducing student attrition while at the same time pursuing a strategy of expanding access for under-represented groups is a demanding objective, and the University is making good progress in achieving it. (TEQSA, 2011, p.4)

The report also recognized that UWS "has many of the elements in place to manage these challenges and that others are in the process of being developed or scaled up, to form a generally supportive learning environment" (TEQSA, 2011, p.4). This is critical in providing a context for considering the processes underpinning the implementation of trimesters, including student consultation and involvement.

Finally, as this discussion moves forward, it would be worthwhile to consider the Executive Strategic Questions raised by our VC during the Campus Forums late last year, namely:

- Which of the University's strategic directions must be considered when developing the response to growth?
- Where is the demand and can the University take advantage of this demand?
- Where is there capacity to respond to demand and what needs to be done to increase capacity?
- What are the risks from growth and what is the University's appetite for growth?

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Australian Universities Trimester Schedules - Calendar Year: 2012 (Where applicable, Saturdays are included as exam days)

APPENDIX A

	University Attribute / Name	Bond University	University of Canberra	University of Newcastle	University of Western Australia
TRIMESTER 1		Trimester 1 15 weeks	Trimester 1 17 weeks	Trimester 1 14 weeks	Trimester 1 14 weeks
	Trimester 1	9 Jan – 21 Apr	30 Jan – 1 Jun	30 Jan – 11 May	21 Jan – 28 Apr
	Orientation	9 Jan – 13 Jan	30 Jan – 3 Feb	-----	-----
	Classes	16 Jan	6 Feb – 23 Mar	30 Jan – 5 Apr	21 Jan – 20 Apr
	Mid Trimester Break	-----	26 Mar – 30 Mar	6 Apr – 13 Apr	-----
	Classes	-----	2 Apr – 11 May	16 Apr – 27 Apr	-----
	Study Break	-----	-----	30 Apr – 2 May 3 days	-----
	Examination	13 Apr – 21 Apr 8 days	14 May – 1 Jun 17 days	3 May – 11 May 8 days	21 Apr – 28 Apr 7 days
	Inter Trimester Break	23 Apr – 4 May	4 Jun – 11 Jun	14 May – 18 May	30 Apr – 11 May
TRIMESTER 2		Trimester 2 15 weeks	Trimester 2 9 weeks	Trimester 2 14 weeks	Trimester 2 13 weeks
	Trimester 2	7 May – 18 Aug	12 Jun – 10 Aug	21 May – 24 Aug	12 May – 11 Aug
	Orientation	7 May – 11 May	-----	-----	-----
	Classes	14 May	12 Jun – 27 Jul	21 May – 10 Aug	12 May – 3 Aug
	Mid Trimester Break	-----	-----	-----	-----
	Classes	-----	-----	-----	-----
	Study Break	-----	-----	13 Aug – 15 Aug 3 days	-----
	Examination	10 Aug – 18 Aug 8 days	30 Jul – 10 Aug 11 days	16 Aug – 24 Aug 8 days	4 Aug – 11 Aug 7 days
	Inter Trimester Break	20 Aug – 31 Aug	No Break	27 Aug – 31 Aug	13 Aug – 24 Aug
TRIMESTER 3		Trimester 3 15 weeks	Trimester 3 17 weeks	Trimester 3 14 weeks	Trimester 3 13 weeks
	Trimester 3	3 Sep – 15 Dec	6 Aug – 7 Dec	3 Sep – 7 Dec	25 Aug – 24 Nov
	Orientation	3 Sep – 7 Sep	6 Aug – 10 Aug	-----	-----
	Classes	10 Sep	13 Aug – 28 Sep	3 Sep – 23 Nov	25 Aug – 16 Nov
	Mid Trimester Break	-----	1 Oct – 5 Oct	-----	-----
	Classes	-----	8 Oct – 16 Nov	-----	-----
	Study Break	-----	-----	26 Nov – 28 Nov 3 days	-----
	Examination	7 Dec – 15 Dec 8 days	19 Nov – 7 Dec 17 days	29 Nov – 7 Dec 8 days	17 Nov – 24 Nov 7 days
	TOTAL WEEKS PER YR *	45	43	42	40

NOTE: * = No of weeks per semester/year includes orientation, classes and examination periods but excludes the mid-semester breaks

Australian Universities Trimester Schedules - Non-Calendar Year: 2012 /13 (Where applicable, Saturdays are included as exam days)

APPENDIX B

	University Attribute/Name	Central Queensland University	Charles Sturt University	Curtin University of Technology	Deakin University	Southern Cross University	University of New England
TRIMESTER 1		Trimester 1 14 weeks	Trimester 1 15 weeks	Trimester 1 16 weeks	Trimester 1 14 weeks	Trimester 1 14 weeks	Trimester 1 15 weeks
		27 Feb – 8 Jun	20 Feb – 15 Jun	20 Feb – 15 Jun	5 Mar – 15 Jun	15 Feb – 2 Jun	13 Feb – 8 June
	Orientation	-----	20 Feb – 24 Feb	20 Feb – 24 Feb	-----	15 Feb – 17 Feb	13 Feb - 17 Feb
	Classes	-----	27 Feb – 5 Apr	27 Feb – 7 Apr	5 Mar – 5 Apr	20 Feb – 30 Mar	20 Feb – 25 May
	Mid Semester Break	-----	# 6 Apr – 20 Apr	9 Apr – 13 Apr	6 Apr – 15 Apr	** 2 Apr – 6 Apr	9 Apr – 22 Apr Intensive School
	Classes	-----	23 Apr – 1 Jun	16 Apr – 25 May	16 Apr – 1 Jun	10 Apr – 18 May	-----
	Study Break	-----	-----	28 May – 1 Jun 5 days	4 Jun – 6 Jun 3 days	21 May – 23 May 3 days	-----
	Examination	31 May – 8 Jun 8 days	4 Jun – 15 Jun 10 days	4 Jun – 15 Jun 10 days	7 Jun – 15 Jun 7 days	24 May – 2 Jun 9 days	28 May – 8 Jun 11 days
TRIMESTER 2	Inter Trimester Break	11 Jun – 29 Jun	18 Jun – 6 Jul	18 Jun – 6 Jul	18 Jun – 6 Jul	4 Jun – 15 Jun	-----
		Trimester 2 14 weeks	Trimester 2 15 weeks	Trimester 2 16 weeks	Trimester 2 14 weeks	Trimester 2 14 weeks	Trimester 2 13 weeks
		2 Jul – 12 Oct	9 Jul – 26 Oct	9 Jul – 2 Nov	9 Jul – 19 Oct	13 Jun – 29 Sep	21 Jun – 15 Oct
	Orientation	-----	-----	9 Jul – 13 Jul	-----	13 Jun – 15 Jun	21 Jun – 22 Jun
	Classes	-----	9 Jul – 17 Aug	16 Jul – 7 Sep	9 Jul – 21 Sep	18 Jun – 27 Jul	25 Jun – 28 Sep
	Mid Semester Break	-----	# 20 Aug – 31 Aug	10 Sep – 14 Sep	24 Sep – 30 Sep	** 30 Jul – 3 Aug	11 Jun – 24 Jun 11 Aug – 26 Aug Intensive Schools
	Classes	-----	3 Sep – 12 Oct	17 Sep – 12 Oct	1 Oct – 5 Oct	6 Aug – 14 Sep	-----
	Study Break	-----	-----	15 Oct – 19 Oct 5 days	8 Oct – 10 Oct 3 days	17 Sep – 19 Sep 3 days	-----
TRIMESTER 3	Examination	4 Oct – 12 Oct 8 days	15 Oct – 26 Oct 11 days	22 Oct – 2 Nov 11 days	11 Oct – 19 Oct 8 days	20 Sep – 29 Sep 9 days	2 Oct – 15 Oct 12 days
	Inter Trimester Break	15 Oct – 26 Oct	29 Oct – 9 Nov	-----	22 Oct – 9 Nov	1 Oct – 12 Oct	-----
		Trimester 3 14 weeks	Trimester 3 13 weeks	Trimester 3 13 weeks	Trimester 3 14 weeks	Trimester 3 15 weeks	Trimester 3 13 weeks
		29 Oct – 8 Feb '13	12 Nov – 15 Feb '13	5 Nov – 8 Feb '13	12 Nov – 22 Feb '13	15 Oct – 2 Feb '13	29 Oct – 11 Feb
	Orientation	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
	Classes	-----	12 Nov – 21 Dec	5 Nov – 21 Dec	12 Nov – 24 Dec	15 Oct – 14 Dec	29 Oct – 21 Dec
	Mid Semester Break	24 Dec – 1 Jan '13	24 Dec – 1 Jan '13	24 Dec – 1Jan '13	25 Dec – 3 Jan '13	** 17 Dec – 1 Jan '13	24 Dec – 4 Jan
	Classes	-----	2 Jan – 25 Jan '13	2 Jan – 1 Feb '13	4 Jan – 8 Feb '13	2 Jan – 18 Jan '13	7 Jan – 25 Jan
	Study Break	-----	# 28 Jan – 8 Feb '13	-----	11 Feb – 13 Feb '13 3 days	21 Jan – 23 Jan '13 3 days	-----
	Examination	4 Feb – 8 Feb '13 5 days	11 Feb–15 Feb '13 5 days	4 Feb – 8 Feb '13 5 days	14 Feb – 22 Feb '13 8 days	24 Jan – 2 Feb '13 8 days	29 Jan – 11 Feb'13
	Inter Trimester Break	11 Feb – 22 Feb '13	-----	11 Feb – 22 Feb '13	25 Feb – 8 Mar '13	-----	-----
	TOTAL WEEKS PER YR *	42	43	45	42	43	41

NOTES: * = No of weeks per semester/year includes orientation, classes and examination periods but excludes the mid-semester breaks
= This period is denoted "residential school" for external students on the university calendar but is considered a mid-semester break here
** = This period is denoted "study week" on the university calendar but is considered a mid-semester break here

UK Universities Trimester Schedules: 2012/13

APPENDIX C

	University Attribute/Name	University of Oxford (Lincoln College)	University of Cambridge	University of the West of Scotland	Edinburgh Napier University	Glasgow Caledonian University
TRIMESTER 1		Trimester 1 / Michaelmas Term 8 weeks	Trimester 1 / Michaelmas term 9 weeks	Trimester 1 17 weeks	Trimester 1 15 weeks	Trimester 1 15 weeks
	Trimester 1 2012	7 Oct – 1 Dec 2012	2 Oct – 30 Nov 2012	17 Sep 2012 – 26 Jan 2013	8 Sep – 22 Dec 2012	10 Sep – 19 Dec 2012
	Examination	End on 1 Dec	-----	12 Jan – 26 Jan	10 Dec – 22 Dec	10 Dec – 19 Dec
	Inter Trimester Break	3 Dec – 12 Jan 2013	1 Dec – 14 Jan 2013	-----	24 Dec – 13 Jan 2013	20 Dec – 13 Jan 2013
TRIMESTER 2		Trimester 2/Hilary Term 8 weeks	Trimester 2 / Lent Term 9 weeks	Trimester 2 16 weeks	Trimester 2 15 weeks	Trimester 2 15 weeks
	Trimester 2 2013	13 Jan – 9 Mar	15 Jan – 15 Mar	28 Jan – 25 May	14 Jan – 11 May	14 Jan – 3 May
	Examination	End on 9 Mar	-----	11 May – 25 May	29 April – 11 May	15 Apr – 3 May
	Easter Break			29 Mar – 5 Apr	29 Mar – 12 April	
	Inter Trimester Break	10 Mar – 20 April	18 Mar – 22 Apr	-----	12 May – 19 May	6 May – 10 May
TRIMESTER 3		Trimester 3 / Trinity term 8 weeks	Trimester 3 / Easter Term 8 weeks	Trimester 3 12 weeks	Trimester 3 15 weeks	Trimester 3 14 weeks
	Trimester 3 2013	21 April – 15 June	23 Apr – 14 June	27 May – 17 Aug	20 May – 31 Aug	13 May – 16 Aug
	Examination	End on 15 June	-----	3 Aug – 17 Aug	19 Aug – 31 Aug	5 Aug – 16 Aug
	Inter Trimester Break	16 June – 12 Oct	18 June – 7 Oct	19 Aug – 14 Sep		19 Aug – 6 Sep
	TOTAL WEEKS PER YR *	24	26	45	45	44

NOTES: * = No of weeks per semester/year includes orientation, classes and examination periods but excludes the mid-semester breaks

US Universities Trimester Schedules: 2012/13

APPENDIX D

	University Attribute/Name	University of California (Irvine)	University of Denver (Sturm College of Law)	Portland State University	University of Washington	DePaul University	Harvard University	University of California, Los Angeles
TRIMESTER 1		Trimester 1 * 12 weeks	Trimester 1 18 weeks	Trimester 1# 11 weeks	Trimester 1^ 12 weeks	Autumn Quarter \$ 11 weeks	Fall Term 16 Weeks	Fall Quarter 12 Weeks
	Trimester 1	24 Sep – 14 Dec	13 Aug – 18 Dec	24 Sep – 8 Dec	24 Sep – 14 Dec	4 Sep – 20 Nov	4 Sep – 21 Dec	24 Sep – 14 Dec
	Orientation	24 Sep – 26 Sep	13 Aug – 17 Aug	-	-----	4 Sep	-----	24 Sep – 26 Sep
	Classes	27 Sep – 7 Dec	20 Aug – 29 Nov	24 Sep – 2 Dec	24 Sep – 7 Dec	5 Sep – 13 Nov	4 Sep – 20 Nov	27 Sep – 7 Dec
	Mid Trimester Break	-----	22 Nov – 24 Nov	-----	-----	-----	21 Nov – 25 Nov	-----
	Classes	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	26 Nov – 4 Dec	-----
	Study Break	-----	30 Nov – 5 Dec	-----	-----	-----	5 Dec – 12 Dec	-----
	Examination	8 Dec – 14 Dec	6 Dec – 18 Dec	3 Dec – 8 Dec	10 Dec – 14 Dec	14 Nov – 20 Nov	13 Dec – 21 Dec	8 Dec – 14 Dec
	Inter Trimester Break	-----	-----	10 Dec – 4 Jan	17 Dec – 4 Jan	-----	22 Dec – 27 Jan	-----
		Trimester 2 12 weeks	Trimester 2 17 weeks	Trimester 2 11 weeks	Trimester 2 11 weeks	Winter Quarter 11 weeks	Spring Term 15 Weeks	Winter Quarter 12 Weeks
TRIMESTER 2	Trimester 2	2 Jan – 22 Mar	14 Jan – 16 May	7 Jan – 23 Mar	7 Jan – 22 March	5 Jan – 22 Mar	28 Jan – 18 May	2 Jan – 22 March
	Orientation	2 Jan – 4 Jan	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	2 Jan – 4 Jan
	Classes	7 Jan – 15 Mar	14 Jan – 29 Apr	7 Jan – 17 Mar	7 Jan – 15 Mar	5 Jan – 15 Mar	28 Jan – 15 Mar	7 Jan – 15 March
	Mid Trimester Break	-----	18 Mar – 23 Mar	-----	-----	-----	16 Mar – 24 Mar	-----
	Classes	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	25 Mar – 1 May	-----
	Study Break	-----	30 Apr – 2 May	-----	-----	-----	2 May – 9 May	-----
	Examination	16 Mar – 22 Mar	3 May – 16 May	18 Mar – 23 Mar	18 Mar – 22 Mar	16 Mar – 22 Mar	10 May – 18 May	6 Mar – 22 March
	Inter Trimester Break	25 Mar – 26 Mar	17 May – 27 May	25 Mar – 29 Mar	25 Mar – 29 Mar	25 Mar – 29 Mar	-----	-----
		Trimester 3 12 weeks	Trimester 3 9 weeks	Trimester 3 11 weeks	Trimester 3 11 weeks	Spring Quarter 11 weeks	Summer School 7 weeks	Spring Quarter 12 Weeks
TRIMESTER 3	Trimester 3	27 Mar – 14 June	28 May – 27 July	1 April – 15 June	1 Apr – 14 June	1 Apr – 14 June	24 June – 9 Aug	27 Mar – 14 June
	Orientation	27 Mar – 29 Mar	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	27 Mar – 29 Mar
	Classes	1 Apr – 7 June	28 May – 16 July	1 Apr – 9 June	1 Apr – 7 June	1 Apr – 7 June	-----	1 Apr – 7 June
	Mid Trimester Break	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
	Classes	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
	Study Break	-----	17 July – 20 July	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
	Examination	8 June – 13 June	22 July – 27 July	10 June – 15 June	10 June – 14 June	8 June – 14 June	-----	8 June – 14 June
	TOTAL WEEKS per YR	36	44	33	34	33	38	36

Notes: * University of California runs 2 summer sessions between trimester 2 and 3.
 Summer Session 1 – goes from June 25 – August 1 (5 weeks)
 Summer Session 2 – August 6 – September 12 (5 weeks)

^ University of Washington runs 2 summer sessions between trimester 2 and 3.
 Summer Session 2 (A term)– June 24 – July 24 (4 weeks)
 Summer Session 3 (B term) – July 25 – August 23(4 weeks)

Portland State University runs 3 summer sessions between trimester 2 and 3.
 Summer Session 1 – goes from June 25 – July 22 (4 weeks)
 Summer Session 2 – July 23 – August 17 (4 weeks)
 Summer Session 3 – June 25 – September 7 (11 weeks)

\$ Depaul University runs 2 sessions between trimesters 2 and 3.
 Summer Session 1 – goes from June 17 – July 19 (4 weeks)
 Summer Session 2 – July 22 – August 23 (4 weeks)

Possible Trimester Structure / BUSINESS and UWS COLLEGE

APPENDIX E

[illegible]