Compressed Calendar
Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is a “compressed calendar”?
Compressing a calendar means altering the academic schedule from an 18-week semester to a 17 or 16-week semester (the minimum mandated by California Ed Code) without loss of instructional time in the classroom. Most community colleges convert to 16 weeks to better align their schedules with 4-year institutions. Of the 112 community colleges in California, 54 have converted to a compressed calendar, and an additional 9 Districts are currently considering converting. No colleges have ever shifted back to a traditional academic calendar from a compressed academic calendar.

2. Why are we considering a compressed calendar at Hartnell College?
In response to increasing faculty interest, a Task Force was formed in Spring 2013 to explore the possibility of a compressed calendar at Hartnell College. According to a similar task force at Santa Rose Junior College, community colleges that have adopted a 16-week semester consistently report between 1 and 2% increase in student retention and success. Some colleges offer a winter intersession, allowing students to fast-track their academic studies. The 16-week semester more closely aligns with many UC and CSU formats, facilitating the transition of transfer students. The compressed calendar offers greater convenience for students who are concurrently enrolled at more than one institution. Colleges that have converted to the compressed calendar report overall satisfaction with increased scheduling flexibility. Faculty and administrators appreciate the additional time to prepare for classes, process grades, and bring closure to previous term activities before the start of the next academic term.

3. How would the new schedule affect instructional time?
We are interested in developing a schedule that replicates as closely as possible the same amount of instructional time that we have under the current semester length. If a three unit class currently is scheduled for a maximum of 54 hours per semester (3 hours x 18 weeks = 54 hours), in the compressed schedule the class would still be scheduled for 54 hours, but would require more instructional time per week. The same calculation would be applied to the lab portion of any class. Class hours may include one 10-minute break per hour, and the need for 10 minutes of passing time would also be calculated into the schedule.

4. How would class times be affected?
Scheduling of classes must be consistent with the class hours indicated in the approved course outline for completion of the course. We will be evaluating compressed calendar schedules at a number of community colleges in California and looking for a model that best fits Hartnell College. Individual class schedules must be based on five-minute increments for starting and ending times, so a 3 unit class that meets for 18 weeks from 9:00 am to 10:15 am two days per week, with 10:15 to 10:25 allowed for passing time, would meet for 16 weeks from 9:00 am to 10:25 am with 10:25 to 10:35 for passing time. We will still have at least 10 minutes of passing time between classes.
5. How would lab times be affected?
The same math used to calculate minutes of instruction for lecture classes can be applied to lab classes to estimate how the schedule would be different under a compressed calendar. The calculated time may be different depending on if the lab meets one, two or more times per week.

6. How would the change to fewer instructional days affect our paychecks?
Since no instructional time is lost under a compressed calendar faculty pay would not be affected, but work schedules may change. Some aspects of the change may need to be negotiated.

7. Would the change to fewer instructional days affect retirement through STRS?
No, the compressed calendar would not affect STRS retirement.

8. Would we still have a finals schedule?
Some colleges choose to eliminate the finals week and hold exams during the last week of instruction. Most colleges have eliminated the designated finals schedule and offer finals during the 16th week of the semester. We will need to evaluate the best alternative for Hartnell College.

9. Would I have to change my syllabus?
Yes, you will need to modify your syllabus because the number of class sessions and meeting times will change.

10. Would I have to go to the Curriculum Committee to change my course?
No, the curriculum, unit value, and student learning outcomes would all remain the same under a compressed calendar; therefore you would not need to bring changes to the Curriculum Committee.

11. Would there be a winter intersession?
A compressed calendar provides an opportunity for a winter intersession, but there is no current plan to offer a winter intersession due to a lack of growth funding. We will have to evaluate this for Hartnell College for feasibility at the appropriate time.

12. Would summer session be longer?
It is anticipated that an 8-week summer session could be offered. Within the 8-week summer session, it is still possible to offer 6-week classes.

13. Would there be a Spring break?
Some colleges have eliminated Spring Break. We will need to evaluate the best scheduling scenario for Hartnell College.

14. What implications does this calendar have for counseling faculty and librarians?
Schedules for librarians and counselors will be affected; the degree of change is subject to negotiation.
15. **What implications does this calendar have for classified staff?**
   Full-time classified staff would experience no reduction in their regular annual work schedule as a result of this calendar. Work schedules for part-time classified staff may be impacted and need to be evaluated.

16. **Are student fees/tuition for the shorter terms the same as those for the full semesters?**
   Yes. All fees remain the same from term to term unless there are changes imposed by the State of California.

17. **Would a compressed calendar affect our flex activities?**
   Possibly, but this is a function of negotiations. We need to evaluate the best practice for Hartnell College.