

The Anatomy of a College Term

What is a College Term? A term is the length of time you will be enrolled in a single course.

College credit is earned after each course is successfully completed at a college or university. The number of credits is a measurement that is based on the number of hours you spent in lectures or labs learning with a professor.⁺



Quarter vs. Semester

5% of 4-year institutions operate on a quarter system



95% of 4-year institutions operate on a semester calendar

180 quarter credits

=

120 semester credits

1.5 quarter hours

=

1 semester hour

Semester hour vs quarter hour - translates to a set number of hours of class per week



First introduced in 1891

A quarter term is similar to the seasons. The academic year is broken into 4 separate terms: Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer.

4 terms per year

On average: 10 weeks

September, January, March, and June start times; Finishes in June.

Pro: Real-world pace

More courses means more customization opportunities



The semester originated in Germany and was adopted in America in the early 19th century to indicate a half-year term.*

2: # of Semesters per year with some offering a condensed summer option

15 weeks: Average length of a Semester

August and September – Semester Start Times; Finishes in May

Pro: Longer course time

Less curriculum flexibility

Trimester



The term trimester is used when the academic year is divided into three terms. Typically, this means that you will go to school in the Fall, Winter, and Spring. Depending upon the school, the trimester terms can be similar to the 10-week quarter system term or they can be slightly longer at 12-13 weeks. Some students like the trimester system because it can give you the flexibility to take fewer classes in each term but still finish at the same time.