

**Blog – June 2021**

# **Smooth sailing through the academic year**

## **- The importance of the Summer semester!**

So, here we are in June! Maybe you are a new transfer student; a continuing student; or you are taking the well-earned summer break. If you are a continuing student, maybe you thought about doing a course or two in the Summer semester but decided to hold off. Maybe you are thinking ahead to next year and planning out your course load for Fall/Winter 21-22 before your enrolment in July/August. As a mature student now in my 4<sup>th</sup> and final year, let me share some thoughts on the Summer semester to hopefully help you with your academic journey.

Your program requirements are probably like mine (depending on what you are studying of course). I have 120 credits to take over 4 years because I am doing it full time – many students do it over a longer period, so this is just my example. We all know that being a mature student is all about balancing studies with a whole array of other commitments. Whether you are part-time or full time, I believe taking Summer courses can help take the stress off when planning for F/W. It took me two years to realise this, hence why I am sharing these thoughts with you now!

In my first two years of university, I worked hard during the Fall/Winter terms to complete 30 credits and was on such a high once the final exams were over, all I wanted to do was take a break. Last year I realised that the “summer break” was a whole four months and in fact still part of the academic year. After looking through the list of courses, I was curious about a couple of them and decided to enrol and I am so glad I did. Here are my reasons you should consider Summer courses:

1. Whether you choose a course that is SU (whole summer), S1 or S2 (either half of summer), you are completing some of the credits and have less to take in Fall/Winter. For example, last year I took two courses (3 credits each) so this year I only had to do 24 credits. This summer I am taking one S1 course and an SU course with 6 credits each so this coming F/W terms I need 18 credits to graduate.

2. As a mature student and a parent, having the need to take less courses in F/W semester, makes me feel less anxious about having to choose between the courses I WANT to do and the course I CAN do due to timetable restrictions around childcare. This is also applicable if you are working or have other responsibilities.
3. You can select courses that interest you and there might be options that are online/ asynchronous you can fit in around your summer commitments and just focus on those courses. This summer I am taking *Anthropology of Digital Media*, which is fascinating and complimentary to my degree. I am also taking *Rock & Popular Music*, because when else would I get a chance to research and write about The Beatles!
4. Let us be honest, it is a fairly long period between end of exams in April and September! It is harder to get back into the university mindset after such a long time. If you do even one course, you can continue exercising those little grey cells!

Things to be mindful of before choosing your courses:

1. The courses are condensed and go twice as fast. You just need to mentally prepare for 2 lectures, or 2 readings/discussion posts a week!
2. Check in with your academic advisor to make sure you are on track. The degree progress report can be a little confusing and having an advisor look over your progress can be reassuring! You do not want to be in a position where you have taken a course you really like but it does not count towards your credits!
3. Look at the lesson delivery method and assessment formats. If you email the department or the course director, they may be able to provide you with an older syllabus or a course outline. This will help you see whether you are able to commit to it or not. Nothing worse than having weekly quizzes at the same time as you have your kids around, and you cannot concentrate. Choose the course where more focus is on either exams or written essays, depending on your strengths!

**Whether you are or you are not taking a summer course...** utilise this time to build skills and knowledge through virtual workshops and events! So, if you want to improve on your writing skills, your resume or your study skills, this is a good time look at what is offered by the [Writing Centre](#), [Career Education & Development](#) and the [Learning Skills Services](#). If you just want to improve your wellbeing or make connections with fellow mature students, [ACMAPS](#) offers regular Café Hours and Mindful Meditation as well as many other workshops such as Student-Parents Connect. You can also use this opportunity to connect with one of the friendly and experienced [ACMAPS Student Peer Mentors](#) who are available on a one-to-one basis as well as during Café Hours.

Wishing you a successful and productive rest of Summer term or a restful break!

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