

# **CONSULTATION PAPER**

## **Interim Report of the Academic Calendar Implementation Group 2017**

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### **Acknowledgements**

The Academic Calendar Implementation Group acknowledges the support given by many people in the consideration of the matters presented in this Interim Report. We are grateful for their wise counsel and detailed comments. We are indebted to Alice Snell for providing administrative support and coordinating the many meetings that were required.

6<sup>th</sup> June 2017

## 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1.1 Introduction

Building on previous work undertaken in 2016, the primary objective of the Academic Calendar Implementation Group (ACIG) was to establish a preferred option (including implementation timelines) for changes to the Academic Calendar, consistent with the 2017-2020 Strategic Plan.

A revised set of calendar Schedules (A-D) were developed. **Schedule A** proposed potentially far-reaching changes to existing semesters in order to provide large blocks of time over summer which could be used for teaching and/or research. **Schedule B** proposed a variation on the existing trimester series, whilst **Schedule C** proposed the introduction of six study periods available for intensive teaching. **Schedule D** (Open Universities Australia, OUA) was included (with no changes) for reference to show alignment between OUA and other periods.

These proposals were tested through a process of rapid 'idea testing' with identified stakeholders, who, in turn were encouraged to seek the views of others across the university.

### 1.2 Findings

Whilst there was some support for the compression of the semesters in Schedule A, the majority view expressed by stakeholders was that these changes would realise inadequate benefits compared to the human and financial costs of making these changes. However, there was good support for starting Semester 1 one week later, and finishing Semester 2 one week earlier. Schedule B was supported, but the inclusion of mid-trimester breaks was seen to extend the time excessively. There was strong support for the intensive blocks of teaching (Schedule C), and many innovative ideas for their use were advanced by stakeholders. The proposed start date of the first intensive period (1 Jan) in Schedule C was widely seen to be problematic as it commenced too early in the year.

The ACIG examined the costs and benefits of these proposed changes in the light of feedback. This included a consideration of the timelines that would be needed to prepare and execute a successful implementation, and the time taken for proposals to yield worthwhile benefits for the institution.

### 1.3 Proposal for consultation

The ACIG therefore propose the following implementation actions and timeframes:

**Schedule A:** The original proposal will be **dropped**. Rather, in the current semester calendar one of the two tuition free weeks will be deleted, meaning that Semester 1 would start one week later, Semester 2 would finish one week earlier. (The current inter-semester gap would be maintained, the study week retained.) These changes could be implemented for the calendar year 2019 onwards.

**Schedule B:** The original proposal will be **dropped**. Rather, the existing trimester series (1, 2, 3) will be left unchanged, and used in preference for new programs as required. Existing programs using 'A' and 'B' trimesters would be encouraged to use the intensive blocks or the standard trimester series as appropriate in future. This longer term proposal is subject to contract negotiations.

**Schedule C:** The original proposal will be **maintained**. However, the later start of Semester 1 would allow the first intensive block to start one week later, thereby avoiding starting on the 1<sup>st</sup> January. These new study periods could become available for use from the calendar year 2018 onwards.

### 1.4 Consultation timeline

The formal consultation period opens on the 6<sup>th</sup> June and runs for a month. Please circulate this document widely and return comments to [calendar@curtin.edu.au](mailto:calendar@curtin.edu.au) no later than Friday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2017.

## 2.0 BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Precursor work: The 2016 Working Party

During 2016 and consistent with activities being undertaken in line with the then emergent 2017-2020 Strategic Plan, an Academic Calendar Review Working Party (hereafter, 'Working Party') was convened by the DVC Academic, Professor Jill Downie. Under the leadership of A/Professor Linley Lord (Chair, Academic Board), the Working Party reviewed earlier proposals, conducted a literature review, scanned for established/emergent practices in other institutions and gathered feedback from stakeholders across the institution. The Working Party focused on the undergraduate cohort, with medical school and postgraduate students defined to be outside the scope of the review.

The report, issued on the 29<sup>th</sup> November 2016 and entitled '2016 Options Paper' (Lord, 2016) examined four calendar options, all of which were based on reducing the current number of study periods. The report also identified 9 recommendations. These set out key principles, and proposed that a preferred model would be agreed and socialised further (Recommendation 1).

Table 1: Summary of recommendations outlined by the working party (Lord, 2016)

Number	Recommendation
Recommendation 1	A preferred academic calendar model is agreed to and socialised further with the academic community and other key stakeholders
Recommendation 2	Consolidate current teaching periods in the academic calendar to reduce the number of study periods available
Recommendation 3	Establish clear procedures including governance requirements to create a new teaching period
Recommendation 4	Review course design, assessment and moderation practices to ensure effective delivery on the optimal calendar across all modes and locations
Recommendation 5	Classes continue to be offered on public holidays that fall in scheduled teaching periods
Recommendation 6	Supplementary examinations continue to be offered
Recommendation 7	Recognise the systems and people capability and capacity required to deliver on a changed academic calendar including appropriate allocation of human and financial resources
Recommendation 8	Recognise the resources required to cover the entire student lifecycle
Recommendation 9	Maintain the focus on student experience and retention with respect to changes to the academic calendar

### 2.2 Formation of the Academic Calendar Implementation Group

At the request of the DVC(A), an Academic Calendar Implementation Group (ACIG) was established. As shown in the below extract and outlined in the terms of reference, the purpose of this group was to determine a preferred model for implementation.

#### 2.2.1 Purpose

*Using the Academic Calendar 2016 Options Paper as a basis, the Academic Calendar Implementation Group will analyse potential options for a revised Curtin Academic Calendar to determine a preferred model for implementation. This analysis will seek to understand the implications of each model and the extent and nature of any resulting changes.*

### 2.2.2 Principles

Within the terms of reference of the ACIG, five principles underpinned the identification of a preferred academic calendar model.

1. Suit the needs of a global university;
2. Enable students to progress smoothly, with enough time in their schedules to manage study, and to engage in co-curricula experiences;
3. Provide time for academic and professional staff to do teaching preparation and research and to be university and community citizens;
4. Maximise opportunity for the University to grow its student load in all study periods by providing attractive study period options for students from all cohorts; and
5. Be sustainable in operation and have a manageable implementation impact.

Given the limitations on scope outlined earlier, the purview of the Implementation Group was extended to draw the medical school and postgraduate courses into the frame of reference.

Drawing on the models considered by the Working Party, a 'comparison calendar' was drawn up. This drew together the key aspects of the current calendar and provided information about census/reporting dates; results release; and holidays other than WA. It facilitated a side by side comparison of the current and possible future study periods across the calendar year, and included two international examples to provide reference to northern hemisphere calendars.

The following broad approaches were considered:

1. **Minor Changes:** No substantial changes to the existing calendar. Study periods retained as they currently are, with improvements to issues of timing wherever possible.
2. **Transformation:** Move towards a new calendar defined by short blocks of six week study periods, with a corresponding reduction in the number of available study periods.
3. **Transition:** Create new study periods to target strategic aims and align with markets. The new study periods would be available generally, with the intention of moving appropriate courses over to the new periods and reducing the number of study periods over time.

The three broad approaches were each examined to appraise their potential to yield worthwhile benefits; their likely impact on existing provision; and the risk of unintended consequences. The ACIG judged the existing calendar to be working reasonably well (albeit with some notable areas of weakness) for Curtin's current scope of operation. However, in its current form, the Calendar would not necessarily serve the global aspirations of the Strategic Plan 2017-2020 particularly well. In 2016, the Working Party had advanced the concept of six week intensive blocks and the ACIG considered whether their wholesale adoption across the university would facilitate the transformative agenda outlined above. On balance, the ACIG determined that the level of radical change required to enact such a transformative agenda would incur an unacceptable level of risk. The ACIG therefore concluded that the most appropriate approach would be to evaluate a transitional approach which would allow new study periods to be trialled, together with amendments to existing provision within semesters and trimesters.

## 2.3 Process

The following table outlines the high-level process followed by the ACIG.

Table 2: ACIG Process.

Step	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sept
Develop Calendar models and undertake high level analysis								
Consultation [Round 1]: 'idea-testing'								
Data analysis, model refinement & high level implementation requirements analysis								
Consideration of high level implementation requirements								
Interim Report drafted								
Consultation [Round 2]: Interim Report					6 <sup>th</sup> June to 7 <sup>th</sup> July			
Interim Report presented to Academic Services Committee					Docs 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Mtg 6 <sup>th</sup>		
Final Report prepared								
Present findings to SET								
Submit for approval to Academic Board							Docs 14 <sup>th</sup> Mtg 25 <sup>th</sup>	

The Final Report of the ACIG will be prepared following the second round of consultation. The final report findings will be presented to the Senior Executive Team before being submitted to the Academic Board for approval. If approved, the subsequent action would be to establish a project group with the remit to operationalise these changes to the calendar.

## 3.0 PROPOSALS

### 3.1 Development of proposed calendar schedules

A set of proposed calendar Schedules (A-D) were developed, and these are shown in Appendix A.

**Schedule A** proposed potentially far-reaching changes to existing Semesters, in order to provide large blocks of time over summer which could be used for teaching and/or research. To create adequate space for the insertion of an extended block of time over summer, a tuition free week and a study week was dropped from each Semester. The inter-semester gap was narrowed considerably.

**Schedule B** proposed a variation on the existing trimester series. This maintained the existing start date of the current standard Trimester series, but introduced a tuition free week into each trimester for comparability with the single tuition free week that had been retained within semesters.

**Schedule C** proposed the introduction of six study periods available for intensive teaching. To align with the start dates of Semester 1, the first intensive study period commenced immediately after January 1<sup>st</sup>. Each of these six study periods contained a notional six weeks of teaching with an examination week giving seven weeks in total available within each intensive period.

**Schedule D** (Open Universities Australia, OUA) was included to show alignment between OUA and other periods. There were no changes contained within Schedule D and its inclusion was for reference only.

### 3.2 Rapid idea-testing

These proposals were tested through a process of rapid 'idea testing' with identified stakeholders. During April and May 2017, an intensive program of meetings was facilitated by the members of ACIG, with each member taking responsibility for engaging with stakeholders within their domain. Stakeholders were also encouraged to also seek the views of others across the university.

Stakeholders included:

- Members of the Senior Executive Team;
- Heads of School;
- Operational/Administrative areas (including Faculty Business Managers);
- Teaching and Learning;
- International;
- Student Guild.

Stakeholders were provided with...

- A very short briefing paper outlining the changes and key questions for discussion;
- A spreadsheet showing existing and new timings for study periods; and
- A spreadsheet showing unit enrolments for existing study periods.

... and they were asked to comment on the proposals by addressing the following key points:

- Advantages for staff, students, University, new markets and load;
- Contribution to university strategic aims;
- Possible disadvantages or unintended consequences;
- Impact of the change on the university community;
- Key resourcing implications; and
- Any other relevant considerations.

In addition to the above, several Teaching Support Officers, Academics and school-based administrative staff were involved in the consultation meetings with their Heads of School.

A short briefing/discussion meeting was also held with: Human Resources Business Consultants; Curtin Academy Executive; and staff from Corporate Relations (University Marketing).

Written submissions were also received from other parties not listed above.

Responses were collected through a diversity of channels, including interviews, meetings, and informal discussions. Responses from others were also received by email.

Data were collated and stored in a repository of 'key issues'. These were subjected to analysis to identify and categorise emergent themes and to appraise the level of support for each theme. The emergent themes were subsequently re-examined by members of the ACIG in the light of the original data to ensure that they were representative of the breadth and depth of the discussions that had taken place.

The ACIG acknowledges the contributions and thank colleagues for their considered input and support. Inevitably, given the volume of data collated, and the nuances contained therein it has not been possible to include every aspect of fine detail within this document.

The following discussion summarises those key points that emerged from this process.

## 4.0 FINDINGS

### 4.1 Introduction

The findings in relation to the proposed Schedules A-C are each taken in turn, presented in the following subsections in a consistent format which identifies potential benefits, costs, and any new suggestions which emerged through the process of idea-testing. A synopsis concludes each subsection.

### 4.2 Schedule A (Semesters)

**Schedule A** proposed potentially far-reaching changes to existing Semesters, in order to provide large blocks of time over summer which could be used for teaching and/or research. To create adequate space for the insertion of an extended block of time over summer, a tuition free week and a study week was dropped from each Semester. The inter-semester gap was narrowed considerably.

#### 4.2.1 Benefits

- A condensed semester program with more productive utilisation of the remaining time in the year for teaching/research would make better use of university facilities. This could also potentially relieve current pressure points if the load were more evenly distributed.
- Where appropriate, a calendar offering 2 semesters and 1 summer school (2+1) would facilitate condensed programs of study. Some students would appreciate the opportunity to fast-track their studies, or alternatively they could take advantage of a longer window of opportunity for work or extracurricular experience.
- The proposed changes would address long-standing problems faced by areas that currently teach both semesters and trimesters, and specifically where the summer trimester does not coordinate well with the holiday period associated with current semesters.

#### 4.2.2 Costs

- The majority of respondents were of the view that the condensing of the two semesters to produce sufficient space to allow an extended summer school would be likely to cause several undesirable consequences, and these are amplified in the following points.
- From a market growth point of view, it was unclear whether there was sufficient demand for courses/units during the summer period to warrant compressing the semesters to create space for an extended summer school. Equally, from a market risk point of view, there was a substantial risk to existing recruitment/retention given the large numbers of students currently operating within the semesters. In short, the Semester A proposal was seen by many to risk disadvantaging the majority for the benefit of comparatively few.

- From a student perspective, the loss of the student study week and a tuition free week was judged to be unfavourable. Furthermore, the condensed semester would increase the pressure on students to complete in a reduced timeframe, and (significantly) this pressure would be felt even where the opportunity for compressed study had not been taken up by the school. There would be less time to complete projects (e.g. fourth year Honours students would have 5 weeks less time to complete projects), and there would be a reduced opportunity to partake in extracurricular activities between semesters. Programs such as 'Go Global' would be under threat from the reduced inter-semester gap as would external activities such as University Games. Furthermore, some students (especially international/interstate) use the existing inter-semester gap to travel home to family. Finally, if the course was not being taught intensively using the unused summer period would introduce an unacceptably long break from studies between successive years.
- From a teaching perspective, the condensed semesters were seen to increase pressure on staff who would see an increase in workload. Available time for providing feedback and marking would be reduced. A recurrent theme was that this approach would not be family friendly, as it would become more difficult to take holiday during school vacation times. Childcare would be similarly impacted. It would become more difficult to coordinate and organise work integrated learning (e.g. placement) activities.
- From a research perspective, whilst the greater summer period would be helpful if staff were freed up to take advantage of this, the reduced gap between semesters would make it more difficult to conduct research activities. One such point of impact would be that of conference attendance which is often timed to occur during the months of July-August. Curtin's involvement in other activities such as National Science Week (12-20 August in 2017) could also be similarly impacted.
- From an administrative perspective, there would be substantially increased pressure to finalise entry and exit processes for students. Points of impact here would include pressures on results ratification processes (needed to confirm student progression) and the need to rapidly deal with assessment and termination appeals, amongst others.

#### 4.2.3 New suggestions

- The suggestion of starting the first Semester a week later was advanced and supported by several respondents. It is relatively uncommon in the Australian sector for a semester to contain three weeks designated as either tuition free or study weeks, and the reduction of one tuition free week would facilitate the one week later start to the semester. This was seen to have advantages which included the provision of more time for research and teaching preparation. Applying this logic to the second semester would permit the second semester to finish one week earlier, and it would maintain the inter-semester gap as it currently is. This suggestion also aligned with one of the suggestions for Schedule C, a point which is addressed in section 4.4.4.

#### 4.2.4 Synopsis

The consensus view was that considerable time and resources would be required to prepare adequately for a change of this magnitude, and the ACIG formed the view that 2019 would be the earliest possible date for inception were this proposal to proceed. Even so, 2019 would be a very tight implementation timeline, and the ACIG could not see that there would be sufficient benefit realised when set against the costs of making such changes. Furthermore, respondents identified considerable risk of damage to existing courses/markets and pointed to potential downstream issues

of quality, standards and retention. In short, there was insufficient evidence to determine that this would be a desirable change at this point in time.

The alternative suggestion of shortening each semester by removing one tuition-free week appears to offer benefits across the institution and ACIG noted a strong level of support for this. This change would not be in the same order of magnitude as that originally proposed, making an inception date for this change in 2019 viable. (This could not be changed for 2018 as there is insufficient lead time.)

### 4.3 Schedule B (Trimesters)

**Schedule B** proposed a variation on the existing trimester series. This maintained the existing start date of the current standard Trimester series, but introduced a tuition free week into each trimester for comparability with the single tuition free week that had been retained within semesters.

#### 4.3.1 Benefits

- There was a good level of ‘in principle’ support for the harmonisation of trimesters as greater calendar alignment could potentially increase the ability to teach in a more coordinated way across multiple locations. Even if synchronous teaching were not possible due to time zone differences, it would be possible to coordinate Boards of Examiners and other teaching/assessment activities. There would possibly be other added value in terms of the sharing of teaching/marking loads across locations in the event of holidays or sickness.

#### 4.3.2 Costs

- There would be a danger that harmonisation into one trimester could reduce the attractiveness of the program to specific domains. For example, a program that aligned well to the northern hemisphere may be of less interest to the Asian market, and vice versa.
- The additional tuition free weeks inserted into the trimesters were not seen to be helpful. Not only did they increase the overall time for three trimesters to complete by three weeks, the addition brought the close of the trimester series too close to the closedown period in December, placing additional pressure on the trimester end processes. The alternative of increasing the spacing between trimesters was not strongly supported, as whilst this gave more time between trimesters, it necessitated an earlier start to the year and a later finish. In short, the prevailing view was that the standard trimester series was ‘about right’.

#### 4.3.3 New suggestions

- An alternative proposal to create 10 week trimesters was advanced, but this was not widely supported. Critiques of this approach included the significant overhead of developing and maintaining units in multiple-length formats.

#### 4.3.4 Synopsis

The addition of tuition free weeks to the standard trimesters (1, 2, 3) would extend the series excessively, and there was little support for this change. Whilst there will be other trimester series that will be needed to meet current contractual obligations (or to suit particular markets in future) the most logical solution appears to be to leave the current standard trimester series (1, 2, 3) unchanged. It may be possible to reduce the diversity of Calendar trimester options in future and this could be driven through the Academic Calendar and Timetabling policy review due in 2018.

#### 4.4 Schedule C (Intensive periods)

**Schedule C** proposed the introduction of six study periods available for intensive teaching. To align with the start dates of Semester 1, the first intensive study period commenced immediately after January 1<sup>st</sup>. Each of these six study periods contained a notional six weeks of teaching with an examination week giving seven weeks in total available within each intensive period.

##### 4.4.1 Benefits

- Overall, the proposal to make available optional intensive blocks was strongly supported.
- Respondents argued that it was a distinct advantage to have standard dates for these established from the outset, which would prepare the ground for these to be cross-connected between different courses in future.
- The ACIG considered that the introduction of these intensive periods would not disrupt existing practices, as their inception does not mandate immediate change. Each area would be able to conduct a careful appraisal of viability in their own context before committing to deliver any units or courses using intensive periods. This approach was supported by respondents, many of whom pointed to the need for sharp market intelligence to help determine the viability of operating in areas that were new or less well known.
- Units delivered in intensive periods could be used in conjunction with MOOCs and MicroMasters programs to facilitate progression. Intensive blocks with six potential intake dates throughout the year would align more closely to a variety of academic calendars in use worldwide.
- Current intensive teaching deliveries were sometimes poorly aligned to census dates which occasionally occurred after teaching and assessment activities had been completed. This is problematic, because students can withdraw without financial penalty before the census date. Whilst this was reasonably uncommon, the availability of intensive teaching study periods is helpful in this situation.
- The use of early/late intensive teaching periods would make greater use of existing facilities.
- From a sessional staff point of view, it would be possible to have greater continuity of income over the summer period.
- Many potential uses for the intensive periods were advanced. These included:
  - using the first intensive period to offer 'catch-up' units which would allow students to retake a failed unit and continue into their subsequent year;
  - using an intensive period to allow students to complete pre-requisite units or specific entry requirements at any time (possibly converting a conditional offer into an unconditional one);
  - the ability to offer intensive professional or executive CPD on either a 'for-credit' or NFD (not for degree) basis at varying times throughout the year;
  - the opportunity to tender for government CPD short course contracts that form part of the Australia Awards program;
  - the ability to improve postgraduate load by offering graduate certificates and diplomas within the intensive periods;
  - the ability to offer intensive units as a 'winter' school (which would be summer in the northern hemisphere) for international cross institutional enrolments;
  - allowing students to start a course at different points of the year - this would be especially helpful with respect to alignment with other calendars (such as those in the northern hemisphere) and to postgraduate study more generally;
  - the ability to partly accelerate (or remediate) student progress according to demand;

- the ability to restructure a course to free up blocks of staff time for research in the periods where they were not teaching intensively; and
- the potential to create an accelerated two-year degree program (providing this was not in conflict with accreditation requirements);

#### 4.4.2 Costs

- The introduction of intensive teaching is not necessarily without cost. Several respondents pointed to the tension between not wanting to disrupt existing course/unit provision in semesters, whilst at the same time wanting to offer non-semester based alternatives to grow courses in different jurisdictions (online, international).
- Some respondents pointed out that units may need to be repeated during the year, and this would increase costs and pressures on staffing. In some disciplines, sessional staff were readily available, whilst in others it was more difficult to source staff with the academic qualifications and/or professional experience required to meet accreditation standards.
- From a financial point of view, some respondents drew attention to the risk of increasing costs (because of repeated unit delivery) without a parallel rise in enrolment numbers. To an extent, a similar risk would be realised if revenue were to increase in parallel with the cost of delivery, meaning that workloads would be increased without revenue benefits being realised. Essentially, this would be 'running harder to financially stand still'. This point lends weight to the observation in 4.4.1 regarding the need for greater insight and research into comparatively unknown markets.
- The intensive block around the Easter holiday would need to be extended to account for the impact of the public holidays.
- Although limits would be prescribed within the forthcoming EBA, concerns were expressed that some staff might find themselves 'teaching all the time' in every intensive period.

#### 4.4.3 New suggestions

- It was suggested that the start date for the first intensive period (immediately after January 1st) would be too soon, and that a start the following week would be preferable. This idea received considerable support.
- New courses or units offered in an intensive mode using these study periods should be monitored to ensure they are working as intended and to inform future development.

#### 4.4.4 Synopsis

There was very strong support for the introduction of intensive periods within the calendar. These were seen to provide opportunities for development in alignment with the strategic plan in areas where there was demonstrable market demand. It would, where appropriate, potentially facilitate student mobility across courses and locations. An important strength of this approach is that it would permit the creation of intensive study periods for those areas that would benefit, but it does not mandate wholesale change across the university.

The ACIG formed the view that Schedule C represented an attractive and innovative proposition, as the intensive study periods could be used in a variety of ways (some of which were outlined earlier) according to the interests and priorities of the school/faculty. Furthermore, if the semester one start date was moved in accordance with suggestions outlined 4.4.1, this would facilitate the start date of the first intensive period to be a week later.

#### 4.5 Schedule D (OUA periods)

Schedule D was included for reference to facilitate an examination of the alignment between existing OUA study periods and those study periods contained within the proposed Schedules A-C. There are no changes to OUA periods identified within this proposal.

#### 4.6 Other issues (not covered in the above)

- The medical school will require study periods to be established that are different to these, because of the whole year approach to teaching and learning that is typically encountered in this disciplinary context. Note that the first year of teaching in the medical school is within semesters (Schedule A, dealt with in section 4.2).
- Compression of (or changes to) the academic calendar has ‘knock-on’ effects for other areas, including (for example) maintenance, repairs and upgrades to teaching spaces.

### 5.0 CONCLUSIONS

#### 5.1 Synopsis

The ACIG examined the costs and benefits of these proposed changes in the light of feedback. This included a consideration of the timelines that would be needed to prepare and execute a successful implementation, and the time taken for proposals to yield worthwhile benefits for the institution.

Whilst there was some support for the compression of the semesters in Schedule A, the majority view expressed by stakeholders was that these changes would realise inadequate benefits compared to the human and financial costs of making these changes. However, there was good support for starting Semester 1 one week later, and finishing Semester 2 one week earlier in future.

Schedule B was generally supported, but the addition of mid-trimester breaks was seen to extend the time excessively, the deletion of which would mean that Schedule B reverted to the current standard trimester series (1, 2, 3).

There was strong support for the intensive blocks of teaching (Schedule C), and many innovative ideas for their use were advanced by stakeholders (refer to Section 4.4.1). The proposed start date of the first intensive period (1 Jan) was widely seen to be problematic as it commenced too early in the year, however this issue would be resolved if Semester 1 was started a week later.

The use of the intensive blocks was also seen as a way of transitioning into a different model of organising teaching. Many pointed to the issue of having overlapping teaching contained in semesters and trimesters, which led to various problems and inefficiencies, yet both were needed in order to meet the demand from different (national and international) domains. The use of intensive periods would allow the creation of two (for example) intake dates which would then be suited to the major areas of demand, allowing a global program to have a well-coordinated basis.

The ACIG recognised that it is probable that within the current financial climate, resourcing limitations will hinder the development and implementation of new courses/units taught in an intensive mode. It is the view of the ACIG that such developments should be supported through a combination of financial and support incentives to facilitate more rapid progress than might otherwise be the case.

Financial and support incentives could include:

- Identifying ‘champions’ to support development of intensive programs;
- Financial incentives to facilitate development that operate at a local level;
- Data gathering market intelligence activities to inform areas of high growth; and
- Course development teams to assist with redesign/reworking of learning materials and activities.

## 5.2 Proposal for consultation

The ACIG therefore propose the following implementation actions and timeframes:

**Schedule A:** The original proposal will be **dropped**. Rather, in the current semester calendar one of the two tuition free weeks will be deleted, meaning that Semester 1 would start one week later, Semester 2 would finish one week earlier. (The current inter-semester gap would be maintained, and the study week retained.) These changes could be implemented for the calendar year 2019 onwards.

The ACIG considered whether it would be possible to implement these changes for the 2018 calendar year, but this was not considered to be necessary as the intensive periods in Schedule C can be implemented in 2018 without requiring this move. Furthermore, any change to dates of semesters in 2018 would incur several ‘knock-on’ effects. This is because all location calendars and unit availabilities for 2018 have been published, and late changes to these would cause an additional burden on staff resources without equivalent benefit. For example, manual updates of census, applications, enrolment, last day withdrawal, fee payment dates and exam dates would be required. Class scheduling would be affected, and Orientation dates would need to be changed. International students would need updated letters of offer and COE/visa would need to be redone.

**Schedule B:** The original proposal will be **dropped**. Rather, the existing standard trimester series (1, 2, 3) will be left unchanged, and this will become the calendar to be used in preference for new (and if appropriate) existing programs as required. The current ‘A’ and ‘B’ series trimesters will remain, however existing programs using these trimesters would be encouraged to consider using the intensive blocks or the standard trimester series as appropriate in future. This is a longer-term proposal (to be driven by revisions to the Academic Calendar and Timetabling policy) and is subject to contract negotiations.

**Schedule C:** The original proposal will be **maintained**. A minor modification adjusts the date of the blocks to facilitate a start one week later than originally proposed – this avoids starting on the 1<sup>st</sup> Jan. These new intensive study periods could become available for use from the calendar year 2018 onwards. (It may be possible to re-purpose existing blocks within the location calendars and this would be investigated further.) For 2018, there would be no gap between the completion of the first intensive period and the start of the semester. However, the later start of Semester 1 commencing in 2019 onwards would introduce a one week gap between the conclusion of the first intensive period and the start of semester one.

The revised Schedules are shown in Appendix A.

(Filename: Appendix A - Academic Calendar Proposals v2.xlsx)

### 5.3 Consultation questions

Colleagues are asked to comment on the proposal by responding to the following questions:

1. Do you support the revised proposals?
2. Do these proposals go far enough to support the university strategic aims?
3. What else should to be done?
4. Are there any other relevant considerations?

### 5.4 Consultation timeline

The formal consultation period opens on the 6<sup>th</sup> June and runs for one month. Please feel free to circulate this document widely within Curtin.

Comments should be returned to [calendar@curtin.edu.au](mailto:calendar@curtin.edu.au) no later than Friday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2017.

Following closure of this consultation period, the ACIG will examine the responses received. A final proposal paper will be subsequently presented to Academic Board for approval.

Academic Calendar Implementation Group  
May 2017

## REFERENCES

Lord, L. (2016) et al. Academic Calendar 2016 Options Paper, Curtin Internal Document.