

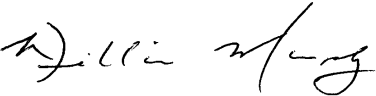


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July 17, 2020

**TO:** Presidents/Chief Executive Officers of NYS Colleges and Universities

**FROM:** William P. Murphy 

**SUBJECT:** Shortened Semester Flexibility for Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 Semesters

At its July 13, 2020 meeting, the NYS Board of Regents approved an amendment to Section 145-2.1(a)(i) and (ii) of the Commissioner's Regulations to permit NYS colleges and universities to shorten the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters from a minimum of 15 weeks to no less than 12 weeks without impacting a student's eligibility for NYS financial aid. The wording of the amendment is attached to this memo.

It is important to note that, regardless of the number of weeks in the semester, colleges must still meet the semester hour requirement in Section 50.1(o) of the Regulations which requires at least 15 hours of instruction and at least 30 hours of supplementary assignments per semester hour/credit granted. Section 50.1(o) reads as follows:

(o) *Semester hour* means a credit, point, or other unit granted for the satisfactory completion of a course which requires at least 15 hours (of 50 minutes each) of instruction and at least 30 hours of supplementary assignments, except as otherwise provided pursuant to section 52.2(c)(4) of this Subchapter. This basic measure shall be adjusted proportionately to translate the value of other academic calendars and formats of study in relation to the credit granted for study during the two semesters that comprise an academic year.

Colleges that shift to a shorter semester for the Fall 2020 and/or Spring 2021 semesters, as permitted by this amendment, should revise their course schedules as necessary to ensure continued compliance with Section 50.1(o).

Questions about the shortened semester flexibility and the semester hour requirement should be sent to [OCUEinfo@nysed.gov](mailto:OCUEinfo@nysed.gov). Questions about if/how shifting to a shortened semester might impact programs that lead to professional licensure should be sent to [OPPROGS@nysed.gov](mailto:OPPROGS@nysed.gov).

July 13, 2020 Amendment to Section 145-2.1(a)(i) and (ii). (New language is underlined):

Subparagraphs (i) and (ii) of paragraph (1) of subdivision (a) of section 145-2.1 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education are amended to read as follows:

(i) For State student financial aid programs, except the supplemental tuition assistance program (STAP), full-time study, where required by law, shall mean enrollment in credit-bearing courses applicable to the students' program of study, for at least 12 semester hours for a semester of not less than 15 weeks or 100 calendar days, inclusive of examination periods; or eight semester hours a quarter; or, in programs not organized on a semester or quarter basis, 24 semester hours for an academic year of not more than 12 months or the equivalent, as determined by the commissioner. Provided, however, that for the 2020-2021 academic year, a student shall meet the definition of full-time study in accordance with this subparagraph where a student is unable to enroll in credit-bearing courses applicable to the student's program of study for at least 15 weeks for a semester due to the COVID-19 crisis, provided that the student is enrolled in such credit-bearing courses for a minimum of 12 weeks for a semester and otherwise meets the semester hour requirements prescribed in this subparagraph.

(ii) A student shall be considered full-time for a program organized on an academic-year basis only if the student has filed a plan of study with the institution for the entire academic year. Except as otherwise defined in paragraph (4) of this subdivision, part-time study, for general awards, other than tuition awards for veterans and tuition awards for part-time undergraduate students, and for academic performance awards, shall mean enrollment in credit-bearing courses applicable to the students' program, for at least 6, but less than 12, semester hours or the equivalent for a semester of not less than 15 weeks or 100 calendar days, inclusive of examination periods; or at least four, but less than eight, semester hours a quarter. Provided, however, that for the 2020-2021 academic year, a student shall meet the definition of part-time in accordance with this subparagraph where a student is unable to enroll in credit-bearing courses applicable to the student's program for at least 15 weeks for a semester due to the COVID-19 crisis, provided that the student is enrolled in such credit-bearing courses for a minimum of 12 weeks for a semester and meets the semester hour requirements prescribed in this subparagraph.