

TRIDENT FASTRAC

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT
SUCCEEDING IN 8-WEEK SESSIONS

4/27/2015

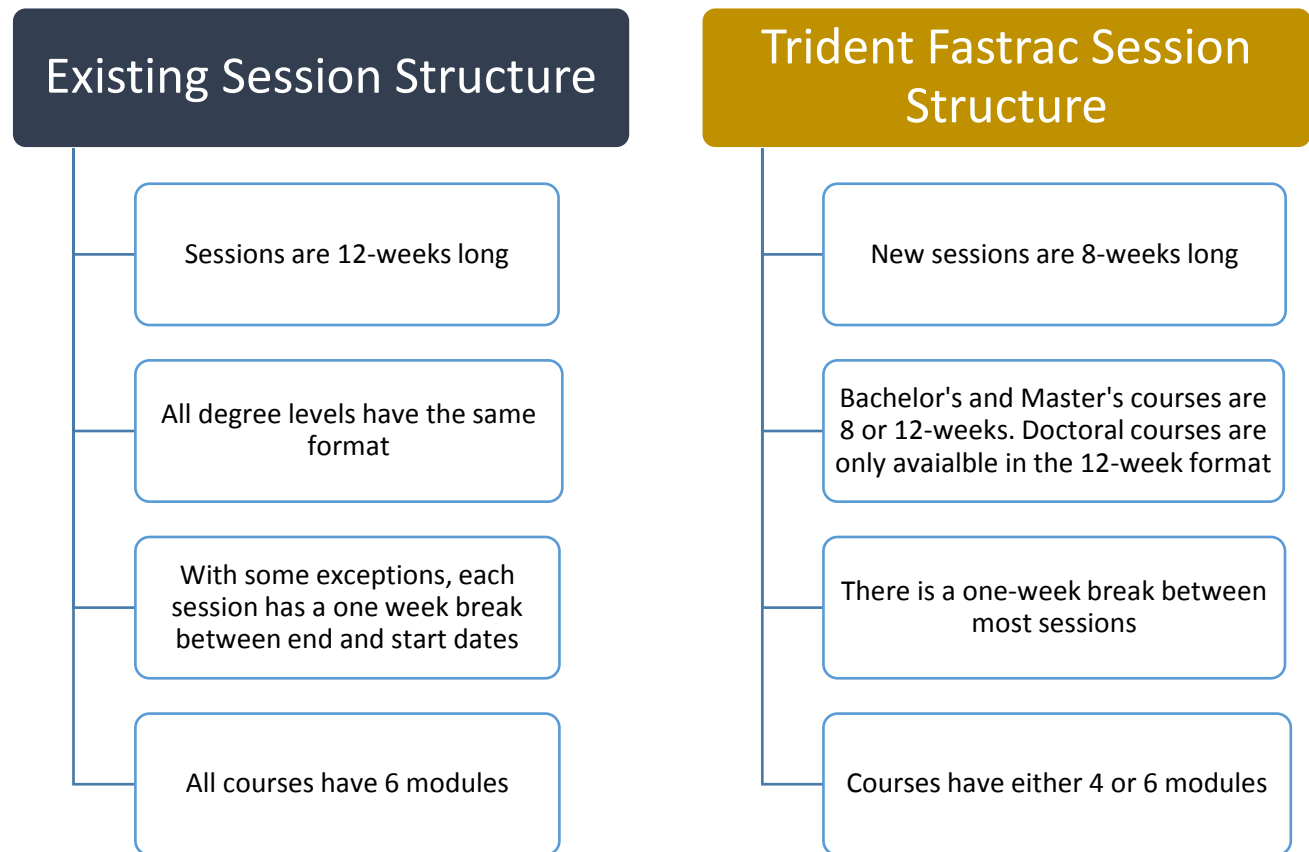


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What is the Trident Fastrac Plan?

The Trident Fastrac plan is a change to the current Trident session structure that enables current students to take courses in an 8-week format instead of a 12-week format (although 12-week courses will continue to be available).



Benefits of the Trident Fastrac Plan

- ✓ Same great education – shorter time to graduation
- ✓ Courses have been reorganized to improve efficiency and user experience in 8-weeks
- ✓ Increased flexibility with course scheduling
- ✓ Shorter sessions keep you interested
- ✓ You may be eligible for more frequent financial aid disbursements

Session Length Option Matrix

The chart below illustrates the options that various student groups will have related to session length as of the term that begins May 11.

Student Type (refers to students starting on or after May 11)	8-week session only	12-week session only	Student's Choice (8 or 12 wk. session)
New Individual course takers	x		
Continuing Individual course takers			x
New Bachelor's	x		
New Master's	x		
New doctoral		x	
Continuing Bachelor's			x
Continuing Master's			x
Continuing doctoral		x	
Inactive Returning Bachelor's			x
Inactive Returning Master's			x
Inactive Returning doctoral		x	
Bachelor's graduate enrolling in Master's	x		
Master's graduate enrolling in doctoral		x	
Bachelor's student switching programs			x
Master's student switching programs			x
Doctoral students switching programs		x	

Important Session Dates

The Academic Calendar has all of the information you need regarding important dates and deadlines, please visit: <https://www.trident.edu/academic-calendar/>

Self-Service Enrollment Improvements

The self-service enrollment process has just gotten easier! The system is more user-friendly and there are fewer steps required to complete the enrollment process. The images below show the current self-service enrollment process on the left (“Before”) and the new and improved process on the right (“After”).

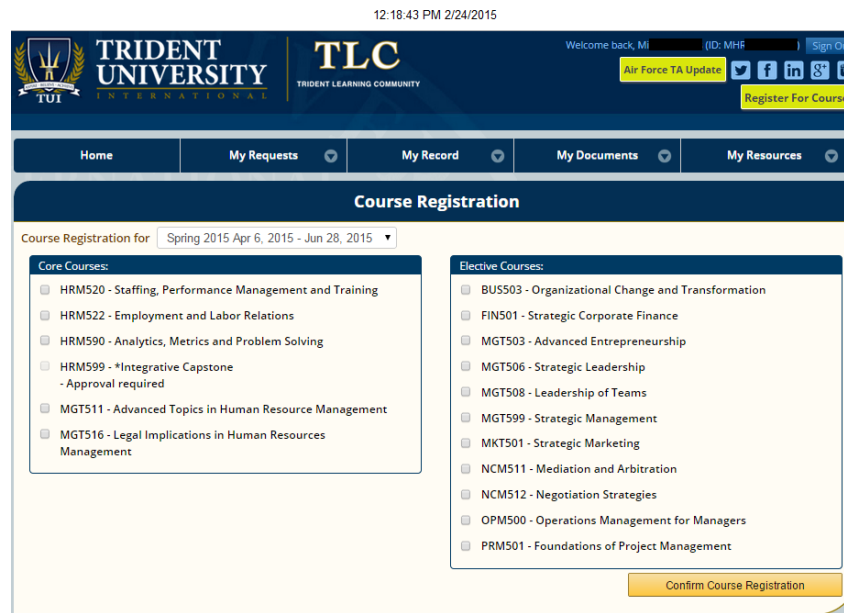
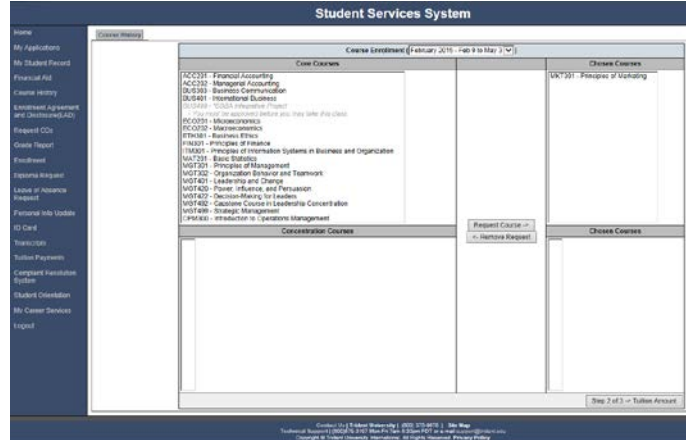
BEFORE

AFTER

Step 1: Click the button “Enroll for a Course”.

Step 2: Select Term to enroll.

Step 3: Request/Remove course one by one.



Frequently Asked Questions by Topic Alphabetically

Academic Experience

1) Is there going to be less work required in an 8-week course?

- No. Since the number of credits per course remain the same in the 8-week version of a course, the course learning outcomes and the amount of work is the same as for 12-week courses, but is completed in less time. Because you are completing the work in a shorter amount of time, the hours per week that you dedicate to your studies will need to increase to ensure that you are successful. Keep in mind that the faculty members have modified the course deliverables, rubrics, and discussions to optimize learning for the 8-week format.

2) How many classes do I have to take concurrently to be considered full time?

- To be considered full time from an academic perspective, a master's or doctoral student must take a minimum of 4 credits (1 course) and a bachelor's student must take a minimum of 8 credits (2 courses). For financial aid purposes for undergraduates, a student needs to complete 3 courses in a 16 week period. This means that students taking 8-week courses can take one course during the first 8-week session and two courses in the second 8-week session (or vice versa) and be considered full-time.

3) Can I enroll in overlapping sessions?

- Yes, students can enroll in overlapping 8-week sessions. However, students may not take 12-week and 8-week sessions simultaneously.

4) I am a doctoral student. Why can't I take courses in the 8-week format?

- Doctoral courses require significant research. The curriculum was evaluated by the faculty who determined that due to the rigor required to successfully complete doctoral level courses, they did not lend themselves to an 8-week format.

- 5) How will my weekly course experience change if I change to 8-weeks sessions?**
- a. Depending on the course, you will have either 4 or 6 modules to complete. The course expectations and contents are the same as they are in the current format, but the content has been condensed to enable more rapid completion. Because the 8-week format is shorter than the 12-week format, you will need to dedicate additional time per week to study and complete assignments. You should plan on spending more time each week on your studies in 8-week courses than you would in a 12-week course.
- 6) How was it determined that 8-week courses are academically appropriate for Trident students?**
- a. A student survey was conducted and analyzed in early 2014. The results of the survey indicated that students wanted an opportunity to increase their pace towards graduation. The academic leadership evaluated the grades and retention of all students and made the determination that 8-week courses were appropriate for Bachelor's and Master's degree students. Due to the requirements related to doctoral coursework, doctoral students will not have the opportunity to take 8-week courses.
- 7) Who determined how many modules should be contained in each course?**
- a. The faculty of each program, working in collaboration with their deans, evaluated the programs and determined the number of modules per course.
- 8) Are all courses going to be offered in an 8-week format?**
- a. Yes (except doctoral courses and courses being phased out on "teach-out"). All active Bachelor's and Master's degree courses will be offered in the 8-week format.
- 9) How many modules will be contained in an 8-week format?**
- a. The faculty of each program, working in collaboration with their deans, evaluated the programs and determined the number of modules per course. Keep in mind that even courses that remain with 6 modules have been revised to maximize the benefits of the 8-week format. In many cases, this equates to increased emphasis on understanding and critical thinking and in some courses, fewer written assignments.

Academic Policy and Technical Questions

- 1) Is the grading turn-around time going to be shorter in the 8-week sessions?**
- a. Faculty will have 72 hours to grade submissions in both 8-week and 12-week courses.
- 2) Where can I find specifics about policy changes?**
- a. A catalog addendum contains all information about policy and procedure changes that will be implemented effective May 11, 2015 to accommodate the shorter 8-week sessions. Other helpful information will be located in the student TLC portal. It is always recommended that you speak with a student services advisor, an academic success counselor, or a financial aid advisor about your specific situation.
- 3) Is the tuition the same for an 8-week and a 12-week course?**
- a. The costs are identical for the 8-week and 12-week courses.
- 4) Will I need a new password or log-in for the 8-week course?**
- a. No. Once you register to take courses in the 8-week format, the log-in credentials will be the same.
- 5) Are my classmates switching?**

- a. When surveyed, the majority of students said that they were interested in accelerating their program. We expect that the majority of students are planning on converting to the 8-week courses.
- 6) Are the course numbering or names changing?**
 - a. No
- 7) Will I still receive course view access a week prior to classes starting?**
 - a. Yes
- 8) How big of a difference in my graduation date will it make if I switch to 8-weeks?**
 - a. The earlier a student is in their program, the bigger benefit the shorter 8-week sessions will have on their graduation date. You should work with Student Services and the Financial Aid department to determine how much earlier you will graduate.
- 9) What is the last day to withdraw from a course?**
 - a. After 75% of the course session has passed (approximately the 6th week in 8-week session; and the 9th week in 12-week session)
- 10) If I graduate with a Bachelor's degree and come back for my Master's degree, can I enroll in 12-week sessions?**
 - a. No. Students that start a new degree program, or who switch programs, will be enrolled in the 8-week session.
- 11) If I switch degree programs or a concentration, can I stay in the 12-week sessions?**
 - a. Switching programs will force a move to 8-weeks, but switching concentrations will not. Contact Student Services for further information.

Background and Benefits

- 1) Why did Trident decide to move to 8-week terms?**
 - a. A student survey was conducted and analyzed in early 2014. The results of the survey indicated that the majority of students wanted an opportunity to increase their pace towards graduation. The academic leadership evaluated the grades and retention of all students and made the determination that 8-week courses were appropriate for Bachelor and Master's Degree students. Due to the rigor of doctoral coursework, doctoral students will continue to enroll in 12-week courses.
- 2) What is in it for me?**
 - a. Time is money! The sooner you graduate, the sooner you can enjoy the benefits associated with earning a degree.
- 3) What evidence did Trident have that 8-week courses provide equivalent learning opportunities to 12-week courses?**
 - a. Course learning objectives and course credit values are not changing. Students will be required to complete the same amount of coursework in 8-week sessions, as they did in 12-week sessions. Many regionally accredited online universities have terms that are between 4-10 weeks, because shorter terms have a positive correlation with higher student retention. After evaluating several learning formats, Trident determined that offering 8-week sessions was most advantageous for its students.
- 4) Was this change approved by Trident's regional accrediting organization WASC?**
 - a. WASC was contacted about this and decided that this was not a substantive change to our programs requiring formal application and approval because the content for courses is

essentially unchanged (although the delivery was improved). WASC sent a letter to that effect to the Department of Education as required for financial aid reasons.

5) Was this change approved by VA?

- a. The Veterans Administration (VA) does not approve university program changes; that is the role of our institutional accreditor, WASC. However, students utilizing military benefits may be required to obtain approval in order to retain their benefits. Revised degree plans and detailed directions will be provided to students to assist them with making the switch to 8-week courses.

Financial Aid and Funding

1) Is there any financial advantage if I agree to make this change?

- a. Time is money -- so anytime you can graduate ahead of schedule and put your degree to work for you – it is a good option! From a financial aid perspective, it depends on when you make the change. There is no additional benefit if the switch is in the middle of a payment period, because there will be a return of title IV calculated and the student will be repackaged. Contact your financial aid advisor for details.

2) How will my FA and/or VA benefits be impacted?

- a. VA benefits are not impacted by the switch to 8-week sessions. Students utilizing Title IV Federal Financial Aid will be impacted because with the 8-week session comes a new academic year definition. Students will still receive two disbursements but will have different payment periods. Consult with financial aid advisor to see how switching will impact your individual situation.

3) How will this change impact the amount and delivery of my stipend checks?

- a. If a credit balance occurs on your account, there is an availability of 2 stipend checks over the course of the academic year – same as now.

4) Will I have to go back through the FA process if I switch?

- a. Yes, students will have to complete a new financial aid application packet if they switch tracks. Our financial aid representatives are ready to help you to make the paperwork as painless as possible!

5) How will the academic year and disbursements work in the 8-week sessions?

8-week Academic Year and Disbursements

Undergraduate

The academic year for students enrolled in 8-week sessions is defined as 32 weeks (four consecutive sessions) and 24 credits. Each academic year has two 16 week payment periods (see examples below). Accordingly, students are expected to enroll and successfully complete 3 courses each 16 week period to maintain their scheduled award (see examples below). Students are also expected to remain enrolled in four consecutive (non-overlapping) sessions, which coincides with the 32-week academic year and loan period (for students receiving Direct Loans). Any breaks in enrollment may result in the loss of federal financial aid eligibility, delay of subsequent disbursements, and/or return of funds already disbursed.

First disbursements are released once the student is enrolled in the payment period and has completed module 1 of the first session in the payment period. Second disbursements are released

once one-half of the academic year (first payment period) is successfully completed, the student is enrolled in the second payment period and has completed module 1 of the first session in the second payment period.

Successful completion of the payment period is defined as:

- A minimum of 12 credit hours (3 courses) over two non-overlapping sessions, or over three overlapping sessions (see examples below) in which the following grades are awarded:
- A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D

Undergraduate Student Examples: (Each yellow and green bar represents an eight week session.)

Example 1 – Non-overlapping

Payment Period 1 = 16 Weeks & 12 Credits		Payment Period 2 = 16 Weeks & 12 Credits	
1 Course	2 Courses	1 Course	2 Courses

Example 2 – Non-overlapping

Payment Period 1 = 16 Weeks & 12 Credits		Payment Period 2 = 16 Weeks & 12 Credits	
2 Courses	1 Course	2 Courses	1 Course

Example 3 – Overlapping

Payment Period 1 = 16 Weeks & 12 Credits		Payment Period 2 = 16 Weeks & 12 Credits	
1 Course	1 Course	1 Course	1 Course
	1 Course		1 Course

Graduate

The academic year for students enrolled in 8-week sessions is defined as 32 weeks (four consecutive sessions) and 16 credits. Each academic year has two 16 week payment periods (see example below). Accordingly, students are expected to enroll and successfully complete 2 courses each 16 week period to maintain their scheduled award (see examples below). Students are also expected to remain enrolled in four consecutive (non-overlapping) sessions, which coincides with the 32-week academic year and loan period (for students receiving Direct Loans). Any breaks in enrollment may result in the loss of federal financial aid eligibility, delay of subsequent disbursements, and/or having funds returned if funds have already been disbursed.

First disbursements are released once the student is enrolled in the payment period and has completed module 1 of the first session in the payment period. Second disbursements are released once one-half of the academic year (first payment period) is successfully completed, the student is enrolled in the second payment period and has completed module 1 of the first session in the second payment period.

Successful completion of the payment period is defined as:

- A minimum of 8 credit hours (2 courses) over two non-overlapping sessions (see example below), in which the following grades are awarded:
- A, A-, B+, B, B-

Graduate Student Example – Non-overlapping: (Each yellow bar represents an eight week session.)

Payment Period 1 = 16 Weeks & 8 Credits		Payment Period 2 = 16 Weeks & 8 Credits	
1 Course	1 Course	1 Course	1 Course

Financial Aid Payment Periods and Enrollment Policy

Students seeking federal financial aid must be registered for all courses in their payment period prior to disbursement of funds for the payment period. The payment period is the period of time it takes a student to successfully complete both half the number of credits and half the number of weeks of instruction in the academic year. Each payment period is 16 consecutive weeks and 12 credits (3 courses) for undergraduate students and 8 credits (2 courses) for graduate students. If a student fails a course or courses or if there is a break in enrollment, the payment period will need to be extended beyond 16 weeks, because half the credits in the academic year have not been satisfied. The second payment period is complete once the student has successfully completed the second half of the academic year’s weeks and credits. Students are not eligible to enter a new academic year until they have successfully completed a full academic year.

Registration and Scheduling

1) I’m in! How do I register for an 8-week course?

- a. Registration is easy! As of March 2015 you can register for the 8-week version on the TLC or by contacting the Registrar. A link to a “how-to” video will be emailed to students. Prior to registering, you must contact your student services representative or a financial aid advisor to discuss the impact of switching on your graduation date and financial aid packaging, if applicable.

2) If I switch, will I still graduate on time?

- a. Students who continue to take the same number of courses per term in the 8-week format will graduate earlier than anticipated. If students reduce the number of course taken per term, they will graduate later than anticipated. Students can obtain more information by talking to the Registrar or Student Services and having their degree plan reviewed.

3) Do I need to submit new degree plans to the military for approval?

- a. No. The courses themselves are not changing, only the length of courses. Therefore, degree plans remain the same.

4) How many classes can I take simultaneously?

- a. Students cannot exceed three “open courses” (current courses plus extensions) in the 8-week format without preapproval by the Program Director.
- b. Taking only one course per session will lengthen the time required to graduate, while taking more than two courses may shorten the degree program so significantly that financial aid or military benefits are not fully available. Students should speak with a Student Services Advisor and a Financial Aid representative to discuss the optimal course load for their unique situation and needs.

5) Can I take some classes in 8-weeks and others in 12-weeks?

- a. No. There are issues with terms and funding that prohibit students from taking 8-week and 12-week courses simultaneously.

6) Is there a one week break between consecutive 8-week sessions?

- a. Yes, in most cases.

7) What is the drop/add period for an 8-week class?

- a. 8 days

8) When do I have to make a decision to move to the 8-week course structure?

- a. It is recommended that students talk with a financial aid representative as soon as possible to ensure there is adequate time to prepare for any funding changes that occur from an earlier graduation date. Students will begin registering in March for the term that begins on May 11th. Students who do not attend 8-week courses in May will be offered the opportunity to switch to 8-week terms when they register for subsequent terms.

9) What additional paperwork will I be required to complete should I choose to make the change to 8-week courses?

- a. Since the graduation date will be earlier for students that complete two, 8-week courses, per session, the student will need to visit Financial Aid to complete new paperwork. The Registrar will also assist the student in obtaining a new degree plan, if necessary, and schedule.

10) If I choose not to change, will my program be offered as it was originally designed? Will all the courses I need still be offered in the original format and on schedule so I can complete as I originally intended?

- a. The majority of courses have been reorganized to improve efficiency and user experience in 8-week sessions. However, there are a few older courses that have been or will soon be retired. The faculty have selected appropriate course substitutions to ensure that students remaining in the 12-week format have options to complete their program successfully.

Succeeding in Trident Fastrac

1) What do I need to do to be successful in an 8-week course?

- a. Each course has been optimized by faculty for the 8-week format but also works well in the 12-week format. The key to success is the same for the 8-week courses as it has been for the 12-week version. You need to schedule quality time to dedicate to your studies so you don't fall behind. Keeping up with the workload, reading, and assignments is essential for success. Since there are fewer weeks in the 8-week version, it is important to dive right in and not waste any time in the first few days of a course.
- b. Communication with the faculty member is an integral part of the course. You should regularly communicate with your professor and share concerns about the course or other difficulties you may be having. The faculty have many years of experience teaching working adults and can work with you to help you be successful.
- c. Utilize faculty assistance, tutoring and the academic success counselors.

2) If I switch to 8-week terms and struggle, can I switch back?

- a. Switching back is strongly discouraged. Only in extraordinary circumstances will a student be allowed to switch back to 12-week courses, because switching has significant financial aid and other consequences. Talk to your program director to find out more information about how to apply for an exception.

3) How much time should I plan on dedicating each week for my 8-week class?

- a. The amount of time required to complete the course objectives is the same regardless of the length of the course. Because the 8-week format is shorter than the 12-week format, you will need to dedicate additional time per week to study and complete assignments. How much additional time depends a great deal on the amount of time it typically takes you to read, research, process information, and prepare your assignments. Estimate the time

that it takes you to complete the work involved in an average 12-week course and then multiply that by about a third to get a rough idea as to how much time will be required.

4) What resources are there to assist me in transitioning to the faster courses?

- a. Faculty have office hours and are always willing to assist you. In addition, academic success counselors are available to help you adjust to the faster pace of the 8-week courses.

Webinars and links to other resources will also be available on the TLC.