

Special Session Set-up Guidelines

Background:

The University of Southern California operates on a semester schedule. USC offers classes during the fall, spring, and summer semesters (also referred to as 'terms'). Classes that differ from the university's main semester calendar (see the USC Schedule of Classes under Registration Calendar), carry higher or lower tuition and fees, or meet in non-university-owned facilities are scheduled in a '**special session**'. To identify special programs in the student information system (SIS), the Registration Department creates a session code in SIS for any course that deviates from the regular term dates, tuition and fees, or location parameters. All courses in a session have the same duration, financial charges, and location. SIS users can access session information on SIS.D.SESS.

When to Request a Special Session:

Request a special session when one or more of these conditions apply:

1. Your department wishes to schedule a class that will start and end on different dates from session 001 (which began on August 25 and will end on December 17 for Fall 2014). The start and end dates for the special session must match the actual dates of instruction for each session requestedⁱ.
2. The course will involve a tuition rate and/or fees that differ from the regular fees (see the USC Schedule of Classes under Tuition and Fees).
3. The course will be taught online or taught away from a recognized USC site (see the list of recognized USC sites in Appendix A).

Financial Aid Eligibility Requirements:

As you plan the academic year for your program, please ensure that the following requirements are met if the students in your program will need federal financial aid:

1. Programs that have at least 30 weeks of instructional timeⁱⁱ in the fall and spring semesters.
2. Semesters must include 14-17 weeks of instructional time and no semester within the academic year may be more than 2-weeks longer than the other semester. Summer terms may be shorter; however, many programs will have their summer terms equal in length to the fall and spring to allow them to admit students year round.
3. Academic programs may be offered in modules or shorter periods that do not meet the definition of the semester on their own. These modular programs must be grouped together to meet the definition of longer semester. For example, a student could be enrolled in one course that spans the 15-week semester or 3 shorter courses of 5-weeks each. When calculating the length of the semester, weeks between modules are excluded.

How to Request a Special Session:

1. Save a copy of the Special Session Request Form to your computer. The form is available for download at <http://www.usc.edu/dept/ARR/registration/forms.html>.
2. Submit the form to regschedule@usc.edu.
3. Wait for confirmation from that the Special Session has been created.
4. Enter the section information in SIS, if the system

The Special Session Request Form is Excel-based.

Department coordinators may use the form to request a single section, several sections within one session, or sections in multiple sessions. If the department requested the special session in a previous term, the session information appears in SIS.D.SESS. Coordinators email the completed form to the Registration Department (regschedule@usc.edu). For compliance with federal financial aid regulations, it is important to pay special attention to the dates requested for the session. Please note that once a session has been assigned to a course on RNR.U.SCHEDULE, the session number cannot be changed.

The Review of Special Session Requests:

The special session request is reviewed to ensure that the dates requested for the session(s) are valid within the term specified on the form§. The Registration Department returns requests with invalid dates to department coordinators for correction. Sessions with dates that fall within a reasonable range of the semester are created in SIS. After the session and sections exist in SIS, Registration notifies Bursar Administration to place any special tuition and fees. Students may register for special session classes after tuition and fee data are entered in the Bursar's system.

Tuition and Fee Calculation Information:

- Students who enroll in sessions with only unit rates are assessed the unit rate for each session times the number of units in that session.
- Students who enroll in any session with a flat rate and whose total tuition units are less than the minimum units for the flat rate range are still assessed per unit.
- Students who enroll in any session with a flat fee rate and whose total tuition units are equal to or more than the minimum units for the flat fee range are assessed that session's flat rate, regardless of the distribution of units among other sessions. If they are enrolled for more units than the maximum for the flat fee range, they are also assessed the unit rate for units over the flat rate units range.
- When a student enrolls in two or more sessions with flat rates, the tuition and fee calculation program goes through each session in order of the highest number of units. Once a session is identified and the student registers for the units within the flat fee range, that session rate is used.

§ Please see DATE PARAMETERS FOR TERMS on the bottom left of the Special Session Request Form for specific dates. Dates that overlap with other terms require approval from the Registrar's Office.

- Tuition income distributes all the money, regardless of the code used, to the tuition income pool. The Budget Office distributes the money to individual departments.

Procedure for Special Topics Courses:

Definition of Special Topics Courses (499/599) – Special Topics Courses are “reserved to allow introduction of a new or emerging aspect of a field or to take advantage of the expertise of a new or visiting faculty member” Armstrong, 1995. The same course may not be offered more than twice in three years without being proposed as a new course.

The Curriculum Office must approve the syllabus of any 499 or 599 each semester.

To request a Special Topics course in a special session, departments in USC College must submit the Special Session Request Form to an email and send it to 4partform@college.usc.edu. All other departments should email the Session Request Form to regschedule@usc.edu. Once the session has been activated in SIS, the department coordinator may submit a Quali eDoc with a syllabus attached for review by the Curriculum Office. Depending on the time of year, the review process can take three business days.

Who to contact for help:

If you have questions about special sessions, please contact us at regschedule@usc.edu or at 213.740.4608.

ⁱ Instructional time cannot include periods of orientation, counseling, homework, vacation, or grading periods. Session dates may not be padded or reduced for any reason. Session dates should not be altered to allow for automated waivers of late registration or settlement fees, nor adjusted to allow for later than normal refunds of tuition.

ⁱⁱ The number of weeks of instructional time is based on the period that begins on the first day of classes in the academic year and ends on the last day of classes or examinations. For all federal student aid programs, a week of instructional time is any period of 7 consecutive days in which at least 1 day of regularly scheduled instruction, examination, or (after the last day of classes) at least 1 scheduled day of study for examinations occurs.

Instructional time does not include periods of orientation, counseling, homework, vacation, grading periods or other activity not related to class preparation or examination. Therefore, the weeks of instructional time may be less than the number of calendar weeks that elapse between the first day of classes and the last day of classes or examinations.

For USC’s purposes, instructional time (before study week) includes all of the following: in-person lecture, online synchronous lecture, online asynchronous lecture, faculty-facilitated online discussion board participation. This means that student have faculty interaction each week during the scheduled academic year.

Appendix A

- University of Southern California - Health Sciences Campus - Health Sciences Campus
Los Angeles, CA 90033-0000
- University of Southern California - Sacramento Public Affairs Center - 1800 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814-2906
- University of Southern California - Orange County Center - 2300 Michelson Drive Irvine,
CA 92612-1351
- University of Southern California - Graduate Program in Education - 1800 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814-2906
- University of Southern California - Graduate Program in Education - Hangar 2, Room #4
Hickman AFB, HI 96853-5246
- University of Southern California - Executive Business Administration - 2100 Costa Del
Mar Rd Carlsbad, CA 92009-0000
- University of Southern California - Global Executive MBA - 535 Fahauzhen Rd Shanghai,
Shanghai CHINA
- University of Southern California - San Diego Academic Center - 16870 West Bernardo
Drive San Diego, CA 92127-1671