

Should you go to summer school?

► Study abroad, focus your efforts or spread out your workload? ► But you may miss out on summer fun



**DUNCAN
MCALLISTER**
LIFE@METRONEWS.CA

Meagan Lowes is in her first year of the animation program at Centennial College in Toronto.

"The program I'm currently in goes all through the summer," she says. "We don't stop and take semesters off."

Some colleges now offer bootcamp-style programs compressed into a full school year.

"Last summer I was working all summer, and I'm happy to be back in school again," says Lowes. "Being in a fast-tracking program is more of a benefit than not in my opinion, because I get done sooner. I don't lose any skills over the break."

Summer school pros

Some students take advantage of out-of-country travel-related courses, such as

studying art history in France. It's an opportunity to see the world that you might not be able to do during the regular term while taking other courses.

You can also concentrate your efforts without the distractions of the regular term.

According to Gerry Kendal, vice-provost and registrar at the University of Alberta, "A course that you need to get into and keep focus on, the best way to do it is when you're not interrupted by course demands in other areas. With the intense focus, you can do some tremendous work."

Summer school is an opportunity for you to make up classes. "We'll always have a component of students doing it from a program mitigation standpoint," says Kendal. "Either making up a course they weren't able to or decided

not to take, or possibly failed in a prior term, or maybe trying to get a step ahead by taking one to get a prerequisite."

You can also spread the workload over the year. For example, instead of taking five courses in the fall and winter, you might only take three or four courses, and pick them up in the spring and summer. Then you can still complete your degree in four calendar years.

Summer school cons

One reason some may not want to take summer classes is that you'll miss out on summer fun, as well as lucrative employment opportunities. It's lonely — your friends and family will be far away while you're toiling away on campus.

You may find it difficult to hold down a summer job while you're taking multiple courses. "There's no



► There are both pros and cons to going to school over the summer holidays.

way I can have a job and go to school at the same time — it's way too intensive," says Lowes.

But with the tightening job market resulting from a slow economy, summer school is a viable alternative. "It's been really hard to find work," says Lowes. "There are summer jobs

available but you have to look extremely hard to find them because people are really hanging on to the jobs that they have."

Taking the summer off allows some downtime that you might not get if you study year-round.

Cheryl Washburn, director of counselling services

at UBC, advises: "If you choose to take summer session courses, it's important to plan ahead to ensure that you get enough of a summer break to re-energize for fall courses. Also, because summer courses are more intensive, maintaining balance can be a challenge."