The academic year at Kent State University consists of two semesters—fall and spring—each approximately 15 weeks in length. The normal bachelor’s degree program is designed to be completed in four academic years, or eight semesters. The normal associate degree is designed to be completed in two academic years, or four semesters. In addition, the university conducts four sessions during the summer term:

- one three-week intercession
- two five-week sessions
- one eight-week session

Each credit hour of coursework is called a "credit hour," as distinguished from the quarter system used at some other universities and colleges. An academic year under the quarter system consists of three 10-week quarters, and one credit hour of coursework is called a "quarter credit hour."

One quarter credit hour of coursework is equivalent to two-thirds of a credit hour (1 quarter credit hour = 0.67 credit hour); one credit hour is equivalent to one and one-half quarter credit hours (1 credit hour = 1.50 quarter hours). A transfer student with a number of quarter credit hours should multiply that number by two-thirds to determine the equivalent credit hours at Kent State University. For example, a student with 48 quarter credit hours would receive 32 credit hours of transfer credit, providing the previous work meets university academic standards.