

Guidelines to a Full Course of Study

On January 1, 2003 new regulations impacting international students on F-1 and J-1 visas took effect. Among the changes are new rules that define a full course of study and outline exceptions. It is important that all students in F-1 and J-1 status read and understand these rules. The Office of International Students and Scholars (OISS) must comply fully with these and other federal regulations.

Guidelines to a full course load:

Definitions. To be considered full-time, you must be enrolled for 12 hours during the academic year (Fall and Spring semesters) if you are an undergraduate student. To be considered full-time, you must be enrolled for 9 hours during the academic year (Fall and Spring semesters) if you are a graduate student.

On-line and distance education courses. You may count only one on-line or distance education course toward your full-time registration in any given term.

Summer registration requirements. You are not required to register in the summer if you were registered in the preceding spring term and will register in the upcoming fall term.

Minimum enrollment requirements. Students with OISS approval to reduce their course load must still carry at least 6 hours unless the approval was based on your final term of study or health problems.

Exceptions to the full course load requirement which require *prior* OISS approval:

OISS must approve the following reduced enrollments before any changes are made in the PAWS registration system. If you wish to enroll for a reduced course load for academic reasons, stop by OISS for an approval form. Your academic advisor must complete and sign the form, and a designated school official at OISS must review it and approve your reduced course load *before* you drop any class.

- **Academic reasons.** You may reduce your course load for only one semester total during your program of study for academic reasons. A reduced course load will be acceptable under the following circumstances: new students enrolled for the first time and having difficulty with spoken English; difficulty with reading requirements; or difficulty with unfamiliar teaching methods. A student who has insufficient background for the class level in which he/she was placed may also seek approval for a reduction in course load at any time. In all cases, students must receive approval from a designated school official *before* dropping below a full course of study.
- **Medical reasons.** If you have a valid medical reason for reducing your course load, you must provide OISS with a medical certificate from a medical doctor, doctor of osteopathy, or licensed clinical psychologist. You may only reduce your course load for medical reasons for a maximum of 12 months, and you must receive OISS approval for the reduced course load *prior* to each semester during that period.
- **Final term of study.** During your final term of study, and with the prior approval of OISS, you need only enroll for the required number of units needed to complete your degree. However, if in your final term you take less than a full course of study as defined above, you must receive OISS approval prior to registering.