

FULL-TIME ENROLLMENT FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

As you are aware, students in F-1 Immigration status must be enrolled full time. But what exactly does that mean? For undergraduate students, it means that you must be registered for at least **12 credit hours each semester** (fall and spring).

What if I begin the semester with 12 credits, but want to withdraw from a course later in the semester?

Students must register for and complete a minimum of 12 credit hours each semester. Withdrawing from a course which would cause you to complete fewer than 12 credits is a violation of F-1 status. (That is why we generally recommend that students try to start the semester with at least 15 credits.)

What if my professor recommends that I withdraw from a course, leaving me with fewer than 12 credits?

Your professor is making that recommendation based on University policies and is likely considering the damage a bad grade would have on your grade point average. However, your professor is probably not aware of your responsibilities under Immigration law. Before you make a decision to drop below a full course of study, you need to talk with an ISSO advisor, because of the Immigration regulations.

Do CLEP tests and other Credit for Prior Learning count toward full-time enrollment?

Since CLEP (College Level Examination Program) tests and other Credit for Prior Learning through departmental exams involve awarding credit for knowledge that you have already obtained, it does not count towards being actively engaged in a full course of study. Thus, even though your transcript may show that you earned 12 credits during a particular semester, if some of those credits were earned via exam rather than coursework, you would not be considered a full-time student for Immigration purposes.

What if I take 9 credits during the spring semester and 3 credits during the summer?

Full-time enrollment does NOT mean 24 credits per year or an average of 12 credits each semester. Immigration regulations clearly state that students must be enrolled for a full course of study EACH semester.

What if I am in my final semester and I need fewer than 12 credits in order to complete my degree?

In the final semester of their degree program, students are allowed to be less than full-time if they have registered for all of the remaining requirements for the degree. **Prior to the beginning of your final semester, the ISSO must receive a memo from your faculty academic advisor.** The memo should verify that you will have met all your requirements for your degree with the remaining courses you have scheduled. Immigration regulations require the ISSO to approve this kind of reduced courseload situation in advance of the student's final semester.

How do I request permission for a reduced courseload?

You should submit a Reduced Courseload Request Form to the ISSO **prior to the end of the "Change of Schedule" period (or before you submit a withdrawal request if later in the semester)**. There are very few specific situations for which Immigration regulations permit less than full-time enrollment. In all cases, an ISSO advisor must approve part-time enrollment in advance, before you complete registration or before you submit a withdrawal request. Failure to comply with this regulation can have extreme consequences on your ability to remain in the U.S. to study or work.