Frequently Asked Questions

ENROLLMENT QUESTIONS

What is considered a “full course of study” or “full-time enrollment?”

To maintain a full course of study (one of the prerequisites to maintenance of lawful status), a student must enroll in and successfully complete 12 credits each quarter if an undergraduate student, and 8 credits each quarter if a graduate student.

My academic advisor told me that my department offers Distance Learning (DL), or online courses. How many online courses can I take per quarter?

Only one online course per quarter may be counted toward the full course of study requirement. (Possible scenario: undergraduate student wishes to take 2 online courses. This is legally possible as long as the student enrolls in an additional 2 traditional courses that quarter. In other words, students may take as many online courses as they would like, but may count only 1 (4-credit) online course toward completion of their 8-credit (grad) or 12-credit (undergrad) minimum.

I would like to drop a class (for academic, medical, or other reasons). Will this affect my legal status? What should I do?

The OISS has very limited legal authority to grant an exception to the full-time credit requirement. A student may be enrolled for less than the required full course load only under special circumstances, and only after receiving the appropriate authorization from the OISS. Examples of exceptional circumstances that may qualify you for a reduced course load are serious illness, depression that is being treated by a licensed clinical psychologist, final quarter before graduation, or academic difficulties. (An exception based on academic reasons is allowable only ONCE during a student's entire academic degree.)

Failure to receive such authorization before dropping a course could lead to serious immigration-related problems, ranging from loss of the opportunity to engage in Optional Practical Training/Academic Training, to deportation and/or ineligibility to re-enter the U.S. upon return from traveling abroad. For details on eligibility and authorization for a reduced course load, please see the Full Course of Study Exception Request. If you have further questions regarding full course of study requirements and/or obtaining authorization for a reduced course load, please contact OISS to make an appointment with an advisor for a Reduced Course Load (RCL) advising.

What is “annual vacation?” Can I take winter quarter off instead of summer quarter?

Each academic year, students are eligible to take one quarter off as their “annual vacation.” During this quarter, you are not required to enroll in any courses (though you may do so, if you wish). Most students elect to take the Summer quarter as their annual vacation, however, it is possible to take an alternative quarter (Fall, Winter, Spring) as your vacation term. To take an alternative annual vacation, you must complete and submit the Full Course of Study Exception Request to our office, demonstrating that you have been enrolled full-time the 3 quarters previous to your desired vacation term. You will also need to make sure that you are enrolled full-time the 3 quarters following your vacation term. (For example, a student who wishes to take Winter 2009 as her annual vacation would enroll full-time Spring 2008, Summer 2008, and Fall 2008, would take Winter 2009 off, and would resume full-time enrollment for Spring 2009, Summer 2009, and Fall 2009.)

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