

FULL-TIME ENROLLMENT FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Students in F-1 Immigration status must be enrolled full-time each semester. But what exactly does that mean? For master's students, it means that you must be registered for a minimum of **9 graduate-level credit-units each semester**, and for doctoral students, a minimum of **6 graduate-level credit-units each semester**. (Graduate courses are numbered 500 or higher.)

How do I decide which courses to take each semester?

When you were admitted into your graduate program, you were assigned to an academic advisor. Please contact this person during your first semester at Towson to determine a plan for your graduate studies. Note that there could be instances when courses required by your program are not offered every semester (some are offered spring or fall only). Therefore, it is critical that you speak with your academic advisor to plan properly and ensure that you have a full course of study each term.

Can I take undergraduate-level courses during my master's program?

Since the U.S. Department of Homeland Security requires that you make "good academic progress," only undergraduate-level, prerequisite courses required by your master's degree program can be counted towards full-time enrollment. If you plan to take a combination of undergraduate and graduate level courses, please speak with an ISSO advisor prior to the start of the term to ensure that you are maintaining a full course of study. Do not make this decision on your own.

How do I know if I am enrolled full-time when combining undergraduate and graduate courses?

The definition of full-time enrollment becomes more complicated for students who combine undergraduate and graduate courses. If you are combining undergraduate, prerequisite courses with graduate-level courses, you must contact the ISSO to make sure you are registered for a full course of study. (We will need to calculate your course load by combining the graduate and undergraduate credit loads in a weighted formula.) Note that there are limited situations when an exception to full-time enrollment can be granted; documentation must be received by the ISSO prior to the end of the "Change of Schedule" period. (Such documentation is required per Immigration regulations.)

What if I am fully enrolled at the beginning of the semester, but want to withdraw from a course later in the semester?

Graduate students must enroll for – and complete – a full course of study each semester to maintain F-1 status. Although withdrawing from a course may be *possible*, it most likely is not in your best interest as it could jeopardize your F-1 full course of study requirement. If you are considering withdrawing from a course, you must first request permission from the ISSO.

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What if my professor recommends that I withdraw from a course, leaving me with fewer weighted units?

Note that professors make recommendations based on University policies and concern over your academic progress. However, your professor is not necessarily aware of your responsibilities under immigration law. Before you make a decision to drop below a full course of study, talk with an ISSO advisor who is familiar with how such a decision will impact your immigration status. If you are considering withdrawing from a course, you must first request permission from the ISSO.

I have a 20-hour graduate assistantship. How many graduate credit-units must I take to be full-time?

Students who have obtained 20-hour graduate assistantships must register for a minimum of 6 graduate-level credits to maintain full-time status. Graduate students who have obtained 10-hour graduate assistantships must still maintain 9 graduate-level credit-units each fall and spring semester to be considered full time.

What if I am in my final semester and I need fewer than 9 credit-units in order to complete my degree?

In the final semester of your degree program, you are allowed to be less than full-time so long as you will be completing all degree requirements during the term. Prior to the beginning of your final semester, contact the ISSO and complete our Reduced Courseload Form. Then contact your academic advisor/program director and request that he/she sends the ISSO an email (isso@towson.edu) or memo which confirms that you will complete your degree upon successful completion of the courses you enrolled in for the term.

How do I request permission for a reduced courseload?

The Reduced Courseload Form can be downloaded online by accessing the ISSO's web page: <http://wwwnew.towson.edu/isso/docs/ReducedCourseloadRequest.pdf>. There are very few situations in which the U.S. Department of Homeland Security permits 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 jeopardize your ability to remain in the U.S. to study or work.