

UNOFFICIAL GUIDE TO ADVISING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Visas

International students may be in the country on one of several types of visas. The most common are:

- J1/F1 – student visa
- H1B- work visa
- H4- spouse of H1B holder

Required credit hours

Students studying on a J1/F1 visa must be enrolled full time in the Fall and Spring semesters. No enrollment is required for the summer semester. Students are permitted to enroll for fewer than nine (9) credit hours only in their final semester before graduating provided the Office of International Affairs (OIA) grants approval.

The Office of International Affairs (OIA) monitors credit hour enrollment for international students. However, the audit is done daily by a report from the Registrar's Office. If a J1/F1 student enrolls for less than nine credit hours, the OIA contacts the student and informs him/her that the visa is out of status. A reduction in hours during the semester due to a "W" can also impact immigration status if the student falls below 9 credit hours enrolled, i.e. the student must then depart the U.S.

Semester	Number of credit hours
Fall	9 (full time)
Spring	9 (full time)
Summer	None required; 6 is considered full time

H1B holders can study part time only.

H4 holders can study full or part time.

Online course hours

For **J1/F1 students**, three (3) credit hours of online coursework can be taken per semester as long as the student is enrolled full time, i.e. taking an additional six (6) credit hours of face-to-face classes. An additional online class may be taken if the student is enrolled for twelve (12) credit hours.

Face-to-face course hours	Online course hours	Total credit hours
9	0	9
6	3	9
9	6	15

International students receive this information during their International Student Orientation when they matriculate. The Office of International Affairs monitors what courses the students take and whether or not they are in compliance with the regulations. If the OIA determines the student is out of compliance, the OIA contacts the student so that the matter can be rectified.

The online course “rule” does not apply to H1B and H4 students who may take as many hours of online courses as they wish.

Incompletes

International students may receive an incomplete in a course and are under the same obligation as U.S. students to complete the course within the following semester. The OIA may request an email or letter from the instructor stating that he/she supports the need for an incomplete grade.

Students who know or suspect in advance that an incomplete may be needed should visit with their international advisor and alert the OIA of the situation. The instructor may be asked to provide a statement supporting the incomplete, if it is needed.

Withdrawal from courses

Students studying on a **J1/F1** visa must remain enrolled for nine (9) credit hours throughout the semester. That is, a full time student cannot withdraw from a course even if he/she is earning a failing grade. Students enrolled for more than nine (9) credit hours can drop a course during the semester as long as nine (9) credit hours are maintained.

If a student wishes to drop any course during the semester (regardless of the number of credit hours the student is enrolled), the student is required to receive his/her OIA Advisor's signature on school's withdrawal form. An OIA signature line was added to the school's withdrawal form this purpose.

Practicum

The practicum for an F1 International student falls under “Academic Training” and must directly link to the student's major area of study. Approval for any practicum must be obtained from OIA prior to starting the work.

H1/F1 and H1B students can be paid for the practicum; **H4** students cannot be paid for the practicum.

Volunteer or Observer Status

An international student may obtain permission to become a volunteer or observer. However, authorization must be obtained from OIA.

Employment

J1/F1 students can be employed up to 0.5 FTE during the time that school is in session, but this employment must be approved by the OIA. These students may be employed full time during school breaks, such as during the Christmas holidays.

H1B students (work visa) may be employed full time.

H4 students cannot be employed nor paid for a practicum.

Post graduate training

J1/F1 students may be eligible to apply for “optional practical training” (OPT) in the U.S. after graduation. Students should work directly with their OIA advisor to obtain authorization. OPT forms can be found on the OIA website.

Note:

The information contained above was reviewed and edited by Ms. Tiaresa Carter, Manager of Admissions, Office of Student Affairs. Ms. Carter is a former staff member of the OIA.