

FULL-TIME ENROLLMENT FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

As you are aware, students in F-1 Immigration status must be enrolled full-time each semester. But what exactly does that mean? For graduate students, it means that you must be registered for a minimum of **48 weighted units each semester** (see attached chart for weighted unit calculation details). Graduate courses are numbered 500 or higher. Undergraduate courses are at the 100-499 level.

How do I decide which courses to take each semester?

You were assigned to an academic advisor when you were admitted into your master's program. You should contact this person during your first semester at Towson to determine a plan for your graduate program. Many times the faculty members will know when your required courses and the electives in your program will be offered, i.e., every spring semester or every other fall semester.

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

Since the U.S. Immigration Service requires that you make "good academic progress," only undergraduate-level, **prerequisite** courses can be counted towards full-time enrollment. You must speak with your academic advisor prior to the beginning of the semester to determine which classes you should take and in which order you should take them. 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 the 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.) Also, there are a limited number of situations when we may need to document an exception to full-time enrollment prior to the end of the "Change of Schedule" period. (Documentation 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 complete a full course of study each semester. Withdrawing from a course which would cause you to complete fewer weighted units is a violation of F-1 status.

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

Your professor is making that recommendation based on University policies and thinking about the damage a bad grade would have on your grade point average. 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, you need to talk with an ISSO advisor because of the immigration regulations.

What if I am in my final semester and I need fewer than 48 weighted units 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 or project advisor. The memo should verify that you will be done with your degree upon successful completion of the courses you are registered to take.

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 to Enrollment Services. You can download the form from <http://wwwnew.towson.edu/isso/docs/ReducedCourseloadRequest.pdf>. There are very few specific situations for which the U.S. Immigration Service 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.

Full Course of Study Calculation for Graduate Students

How do I calculate weighted units?

Full-time and part-time status of graduate students is calculated from a weighting of course units (credits). The weightings are calculated as follows:

Courses numbered 500 - 599	5 times the number of course units (credits)
Courses numbered 600 - 799	6 times the number of course units (credits)
Courses numbered 800 - 899 (primarily project and thesis)	12 times the number of course units (credits)
Courses numbered 900 - 999 (primarily dissertation courses)	18 times the number of course units (credits)

How many weighted units do I need to maintain Full-Time status?

To be considered full-time, a student should have a minimum of 48 weighted units, e.g., 8 units (credits) of a 600-level course would yield, $6 \times 8 = 48$ weighted units, which is full-time; a master's thesis student taking 6 units (credits) of 897 would have $12 \times 6 = 72$ weighted units, which is also full-time.

Half-Time Status and Part-Time Status

To be considered half-time, a student should have a minimum of 36 weighted units (e.g., a student taking 6 units of a 600-level course would have 36 weighted units).

A part-time student would be taking a minimum of 12 weighted units.

Is there any exception to this calculation?

The one exception to this calculation is that a master's or doctoral student finishing a thesis/dissertation and having no other requirements to complete could take one credit of thesis continuum or dissertation continuum and be considered as a full-time student, even though the weightings are only 12 or 18 respectively.

What if I have a Graduate Assistantship?

Twenty-hour graduate assistantships shall count as 24 weighted units. Therefore, 24 additional weighted units are required to complete a full course of study (use the above chart to calculate remaining weighted units). Ten-hour graduate assistantships shall count as 12 weighted units. Therefore, 36 additional weighted units are required to complete a full course of study (use the above chart to calculate remaining weighted units).

What if I need to take undergraduate courses?

If a graduate student takes undergraduate courses for reasons of prerequisites or other program requirements, the undergraduate courses shall be weighted at 4 times the number of course units. Undergraduate courses are numbered 100-499.

If a student's entire course program for a semester consists of undergraduate courses, the usual undergraduate policy for "full-time/part-time" will apply.