

### Full-Time Enrollment

ALL international students on an F-1 or J-1 visa must pursue a 'full course of study' during the fall and spring semesters and make normal progress towards their degree in order to maintain legal F-1 or J-1 status in the United States. Full time enrollment at UNC Charlotte is 12 credit hours for undergraduate students and 9 credit hours for graduate students.

If a student fails to maintain normal progress towards completing their degree, he/she will be deemed to be "out of status" 8 C.F.R 214.2(f)(5)(i). Therefore, we urge all international students to consult with their Academic Advisors and the International Student/Scholar Office (ISSO) on a regular basis in regard to their academic status and its implication on their immigration status.

### Online Degrees / Programs

No more than the equivalent of one on-line/distance education class or 3 credits per session may count towards the "full course of study" requirement, if an online or distance education course "does not require the student's physical attendance for classes, examination or other purposes integral to completion of the class." Therefore, international students are not eligible to receive a form I-20 or DS-2019 for an on-line degree program. International students may enroll and complete an on-line program without obtaining an F-1 or J-1 visa, or ever entering the United States.

### Reduced Course Load

The exceptions to the "full course of study" requirement are limited and require special authorization from ISSO. **United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) will allow international student advisors to authorize a reduced course load only if a student meets one of the four criteria below:**

- Illness or other serious medical conditions (U.S. doctor must recommend a reduced course load for one semester at a time)
- Difficulty understanding the English language or unfamiliar with American teaching methods or reading requirements. This exception is generally only allowed during the first semester in an academic program in the U.S., not including "English as Second Language" Training. (Academic advisor must recommend a reduced course load for one semester at a time.)
- Improper course level. (Academic advisor must confirm that the course level is an improper placement for student)
- Final semester of study before graduation and fulltime enrollment not needed for program completion. (Academic advisor must affirm this request)

**DO NOT drop below fulltime enrollment without authorization from the ISSO!**

### IMPORTANT tips for advising international students

1. International students are required by the Department of Homeland Security to be registered for a full course load of classes before the 30<sup>th</sup> day after semester starts. If a student qualifies to drop below full time, the academic advisor must complete a Reduced Course Load form before the 30<sup>th</sup> day of the semester. This form may be obtained by the student at the International Student/Scholar Office (ISSO).
2. International **undergraduate** students must be enrolled in **9 credits of face-to-face** courses every semester. For example, with 12 credit hours, only 3 hours or less may be online. Above 12 hours, the student may have more than (1) online course. Please contact ISSO with any questions.
3. International **graduate** students must be enrolled in **6 credits of face-to-face** courses every semester. For example, with 9 credit hours, only 3 hours or less may be online. Above 9 hours, the student may have more than (1) online course. Please contact ISSO with any questions.
4. Audited classes do NOT count toward full-time enrollment according to immigration regulations.

## Academic Dismissal

If a student is permanently dismissed or suspended during or after the semester, he/she must depart the United States IMMEDIATELY. However, if the student secured permission to withdraw from the University, he/she is allowed a 15 day grace period from the day in which the decision was made to prepare for departure from the United States or to transfer to another school. If a student appeals the dismissal, he or she may stay in the country until the second/final dismissal decision is made. Therefore, the ISSO urges international students who are dismissed or about to be dismissed to appeal the dismissal decision. Graduate and undergraduate students should contact their academic advisor or program director/coordinator. In addition, the ISSO urges students who have been dismissed to apply to a new program of study or another school IMMEDIATELY in order to have their SEVIS record transferred in case the appeal application is denied. If the appeal is denied, the student must leave the U.S immediately.

### Students who plan to attend a different school upon re-entry into the U.S.

An F-1 student, who leaves the U.S. and has transferred to a new school while in the U.S. does not need to have a U.S. Consulate or Embassy indicate on the F-1 visa stamp the name of the new school which the student will be attending. This is applicable *provided* the student's F-1 visa stamp has *not* expired and the student presents an I-20 from the new school to the USCIS officer at the U.S. port of entry. If the F-1 visa stamp has expired, the student must apply for a new F-1 visa.

### Instructions for Dismissed International Students

If you are academically dismissed, the ISSO must, by federal law, terminate your SEVIS record IMMEDIATELY after the date in which the dismissal letter was issued. Once your SEVIS record is terminated, you will be considered to be "Out of Status" and you must leave the U.S. immediately or request reinstatement from the Department of Homeland Security.

#### ***If you are in the United States, you MUST do one of the following:***

1. Depart the United States immediately
- OR**
2. Appeal the dismissal decision **IMMEDIATELY**, even if you think there is no chance for the appeal to be approved. Meanwhile, complete the following steps:
    - a- Apply to a new program of study or another school to secure admission **as soon as possible**.
    - b- Request the Transfer-in form from your new school of enrollment and ask the ISSO sign it.
    - c- After you secure admission to another school, bring a copy of your new admission letter to the ISSO and request a transfer of your SEVIS record to the new school.

#### ***If you are outside the United States, you MUST:***

1. Appeal the dismissal decision **IMMEDIATELY**, even if you think there is no chance for the appeal to be approved. Meanwhile, complete the following steps:
  - a. Apply to a new program of study or another school to secure admission **as soon as possible**.
  - b. Request the Transfer-in form from your new school of enrollment and ask the ISSO sign it.
  - c. After you secure admission to another school, scan a copy of your admission letter to the ISSO and request a transfer of your SEVIS record to the other school.
  - d. The ISSO will transfer your SEVIS record to the other school.
  - e. Re-enter the U.S. on the **new** school's I-20. Your SEVIS number will remain the same.

Our office will be glad to help you with the **transfer** procedure. Please don't hesitate to contact us early regarding any concerns or questions.

#### ***If your SEVIS record has been TERMINATED, the ISSO strongly recommends ONE of the following:***

1. Depart the United States immediately.
2. Apply to and secure admission to another school and apply for immigration reinstatement.
3. Exit the States and re-enter on the other school's I-20.
4. Note: If your entry visa is not valid, you must renew your visa before re-entering the U.S.