Office of International Affairs

Online Courses for F-1 Students

This regulation pertains only to F-1 international students physically present in the United States. An online course is “a class taken online or through distance education which does not require the student’s physical attendance for classes, examination, or other purposes integral to completion of the class.” (Source: U.S. Code of Federal Regulation: [8 CFR § 214.2 (f)(6)(i)(G)])

“For F-1 students enrolled in classes for credit or classroom hours, no more than the equivalent of one class or three credits per session, term, semester, trimester, or quarter may be counted toward the full course of study requirement if the class is taken online or through distance education and does not require the student’s physical attendance for classes, examination or other purposes integral to completion of the class.” (Source: U.S. Code of Federal Regulation: [8 CFR § 214.2 (f)(6)(i)(G)])

A full-time course load is required only during the fall and spring semesters for F-1 Students. During the fall and spring semesters, an F-1 student is limited to only one online or distance education course that can be counted towards a full-time course load.

There is no requirement that F-1 students be enrolled during summer sessions, it is optional. Thus, F-1 students can take as many online or distance education courses from DSU as they wish (with DSU’s approval) during summer sessions.

Example 1:
An undergraduate international student is taking 16 credits, 9 of which are in traditional on campus classes and 6 online in the fall semester. Since fall is a required term for DSU, only one online course, or 3 credits, counts toward the full-time course load. This student is thus maintaining his or her F-1 student status because he has 12 credits (9 traditional plus 3 online credits).

Example 2:
An undergraduate international student in their senior year desires to take two online courses during the summer term. They want to stay at DSU during the summer term. Summer term is optional for DSU students, and those who do enroll can take up to 6 credits during each summer session. Therefore, they may take all twelve online courses in Summer Sessions I & II and still maintain their F-1 student status.

What if I want to take more than one (1) online course?

Taking more than one online course is fine, but students with an F-1 visa MUST make sure they are also taking at least 9 credits worth of classes that include meeting physically on campus.

If an F-1 Student is in his/her last semester of study and only need one course to graduate, he/she CANNOT take an online/distance education course. Immigration regulations strictly prohibit students in their last semester of study from taking ONLY an online course. If a student needs one course to complete his/her degree requirements and the course is only offered online, he/she must take another traditional course that requires regular classroom meetings. It is best to visit the Office of International Affairs before making these plans.