

Online/Distance Education Course Policy for J-1

International students on J-1 Visa are required by Federal Regulations to maintain full-time status (12 hours undergraduate or 9 hours graduate - fall and spring semester; 6 hours for summer if it's the first semester in new degree program). They must also make normal progress towards the educational objective listed on their DS-2019. Classes that are delivered through online and distance education modalities cannot be used to satisfy the full course of study.

Definitions:

Face-to-Face/Traditional Class - Requires regular/weekly attendance.

Online class - The bulk of the material is delivered online (Blackboard, etc.). Face-to-face sessions are discouraged but acceptable up to 15% of instructional time (maximum of four 1 ½ hour meetings during a long semester).

Hybrid Class - Combines traditional classroom instruction with a significant amount (over 50%) of instruction delivered through educational technology. Hybrid courses meet approximately half of the time in a traditional face-to-face classroom environment with the remainder of the course presentation, interaction, activities, and exercises delivered through various electronic means (online). Because students are required to attend regular class meetings these classes are not restricted by the regulation listed below.

Off-Campus Class – Distance Education offers a number of face-to-face and hybrid classes at UH Sugar Land. These classes are offered in the same formats on campus and are not restricted by the regulation listed below.

Federal Regulation: 22 C.F.R. § 62.2 full course of study

Full course of study. Full-time enrollment in an academic program of classroom participation and study and/ or doctoral thesis research at an accredited academic institution as follows:

(2) College and university students must register for and complete a full course of study, as defined by the accredited academic institution in which the student is registered, unless exempted in accordance with § 62.23(e).

Even though the regulations do not expressly say no to online enrollment, it does require that the minimum hours for full-time enrollment to be with classroom participation. These courses cannot be used to meet the minimum required hours since online classes do not allow classroom participation. Online enrollment above the minimum required hours can be online.

Example 1: A graduate student wants to take 12 hours for the fall term and three of those hours are online. As the 3 hours online are additional to their minimum 9 hours, they are maintaining their J-1 status. The student begins to struggle in one of their face to face courses and decides to drop it. They end up with 9 hours of enrollment, though 3 of those hours would be online. This is a violation of their status as the student did not maintain 9 hours of face to face or hybrid courses.

Example 2: If the start date to begin a new program on a student's DS-2019 is during the summer, he or she is required to complete 6 credit hours for the first summer semester to maintain their status. Of the 6 credit hours, both courses cannot be online.

Other Restrictions: In addition to the number of credits/classes that may be taken online each semester, there are situations where international students may not take online classes.

Final Semester – If a student needs only one class to complete their program of study, it may not be taken online. The student must apply and receive the RCL authorization prior to the start of the semester.

Mini Sessions – If a student is taking the first or last class in their course of study, they may not take the class in the mini session – they must register in the regular session for the semester. Taking the last course in a mini-session that ends earlier than the regular session will immediately begin the 30 day grace period.