

Advising International Students at Willamette University

The Office of International Education would like to thank you in advance for any assistance you can provide to international students as they finalize their schedules and begin to navigate the U.S. educational system.

We at OIE hope you will enjoy working with these students. If you have questions about any of this, please contact us at oiadvise@willamette.edu (shared OIE email).

~ The OIE Staff

Two kinds of international students on campus at WU and PNCA

- F-1 students are degree-seeking students and they can enter as freshman or transfer students OR as graduate students.
- J-1 students are short-term exchange students who will only be on campus for one or two semesters.
 - CAS and PNCA undergraduate exchange students can come as sophomores, juniors, or seniors, but it is most typical that they come as juniors.
 - Graduate exchange students are not at a particular level, per se, but are typically advanced beyond the first semester or year of the graduate program.
 - **More and more, incoming short-term exchange students have very tight academic requirements they need to satisfy their home university.** For these students, the work of the academic advisor can be especially helpful. If you are working with an exchange student, this is a good initial question: Are you able to take anything you want while at Willamette University or do you need to plan your courses carefully? Knowing this in advance can help maximize your advising time.

Main academic requirement for ALL international students (F-1 or J-1 doesn't matter)

- CAS students must be registered for a MINIMUM of 12.0 credits every semester to satisfy U.S. immigration regulations. Like other CLA students, most of the CLA international students will register for between 12.0 and 18.0 credits.
 - Graduate AGSM students must take a minimum of 9.0 credits each semester. They can take up to 18 credits.
 - Graduate Law students must take a minimum of 10.0 credits each semester. They can take up to 18 credits.
 - PNCA undergraduate and graduate international students must take a minimum of 12.0 credits each semester. They can take up to 18 credits.
- Dropping courses: For U.S. students, they are sometimes advised to drop classes if they are earning poor marks or are in jeopardy of failing a class.
 - You can follow this strategy with your international students as well as long as doing so doesn't take them below 12.0 credits (or 9.0 credits for AGSM, 10 credits for Law).
 - U.S. immigration would rather a student earn an F for a class than to drop it and then fall below the full-time enrollment requirement.
 - Earning an F (and ultimately not getting the credit) doesn't harm a student's immigration status unless it becomes so bad that they can't make "normal progress" toward their degree. If you see that kind of thing happening with any of your international student advisees, please bring Kris Lou or Chris Andresen in to try to help.

- Sometimes a CAS student will need extra support, especially in the first semester. Two courses that are sometimes offered can help:
 - **IDS 109: Approaches to Intercultural Learning** (.5 credit) is especially designed to help new international students with the academic and cultural challenges faced initially. It is especially recommended for freshman and transfer students who have never before studied in the U.S. but who hope to earn their degrees at WU. It does not replace the freshman seminar for freshman but can be considered complementary. Only offered in fall semester.
 - CLA students who appear to need extra support might be encouraged to sign up for **IDS 105: Transition to College Learning** (.5 credits) if it can fit with their schedule. While not designed specifically for international students, it has been useful for some who might need some extra help. See also <http://libguides.willamette.edu/transition>. Offered every semester; recommended for spring semester when IDS 109 is not offered.
- Beyond courses, it's a good idea to encourage international students to take advantage of group study that might occur in your department, individual tutoring through the Student Success Hub, and assistance from the Writing Center.

Can a student ever go below the minimum required by immigration?

There are some ways a student can be enrolled for less than full time (CAS – 12 credits; AGSM – 9 credits; Law – 10 credits, PNCA undergrad and grads – 12. credits), but they all require OIE intervention with immigration BEFORE the classes are dropped.

- **Incorrect Academic Level:** This option is only available to international students in their FIRST semester at a U.S. university
 - For example, perhaps it was thought they satisfied a prerequisite based on their transcripts but the reality is that our equivalent classes weren't really equivalent in preparation and a student gets overwhelmed to the point of extreme stress. In this case, dropping below 3.0 credits might be appropriate.
 - There are procedures in this case, so please consult Kris Lou or Chris Andresen before advising a student to drop a class.
- **Illness:**
 - If they are granted a medical authorization (requires documentation from a doctor and intervention with immigration through our office), a student can drop one or all of their courses and still remain in the U.S. without violating their status.
 - This can only be used once during an international student's whole academic program in the U.S., so it should be used with caution.
 - For one semester only exchange students, this would not typically be an appropriate step. In this case, returning home would probably make more sense.

The Liberal Arts

- Our office does what we can to help all CAS international students understand the differences between their home systems and a liberal arts university like Willamette.
- Some of our short-term exchange students might have home university requirements that they need to satisfy that make a true "liberal arts" schedule hard to fashion.
- When possible, we encourage them to take advantage of our system and try new areas of academic interest.