

Advising the International Student

We hope faculty will find this guide useful when advising international students about their academic careers. Although international students enjoy many of the same rights and benefits as their American peers, some of these are superseded by federal regulations. It is imperative that faculty be familiar with the content of this guide to ensure that international students remain in compliance with the law, especially in the current environment of increased monitoring.

The Role of the Office of International Programs

The entire university community is enriched by the presence of students from all over the world. However, to realize the mutual benefits of international educational exchange, students and those working with them must be aware of the additional regulatory requirements that govern their daily lives. It is difficult for international students to succeed academically if they have immigration problems.

Equally important, as hosts to international visitors, Pacific faculty and staff must assist newcomers in making their cultural adjustment to the United States, whether they are from a country as similar in culture as Canada or as different as China. IP helps students through this challenging adjustment by coordinating information programs, by providing a forum for students to discuss their experiences and ideas, by advocating for their special needs and concerns, and by helping them develop a support system while they are here. Working together, faculty, staff and students create and maintain an environment in which international students can thrive.

The Academic Department and IP

As an academic advisor, you may be asked to confirm to IP in writing certain aspects of a student's academic status. Students may request that you explain why they need more time to complete their studies or why they should take a reduced course load, confirm the date by which they are expected to complete their studies, or recommend them for an employment experience related to their field of study. The forms and letters you are asked to complete by IP are not arbitrary; they are designed to keep both the university and the student in compliance with immigration regulations.

Sometimes students confuse the role of the academic advisor with their IP advisor. Please do not complete any government form for any international student. Only IP officials are authorized to issue, sign, and update official immigration documents for international students. Should you be uncertain about what is being asked of you, contact IP directly.

If an international student suddenly stops attending classes or expresses an intention to drop out, it is critical that the faculty member/advisor notify IP immediately. IP will follow up to ensure the student is aware of the immigration regulations governing international students.

To maintain legal F-1 or J-1 status in the United States, international students must:

- Both register for and complete a full-time course load each semester. Any and all exceptions to this, whether for academic, medical or personal reasons, must be pre-approved by IP and properly documented
- contact IP before extending the period of study
- contact IP before attending another school
- contact IP before taking a leave of absence
- contact IP before changing majors or academic programs

Full-Time Course Load

The definition of full-time study for undergraduates is a 12-credit course load per semester. There are only a few valid exceptions to this rule, and even routine cases require IP pre-approval. To determine the student's eligibility for the full-time enrollment exception, IP routinely requests that the academic advisor documents the circumstances necessitating a reduced course load (using the IP Academic Advisor Certification for Reduced Course Load Form) prior to the beginning of the semester for continuing students and before the end of the add/drop period for new students.

NOTE: IP Approval must be granted before any change to a student's enrollment is made at the Registrar's Office.

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