Minimum Registration Requirements
For Graduate Students

POLICIES (Updated 01-26-2015)

General
All credit hours and course loads refer to ONLY those for which a student is receiving graduate credit AND which are applicable to the student’s degree program. BUT, any maximum limit WILL include any undergraduate credit classes and graduate classes not applicable to the student’s degree program.

Type of Admission
The number of hours that a student must register in each semester is not dependent upon the type of admission status of the student. Both regular and conditional admissions are subject to the same registration requirements.

Semester
Course loads for the fall and spring semesters are the same. The normal course load is 12 credit hours; the maximum load is 15. For tuition purposes, enrollment in 9 credit hours is considered full-time. Students may register in fewer than 12 hours with the approval of their academic advisor and in accordance with any other conditions stipulated for each department or program.

A graduate student must be registered for a minimum of 3 hours each academic term (and summer, too, if using facilities or faculty time) in dissertation research (doctoral) and 1 hour in thesis research (master’s). This excludes non-thesis/dissertation research i.e. non-thesis or non-dissertation research will not count towards meeting minimum registration requirements.

Where an international student has an I20 which indicates that he or she is starting their program in the summer semester then the student must be enrolled full-time i.e. 9 hours.

For the summer term students may register for a maximum of 6 semester hours per session or 12 hours during an entire summer dual session. A maximum of 3 semester hours applies during the interim session. A student who is not using University facilities is not required to be registered for any classes during the summer and interim terms.

Doctoral Students and Dissertation
The Catalog section on Continuous Dissertation Registration for Doctoral Students states that once a student qualifies for doctoral candidacy, the student must enroll each semester for at least 3 hours of dissertation (699) research. If certain conditions are met for the student's final semester, the student may qualify to enroll for fewer than 3 hours of 699 dissertation research. A zero-hour or one-hour 699 registration is not permitted in any but the final semester. This exception only applies to students who registered for at least 3 hours of
Final-Semester Dissertation (699) Minimum Registration Hours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When was the completed electronic dissertation submitted to ProQuest/the Graduate School?</th>
<th>Minimum hours of 699 registration required in the final semester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By 4:45 p.m. on the last-possible day for instructors to post grades for the semester before the student’s final semester (date published in the **University Academic Calendar)</td>
<td>0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 4:45 p.m. on the last-possible day for instructors to post grades for the semester before the student’s final semester, but before 4:45 p.m. on the last-possible day to register or add a course for the student’s final semester (both dates published in the University Academic Calendar)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 4:45 p.m. on the last-possible day to register or add a course for the student’s final semester (date published in the University Academic Calendar)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Completed" means submitted at ProQuest after being successfully defended; being carefully edited following the defense meeting; and having the Committee Acceptance Form (CAF) signed by all committee members, department chairperson and graduate dean. At the time of ProQuest submission, the student also must submit the Survey of Earned Doctorates through the NORC website.

* Note: International students on F-1 or J-1 student visa status cannot use the 0-credit hour exception above as the basis of maintaining minimum enrollment requirements as active students. Please see “USCIS” section under “Minimum Hours – Other Policies and Regulatory Bodies” on page 3 of this policy.

**The University Calendar is available at the Academics tab of the website of the University Registrar.
Master’s Students and Thesis

The Graduate School will make an exception for the master’s student’s final semester as follows.

Where the student has completed his or her thesis and has submitted the final document to the Graduate School registration requirements are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When was the completed thesis submitted to the Graduate School?</th>
<th>Registration required for the final semester in 599 thesis research?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By 4:45pm on the last day to register or add courses in the student’s final semester (dates published in the University Academic Calendar).</td>
<td>0 hours*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After 4:45pm on the last day to register or add courses in the student’s final semester (dates published in the University Academic Calendar).</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Completed” thesis is one that has been successfully defended, signed off by all committee members and chairperson, and has been carefully edited before submission to the Graduate School.

Students receiving financial support of any kind (including employment, financial aid) may not take advantage of these exceptions, please see below for minimum registration requirements.

*Note: International students on F-1 or J-1 student visa status cannot use the 0-credit hour exception above as the basis of maintaining minimum enrollment requirements as active students. Please see “USCIS” section under “Minimum Hours – Other Policies and Regulatory Bodies” on page 3 of this policy.

**The University Calendar is available at the Academics tab of the website of the University Registrar.

Continuous Registration for Doctoral Students

Once a student has met the requirements for admission to candidacy for a doctoral degree, the student is expected to pursue completion of the dissertation without interruption by enrolling each semester for at least 3 hours of dissertation research.

Continuous Registration for Master’s Students

Once a student has met the requirements for admission to candidacy for a master’s
degree, the student is expected to pursue completion of the thesis without interruption by enrolling each semester for at least 1 hour of thesis research.

**Minimum Hours – Other UA Policies and Regulatory Bodies**

Generally, where other UA policies mandate minimum registration requirements these will apply in preference to these policies and any exceptions. For example:

- Enrollment below 5 hours (i.e. 4 or fewer hours) will disqualify any student from receiving activity, recreation, and athletic privileges (no access to Student Recreation Center) unless the student purchases the separate Activity/Recreation/Athletic privileges for a special fee (see Student Receivables – Cost of Attendance).
- Enrollment below 5 hours (i.e. 4 or fewer) will also disqualify any student from access to the Student Health Center unless the student pays the separate Health Center services fee (see Student Receivables – Cost of Attendance).
- Students who purchase the UA health insurance or who receive the GA health insurance benefit must register for a minimum of 3 graduate semester hours.
- UA Human Resources policies state that a department can hire any graduate student for regular hourly paid employment as long as the student is enrolled in at least 4.5 hours (see Human Resources – General Hiring Practices, Students).

Minimum hours of enrollment are subject to any state or federal regulations relating to a student’s financial and citizenship situations. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:

1. **Financial Aid:** Federal regulations mandate that a student who is receiving financial aid must be registered half-time. This means a course load of at least 4.5 hours for graduate students. Summer sessions are combined and treated as one semester for financial aid purposes. **Where a student is receiving financial aid the exception listed above regarding the graduating semester does not apply.** (Students with questions concerning financial aid regulations should contact the Student Financial Aid Office.)

2. **USCIS:** International students who are attending UA on F-1 or J-1 student visas must be enrolled in accordance with the institution’s minimum registration requirements. International students may **NOT** take advantage of the 0-credit hour graduating semester exception listed above as the basis of their continued active F-1 or J-1 student visa status. According to immigration regulations, an international student’s visa status ends during the semester in which his/her studies are complete. F-1 and J-1 students must plan to apply for post-completion work authorization, begin a new program of study, transfer to a new academic institution, or prepare to leave the U.S. within the grace period allowed after the last day of the semester in which they complete their current program ([http://is.ua.edu/currentstudents/final-semester-checklist/](http://is.ua.edu/currentstudents/final-semester-checklist/)). Students should contact Capstone International Services with regard to
USCIS regulations and their status after completion of their current program in regard to their thesis or dissertation.

3. **IRS**: As long as a student is enrolled half-time, no withholding taxes will be deducted from any wages or stipend payments made to the student. Half-time means at least 3 hours in a fall or spring semester. *This is regardless of any exceptions listed above or below.*

**Fellowships**

Whilst no service to the University is required, fellowship recipients are expected to take no fewer than 12 graduate hours, and no more than 15. If, however the fellow also receives an assistantship then he or she may take fewer graduate hours in line with the policy for assistantship-holders, but no fewer than 9 graduate hours.

**Assistantships**

All graduate assistants must be full-time graduate students taking the equivalent of 12 semester hours. However, actual enrollment varies from 1 to 12 hours of classes depending upon the work load of the assistantship. Because the student is receiving funding from the university, the Graduate School stipulates a minimum level of registration for each level of work load where a student receives an assistantship during the fall and/or spring semesters.

This is summarized as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FTE level</th>
<th>Workload (hours per week)</th>
<th>Minimum registered hours (required)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Exceptions to these minimum levels for graduate assistants are permitted where:*

- It is the graduating semester and all degree requirements have been met. If the student fails to graduate at the end of the semester this dispensation is not allowed a second time. A minimum registration of 1 hour thesis research or 3 hours dissertation research will apply under this exception for any level of assistantship. Also, note that registration exceptions granted for graduating semester based on submission and approval of thesis or dissertation do NOT apply for an assistantship. *This overrides special dispensation for students who have taken advantage of a reduced registration in their graduating semester based on the submission of their thesis or dissertation.*

OR

- Any semester where the student is registering in thesis/dissertation research hours only and in accordance with the department or program policies. This
excludes non thesis/dissertation research. The minimum hours must be commensurate with the progress a student is expected to make on the thesis or dissertation as well as reflective of the extent to which university facilities and faculty time are invested (see Graduate Catalog Section 4.6 for guidelines for determining appropriate registration). Again, a minimum registration of 1 hour thesis research or 3 hours dissertation research will apply for any level of assistantship.

OR

- Summer and interim terms. Students are not required to register for any classes therefore they may hold an assistantship without any class registration. However if they are using university facilities and faculty time then they must register for thesis/dissertation research hours commensurate with the level of utilization (see Graduate Catalog Section 4.6 for guidelines).

Health Insurance

All graduate students must register at any time in any semester for a minimum of 3 hours in order to qualify for student health insurance.

The only exceptions to this are:

1. Summer semester where student held a qualifying GA position in the previous spring. Where the student receives the health insurance as a benefit under a qualifying assistantship or fellowship in the spring semester, the health insurance coverage period includes the summer, and a student is not required to register for any classes in the summer semester.
2. Final semester dispensation as detailed previously. Student must have completed and submitted an Application for Degree to the Graduate School Registrar for the semester in order to qualify.

Remember, qualifying for student health insurance is not the same as meeting the minimum registration requirement for access to the Student Health Center (see above).

International Students

1.1 All graduate international students who are attending college on F1 and J1 student visas must be enrolled in a minimum of 9 hours.
1.2 Where a graduate international student is employed on campus he or she may combine the equivalent hours of the assignment (IDGR hours as calculated by the Graduate School) with registered class hours to meet the minimum 9 hour requirement. The IDGR hours must be posted on the student’s academic transcript.
1.3 A graduate international student is not required to register for classes in the summer semester unless he or she is using University facilities.
1.4 However, where the student has an F-1 I-20 or J-1 DS-2019 which indicates that he or she is starting their program in the summer semester then the student must be enrolled full-time in the summer semester.
1.5 The only other exceptions to minimum registration of 9 hours for graduate international students are:
   a) Student is formally registered with full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) status. The student’s academic advisor must indicate formally to Capstone International Office how many hours the student is required to register to be full time. Part-time CPT still requires minimum 9 hours.
   b) Student has completed all regular classes and is registering in just thesis or dissertation research hours. Again, student’s academic advisor must indicate formally to Capstone International Office the minimum number of hours they must register.

1.6 The minimum registration exceptions referred to above apply for student health insurance for international students.