



Faculty/Staff Guidebook:

Supporting International Students

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UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD

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Introduction

This guide is meant to serve as a reference to faculty and staff interested in supporting international students throughout their time at the University of Hartford. You will find information on academic expectations, cultural differences, academic advising considerations, and other general recommendations for working with the international student population. If you have additional questions, you may contact the International Center at internatl@hartford.edu. Please also refer to our [website](#).

Course Structure and Expectations

Given various cultural barriers, it can be helpful to clearly define your expectations for all students at the start of the course:

- Describe the purpose of the syllabus and each of its components.
- If relevant to your course, clarify the distinction between take-home, in class, and open-book exams.
- Review your expectations for course assignments and class participation. You may want to further clarify that throughout the course, it is not only acceptable but anticipated for students to respectfully share differing opinions.
- Clearly define your expectations regarding collaboration and group projects, including which portions of the assignment can be done in a group, and which must be done individually.

Grading System and Course Credit

Students may be unfamiliar with the U.S. grading system and standard calculation of grade point averages (GPAs). They may not understand the concept of course credits, such as the number of credits assigned for each course, and how that number is calculated into the overall GPA. Explain your grading system, including letter versus number grades, the percentage of each assignment as it pertains to the overall grade, and the effect of your course's final grade on the student's overall GPA.

Academic Integrity

Incorporate a clear, prominent statement in the syllabus regarding academic integrity in your classroom, and review it on the first day of class. Go over the definitions of common terms relating to academic dishonesty as they pertain to your course, such as plagiarism, cheating, fabricating/ facilitating academic instruction, etc. Finally, explain the range of consequences that can occur as a result of academic dishonesty.

Research and Citation Methods

Research and citation methods differ among educational systems around the world. Some students may come from societies where attribution is unnecessary, or where paraphrasing is considered disrespectful. In other cultures, citing word-for-word without mentioning sources might indicate a level of respect to the author, whereas changing the author's text may be judged as disrespectful. Again, it is helpful to clarify citation expectations with your students, or direct them to the Student Success Center for a workshop on plagiarism and proper citations.

- Define your required citation style, distinguishing if necessary how your style differs from other citation methods.
- Offer samples demonstrating both correct and incorrect citations, including appropriate paraphrasing techniques.
- Direct students to resources, such as the [Center for Student Success](#), the [Center for Reading and Writing](#), [Learning Plus](#) and more.

Written Assignments

Guide students with written assignments by providing examples for topics or specifying the desired topic. Request the use of particular resources in the paper (for example, articles, books, interviews, etc.). Provide students with reviews and feedback at various stages throughout the writing process. Encourage students to ask questions and clarify your expectations during each stage, including accuracy of citation methods, scope of the topic, use of materials and information from peer students, etc.

Student/Instructor Relationship

Students may come from a culture where education is formal and instructor-based, compared to the less formal and student-based educational structure here in the United States. They may not be accustomed to the type of close relationships professors have with their students. Consequently, they may feel uncomfortable meeting with a professor in an informal setting. Open dialogue, discussion, and questioning of the professor may go against cultural norms in their home country. Be patient with students, and clarify your expectations for the relationship.

Faculty Office Hours

If students come from a background where meeting with a professor outside of class is not customary, they may not utilize office hours until they feel more comfortable. Encourage students to utilize your office hours and other appointment times to further their understanding of your expectations for class meetings, papers, examinations and other assignments.

Peer Collaboration

Depending on the country of origin, students may be accustomed to an educational environment of greater competition and less collaboration with their peers. They may not understand how to collaborate successfully, so it can be helpful to clarify what constitutes acceptable collaboration both inside and outside of the classroom.

Common Knowledge

With such diverse backgrounds, the concept of “common knowledge” will also vary across cultures. For example, in a collectivist culture, knowledge is generally considered to be community property. In this case, the concept of intellectual property may be quite foreign. Therefore, it is worthwhile when discussing general themes to provide a brief introduction and background on the topic for those who grew up in a culture outside of the United States.

Academic Advising Considerations for International Students

I. Full-time Course Load Requirement

Students must be enrolled in a **full-time course load** each semester:

- Undergraduate Student Minimum: 12 credits/semester
- Graduate Student Minimum: 9 credits/semester

Exceptions are possible for students in the following situations, provided that the student completes a “Reduced Course Load Application Form” with the academic advisor’s signature:

- Documented illness or medical condition
- Initial difficulty with reading requirements, English language, and/or unfamiliarity with American teaching methods (for students in their first semester)
- Improper course level placement
- Students in their last semester who do not require a full course load to graduate
- Graduate students whose course load can be considered full-time due to a research project or other reason as clarified by the academic advisor

International students may not count more than one three-credit online course toward their full-time course load requirement.

II. Withdrawal/Incomplete

International students should not be advised to withdraw from a course, even if they are failing, if that withdrawal will result in the student being enrolled in a less than full-time course load. To avoid this violation of immigration status, students must complete the reduced course load application with their academic advisor and meet with the International Center for authorization prior to withdrawal.

Receiving a W or Incomplete in a course at the end of the semester is the same violation as if the student dropped the course during the add/ drop period.

When a student drops below a full-time course load without proper authorization, the International Center is obligated to report this to the U.S. government and terminate the student’s immigration record. The student will then be in illegal status and must

immediately depart the U.S. It will be challenging for the student to obtain a new visa to return and complete their studies.

III. Employment Regulations

Students may work on campus in non-work study positions for a maximum of 20 hours per week during academic semesters and up to 40 hours per week during school breaks. Students are not eligible to work off-campus without prior approval from the International Center and/or U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

IV. Scholarship Guidelines

Students may be subject to stricter requirements than the general visa stipulations outlined above, based on the sponsor of their individual scholarship. For example, students may be required to maintain a certain GPA, major in a particular subject, be prohibited from enrolling in online courses, and/or be restricted to completing their academic program within a specified timeframe. In these instances, please refer the student to the International Center for guidance.

V. Internship Requirements

International students must have completed one academic year as a full-time student prior to conducting an internship. Students must be earning academic credit for the duration of the off-campus internship, which can be paid or unpaid. Students cannot exceed 20 hours per week of the internship during the academic year, and 40 hours per week during school breaks. Exceptions may be possible, provided that the internship advisor explains to the International Center in writing the need for a full-time internship. Please refer the student to the International Center for internship authorization.

For additional information regarding academic advising for international students, please contact the International Center at internatl@hartford.edu or 860-768-4870.