



To: UNA Academic Advisors
From: UNA Office of International Affairs

First Semester Online Course Registration for International Students

To help new international students better learn and assimilate into the academic programs at UNA, all international students who are beginning a first semester of academic study at the undergraduate level at UNA **may not register for any online or hybrid class**. All classes must be face-to-face. Total enrollment should not exceed 15 credit hours. This applies to students classified as freshman, level change from ESL to academic, co-enrolled, transfer, double degrees, and pre-masters, etc. This does not apply to students fully-admitted into a Master's program.

The purpose of this policy is to promote a successful start to US academic studies for new international students as they adapt to life and study at the higher education level in the US. Feedback from past students reveals that adjusting to an American classroom culture and an entirely unfamiliar way of life requires more time and energy than the students anticipated. Experience also indicates that online interface presents a steep learning curve for new international students. They have difficulty accessing and understanding the technology and often miss social cues and instructions due to cultural differences. Being in the classroom face-to-face with peers and professors during these first months will give our new international students a chance to learn the university system and the norms of the American university classroom without the added pressure of functioning in an independent and sometimes isolated environment.

After the first semester, international students may take online and/or hybrid courses. For further questions, please contact **Ms. Cala Flippo**, International Student Success Coordinator, at cflippo@una.edu or 256-765-4626.

Other Tips for Advising International Students

An international student must maintain a minimum course load to "maintain status" as a visa-holding student. See table below. Within the total course load, an international student must take a minimum of face-to-face classes. For US government purposes, hybrid* classes count towards the face-to-face requirement.

Dropping a course can jeopardize the student's visa status and legal presence in USA. If necessary, it can be better to take a low or failing grade temporarily rather than to lose student status permanently.

Full Course of Study Per Semester		
Level	<u>Minimum</u> total credit hours	<u>Minimum</u> face-to-face credit hours
Undergraduate	12	9
Graduate	9	6

Final Semester Before Graduation or Program Completion

An international student in his or her final semester cannot take only online courses. An international student with only online courses in the last semester must leave the US and take those courses from the home country. It is important that the student plan ahead to make sure that the last semester includes face-to-face classes. Online courses are permitted in the final semester within a normal Full Course of Study. See table above.

In the final semester before program completion, an international student may be authorized to take fewer classes than the Full Course of Study listed above if those courses are the only remaining requirements for program completion. This is called a Reduced Course Load and it must be requested in International Affairs.

Special Requirements for Scholarship Recipients

Some international students with financial sponsorships or scholarships have even more enrollment requirements. For instance, many of the Middle Eastern students have scholarships from their home country that forbid online or hybrid classes without specific pre-approval. Even students without scholarships may have trouble receiving a degree validation from the home country if the courses were delivered online or hybrid. Each student is responsible for knowing and following his or her own requirements. You can help by raising the question during the advising process.