

Rules for Online Course for F1 Student

On-line courses have become increasingly popular for students, and many colleges and universities, including SUNY Poly, have greatly expanded their on-line and distance education course offerings in the past few years. But, the US federal government limits the number of on-line courses that an F-1 student can count towards a full-time course load during a required term.

Here is the text of the federal regulation:

“For F-1 students enrolled in classes for credit or classroom hours, no more than the equivalent of one class or three credits per session, term, semester, trimester, or quarter may be counted toward the full course of study requirement if the class is taken on-line or through distance education and does not require the student's physical attendance for classes, examination or other purposes integral to completion of the class. An on-line or distance education course is a course that is offered principally through the use of television, audio, or computer transmission including open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, or satellite, audio conferencing, or computer conferencing.”

What does this mean?

For SUNY Poly F-1 students, a full-time course load is required only during the Fall and Spring semesters. There is no requirement that students be enrolled during the Summer or Winter sessions, which are optional. Thus, a F-1 student can take as many on-line or distance education courses from SUNY Poly or from another institution as they wish (with SUNY Poly approval) during Summer or Winter session. But, during the Fall and Spring semesters, an F-1 student is limited to only one on-line or distance education course that can be counted towards a full-time course load, whether it is a SUNY Poly course or a course offered by another school.

If the course requires the student to come to the sponsoring university's location for a class, examination, or some other purpose integral to the completion of the course, then it is not considered “on-line” or “distance education” for the purposes of the federal definition, and is not subject to the federal limit. But, if the course is conducted solely “on-line” with no requirements to come to the sponsoring university’s location, then no more than one such course can be taken in the Fall or Spring semesters, if the student is physically present in the United States.

Confused? Don't be. Send your questions regarding on-line or distance education courses to the ISS at david.garrett@sunyit.edu