

Plymouth State University: Tips for Advising International Students

You've been assigned to be an academic advisor for an international student. An international student has, as defined by PSU, been issued a student visa from the Department of State, either an "F" or "J" visa. An "F" visa is for a degree seeking student. A "J" visa is for an exchange student who is studying at PSU for either a semester or academic year. In order for international students to "maintain their visa status", they are required to abide by the following academic criteria as determined by the US Department of State:

Federal Requirements:

- Must always be enrolled as a full-time student (UG: 12 credits per semester; GR: 6 credits)
- Exceptions for enrolling less than full-time include: documentation to indicate struggling academically, documented medical condition, or the student is in the last semester of their program and needs fewer than full-time credits to complete their degree (*all of which requires authorization from their international student advisor*)
- Students must make "normal progress" towards their degree
- Students are only allowed 1 online course per semester and cannot take an online course as their last class towards their program completion (some students sponsored by their governments are not allowed ANY online courses, or may be allowed 1 for their entire program)
- If students are planning to change their major, a minor, shorten or extend the length of the program they will need approval of their international student advisor either at the International Student Services or the Global Education Office (this is due to changes that are required on immigration documents)
- If students are planning an internship or practicum, they need to obtain prior authorization from their international student advisor
- With authorization from their international student advisor, students are allowed to work a maximum of 20 hours per week only on campus. Students are not allowed to work or volunteer off campus.

Additional Academic Advising Considerations:

- Based on the results of an assessment by the Languages and Linguistics Department, some international students will be enrolled in an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) course, as well as a Strategies For Success course. Please do not support a student in dropping these courses.
- Specifically for "J" visa holders (exchange students), courses that students register for will need to be approved by their home institution.
- Clearly articulate expectations (sometimes several times) and ask clarifying questions
- Explain consequences for academic dishonesty
- Encourage students to use all academic resources on campus: the Writing Center, PASS Office, the Math Activities Center, individual academic department tutoring services, and the academic support services at the Center for Global Engagement
- Review and give feedback during the writing process.
- Pair up international students with students from the U.S. for help with notes, assignments, etc.

Cross-Cultural Considerations:

- Recognizing students may have had different educational experiences including pedagogical approaches, assessment, and classroom culture (many, for example, may be unfamiliar with a course syllabus as a tool)
- Speak clearly and slowly
- Encourage students to share things about their culture, when appropriate
- Encourage students to get involved in campus activities
- Explain the concept of office hours and encourage students to use them
- Explain grading system and how grades affect GPA (this may be different from the student's home country)
- Know the signs of culture shock and refer students to the Counseling Center if needed

Contact Information:

For UG/GR degree-seeking ("F-1 visa") students:

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