New Proposal for Full Time Status for Graduate Students:

Issue:

The number of credit hours for which a student registers should reflect time commitment and also a use of university resources. However, there is no obvious reason for requiring that a student be enrolled full-time for 9 to 12 hours other than to ensure timely completion of the degree. Indeed over the years it seems that more and more of our students are pursuing degrees part-time. This is not a problem for domestic students as they can pursue their studies part-time (less than 12 hours). Indeed many of our domestic doctoral students who are not supported on assistantships or fellowships drop down to the minimum required number of two dissertation hours after they have passed prelims. However, federal regulations stipulate that international students must enroll full-time so they cannot reduce their credit hours with the current rule. Since international students can never be declared in state for tuition purposes this places a heavy financial burden on these students, especially those who are self-payers as well as the academic department for those who receive waivers. Registering for 9 to 12 hours seems particularly appropriate during the early stages of a program when students are taking formal courses. Once a doctoral student has passed prelims and completed the required 24 dissertation hours or a master’s student has completed required coursework and a minimum of 6 thesis hours, it seems appropriate to offer alternative registration options for all students as they complete the degree.

See below for policy change.
Full-time vs part-time status of graduate students

Status:

Current policy stipulates that a graduate student in full-time status must enroll for 9 to 12 hours per semester. Students receiving assistantships e.g. TAs and RAs must enroll for 9 hours. University Fellows must enroll for 12 hours. Generally students without an assistantship or fellowship must enroll for 12 hours to be considered full-time. International students are considered full-time by enrolling in 9 hours because allowance is made for non-native English speakers.

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Policy Change Recommendation:

Establish new categories of full and part-time status as follows:

- Doctoral students: Prior to completion of prelims and 24 hours of dissertation a full-time doctoral student must enroll for 9 to 12 hours per semester. Students receiving assistantships e.g. RAs and TAs must enroll for a minimum of 9 hours and students on fellowships (internal or external) must enroll for 9 to 12 hours as stipulated by the fellowship requirements. Domestic students without an assistantship or fellowship may opt for part-time status with the approval of their program. Federal guidelines require that international students be enrolled full-time.
After completion of prelims and 24 hours of dissertation full-time status requires that a doctoral student must enroll for a minimum of 3 hours per semester (of which at least 2 must be dissertation hours) until completion of the degree. Students receiving assistantships e.g. RAs and TAs receiving a stipend and waiver must enroll for a minimum of 9 hours (of which at least 2 must be dissertation hours) and students on fellowships (internal or external) must enroll for 9 to 12 hours (of which at least 2 must be dissertation hours) as stipulated by the fellowship requirements. Domestic students without an assistantship or fellowship may opt for part-time status with the approval of their program in which case they must enroll for a minimum of 2 dissertation hours. Federal guidelines require that international students be enrolled full-time.

Masters students: Prior to completion of required coursework and 6 hours of thesis (if enrolled in a thesis masters program) a full-time master’s student must enroll for 9 to 12 hours per semester. Students receiving assistantships e.g. RAs and TAs must enroll for a minimum of 9 hours and students on fellowships (internal or external) must enroll for 9 to 12 hours as stipulated by the fellowship requirements. Domestic students without an assistantship or fellowship may opt for part-time status with the approval of their program. Federal guidelines require that international students be enrolled full-time.

After completion of required coursework and 6 hours of thesis (if enrolled in a thesis masters program) full-time status requires that master’s student must enroll for a minimum of 3 hours per semester (of which at least 2 must be thesis hours) until completion of the degree. Students receiving assistantships e.g. RAs and TAs receiving a stipend and waiver must enroll for a minimum of 9 hours (of which at least 2 must be thesis hours) and students on fellowships (internal or external) must enroll for 9 to 12 hours (of which at least 2 must be thesis hours) as stipulated by the fellowship requirements. Domestic students without an assistantship or fellowship may opt for part-time status with the approval of their program in which case they must enroll for a minimum of 2 thesis hours. Federal guidelines require that international students be enrolled full-time.

Explanation and Justification:

1. The 2-hour minimum thesis/dissertation hours rule remains in effect.

2. The Residency rule remains in effect.

3. It is expected that students who are appointed as RAs and TAs and thus receive a stipend and tuition waiver are those who are fully engaged in the FSU academic community and dependent upon maximal use of the university's resources for their studies. This justifies the requirement that they be enrolled for 9 hours.