

Grainger Engineering Full-Time Registration Policy: Final Implementation

April 22, 2021

Policy

Effective Fall 2021, all students in The Grainger College of Engineering graduate programs must register for at least 9 credit hours (including in XXX 599 courses), *or whatever minimum number of hours required by their program or another University policy** if this is greater than 9, during each fall and spring semester of enrollment in order to be considered as full-time students in their program. Students wishing to register for fewer credit hours in an individual semester than this required minimum must request advance permission for this from their graduate program. Students who have completed all their degree requirements but their thesis or dissertation, are in Good Academic Standing, do not hold a tuition-waiver generating appointment (e.g., as a result of the 5-year PhD funding guarantee), and meet the required minimum by registering only for thesis research will receive a college-issued stand-alone tuition waiver.

*Per the Student Code (§3-301), registration in at least 12 credit hours in a semester is required for certification as a full-time graduate student, unless the student holds a 25-67% assistantship appointment. This also applies for purposes of maintaining an international student's visa status.

Permission to register for fewer than 9 credit hours in an individual semester may be granted in the following circumstances:

- Students enrolled in an online degree program.
- Students holding significant employment outside the University, including an internship.
- Students in coursework-only master's programs in their last semester of study who have fewer than 9 credit hours left to complete their degree requirements.
- Students experiencing a documented medical reason.

Purpose

The full-time registration policy serves two purposes:

1. It establishes that the college expects its graduate students to be registered full time during fall and spring semesters while enrolled in their degree programs.
2. It defines full-time registration in a manner consistent with university policy and the ASEE (American Society for Engineering Education) definition.

The first purpose aims to ensure timely academic progress of Grainger Engineering graduate students. The second purpose aims to facilitate consistent reporting of data to the annual ASEE survey, data that is published in *Engineering & Engineering Technology by the Numbers*.

To these ends, the policy sets a floor of 9 credit hours for full-time registration in fall and spring semesters, while giving precedence to university or program requirements that exceed 9 credit hours. The policy further raises awareness of these expectations by requiring advance permission for part-time registration, defined as registration in fewer than the required minimum number of hours defined by this policy.

Part-time registration may have implications for the student outside of the university's purview.

Implementation

Advance permission for part-time registration shall be sought from the student's graduate program. The college will not be involved in this process, nor will the college enforce the full-time registration policy. The college does not intend to ask departments to report on such permissions or on the resulting numbers of students in full-time or part-time status.

The policy stipulates four categories of students who are eligible for permission to enroll in fewer than 9 credit hours in fall or spring semesters. Programs are given autonomy in their implementation of the approval process. For example, programs can choose to give automatic permission to students in online degree programs, as well as students in coursework-only master's programs in their final semester of enrollment, without requiring individual student requests. Situations involving significant outside employment and/or a documented medical reason should be handled on a case-by-case basis, according to a consistent interpretation that applies to all students in that program.

Programs are additionally given autonomy to implement an approval process for students who wish to enroll in at least 9 credit hours but fewer than the minimum number of credit hours required for full-time enrollment as defined by their program or university policies. Such approvals can be provided automatically to all students or handled on a case-by-case basis, as long as the process is implemented consistently for all students in the program.

It is good practice for a program to be aware of the registration status of its students, so care should be taken with implementing automated procedures. Even when automatic permission is granted, students should be encouraged to discuss their registration choices with an academic/faculty advisor.

Waivers

The policy anticipates no financial implications for students in coursework-only master's programs for whom timely academic progress implies graduation within three semesters.

The policy anticipates that all PhD students will be covered on tuition-waiver-generating appointments during their first five years of enrollment, per the 5-year PhD funding guarantee, and that they will complete all their credit-hour degree requirements (coursework + dissertation/thesis research) during this time. For PhD students who have completed their credit-hour degree requirements and are past their first five years of enrollment but have yet to deposit their dissertation (they need not have completed their preliminary or final examination), the policy provides a stand-alone tuition waiver when they enroll full-time provided that they are in Good Academic Standing and do not hold a tuition-waiver generating appointment.

A stand-alone tuition waiver includes a partial fee waiver, but the student remains responsible for paying the General Fee, the Health Insurance Fee, the Health Service Fee, the Transportation Fee, and Student Initiated Fees, for a total in Fall 2021 of \$1,600. In comparison, an on-campus student registering for 0 credit hours in Fall 2021 would be charged \$1,584 in tuition plus \$1,219 in fees, for a total of \$2,803.

Such a stand-alone waiver will also be available to students completing a master's thesis provided that they meet the conditions stipulated by the policy. It is anticipated that this will apply to a smaller number of students in their fourth and final semester of enrollment.

The stand-alone waiver policy is not intended to provide a mechanism for faculty advisors to support their students.