Fall 2020 Instruction for F-1 students FAQs

What are the different instructional modes for the Fall 2020 semester and what do they mean?

Bimodal is face-to-face interactions with students and faculty in a safe social distancing manner.

Online-Asynchronous are classes that have no face-to-face interactions nor virtual meetings at all and the instruction of the class is specifically online.

Online-Synchronous are classes that have no face-to-face, but meet at a particular day and time for virtual instruction in the classroom.

Online-Asynchronous/Synchronous is a class that has not face-to-face interactions.

You can review the different modes here: https://www.uhcl.edu/registrar/enrollment/

Will online instruction cause me to lose my immigration status?

The Department of Homeland Security issued guidance stating that students are not allowed to continue in all online courses for the Fall 2020 semester with online. This means that you must continue to be enrolled full-time and be making normal progress toward the degree and have at least one bimodal course in fall 2020.

What should I do if my visa is about to expire and I cannot return home to renew?

You may stay in the United States on an expired F-1 visa as long as you maintain your immigration status by maintaining of a valid I-20 and maintain full-time enrollment requirements.

All of my classes are bimodal. Are they considered to be all online classes?

Bimodal classes include a face to face component, and are therefore considered Hybrid.

How many credit hours do I need to enroll during the Fall 2020 semester to maintain my lawful status?

Based on the current policy to maintain your F-1 status in fall 2020, you will need to enroll in a full course of study. At least one class must be coded as Bimodal. The remaining classes can be conducted as Online-Asynchronous or Online-Synchronous modes of instruction. Examples include Undergraduate students taking 12 credits could have 9 credits online as Online-Asynchronous or Online-Synchronous and 3 Bimodal credits. Graduate students may have 6 credits online as Online-Asynchronous or Online-Synchronous and 3 Bimodal credits.
Can I only take online courses and depart from the U.S while still maintaining my lawful status, then I will come back later to continue my study and get the degree?

Yes and No. Since UHCL is holding the fall 2020 semester in hybrid mode, your F-1 record will be terminated for Authorized Early Withdrawal. You must return to the USA within 5 months to regain your F-1 status. If you do that, there will be no break in your F-1 status and will still qualify for CPT and/or OPT. However, if you are outside of the USA for more than 5 months, you will need to re-enter with a new F-1 status.

I am an undergraduate student. How many bimodal classes do I need to take during Fall 2020 to maintain status?

Undergraduate students taking 12 credits could have 9 credits online as Online-Asynchronous or Online-Synchronous and 3 Bimodal credits. This is the minimum. You may take more bimodal credits if available in your degree plan.

I am a graduate student. How many bimodal classes I need to take for Fall 2020 to maintain status?

Graduate students may have 6 credits online as Online-Asynchronous or Online-Synchronous and 3 Bimodal credits. This is the minimum requirement to maintain F-1 status. You may take more bimodal classes if available in your degree plan.

The subjects which I have chosen in Fall are online and there is no bimodal course for me to choose. Is it true if there are no bimodal subjects for me to choose I have to move back to my country and purse Master’s from there?

You must work with your international student advisor to discuss your options to maintain your status while inside of the United States and speak with your academic departments (academic advisers or faculty) to advise on options for Bimodal forms of instruction.

Will online instruction cause me to lose my immigration status?

The Department of Homeland Security issued a guidance statement stating that students will have to take at least one bimodal in order to maintain your immigration status.

Will I still be able to apply for OPT this semester? Do I have to be present in the United States to apply?

You must be physically in the United States at the time you submit your Optional Practical Training (OPT) application to USCIS. Your OPT application will be processed as you request within the ISD Portal. If you have not applied for OPT yet, but plan to do
so, we strongly encourage you to apply beginning September 10, 2020 for fall 2020 graduates.

**If I am in my final semester can I take an online course?**

If you are in your final semester you must enroll in a bimodal form of instruction. Be sure to submit a reduced course load authorization through the ISD Portal if under the required courses to maintain your status for the final semester.