



Note: The university governance library, college policies, and case-by-case decisions by the RIT administration supersede information here. Answers to these FAQs are an attempt to consolidate information for students in the Manufacturing & Mechanical Systems Integration program, but these FAQs are not RIT policy. Refer to the relevant RIT policies and program curriculum requirements as published in the university's Graduate Bulletin for final authoritative answers.

VISA and Immigration Issues

For all issues related to VISA's and immigration, [International Student Services](#) is your best resource. The ISS website has its own "Frequently Asked Questions" section with topics related to I-20's, travel, Co-op, OPT and more.

<https://www.rit.edu/studentaffairs/iss/about-us/faqs>

Frequently Asked Questions for MMSI students

1. **As an international student, how do I obtain full-time status for purposes of compliance with my student visa requirements?** Answer: First, always discuss your plans with RIT's International Student Services (ISS) to be sure your plans comply with all U.S. immigration regulations and procedures. Generally, in each fall and spring semester, International students must be registered for and maintain either full-time enrollment ("full-time" means at least 9 course units for graduate students), or be completing all remaining courses if less than full-time enrollment, registered for a project/thesis or continuation, or registered to take the Comp Exam in the semester immediately following the term in which all course work was completed, to qualify for "full-time." It is the student's responsibility to plan coursework accordingly to assure they are on track for graduation and have the required prerequisite courses for subsequent semesters.
2. **What is meant by "Full-time" status?** Answer: At RIT, full-time graduate enrollment is 9 credits (undergraduate is 12 credits). If you are not registered for at least 9 credits, then registration for all remaining courses or registration for thesis, capstone project, and continuations of thesis/project all justify requesting "full-time" status. Contact the MMET office to request a "Full Time Equivalency" (FTE) each semester. FTE requests will be processed after the close of drop/add.
3. **Does registration for coop satisfy full-time requirements?** Answer: Yes, and you do not need to request an FTE (Full Time Equivalency). Other situations (below) require an FTE.
4. **Does registration for only a thesis or capstone project satisfy full-time requirements?** Answer: Yes, but you need to request an FTE from the MMET office.
5. **Does registration for only a continuation of thesis or continuation of capstone project satisfy full-time requirements?** Answer: Yes, but you need to request an FTE from the MMET office.
6. **Why would I need a Full-time Equivalency (FTE) and, if justified, how many times may a student be granted an FTE?** Answer: If the terms of your visa require full-time status, and if none of the above exceptions (project, thesis or coop) apply and the coursework for which you are registered in a given academic term is less than 9 credits for good cause and meets certain limited conditions, then you should request an FTE. If you are registering for all remaining

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courses (exclusive of thesis, project or comprehensive exam), then you should request a “Reduced Course Load” (RCL) from the MMET office. Note that there is a maximum of three FTEs and only one RCL permitted while completing your degree program as imposed by the RIT registrar on the Full-time Equivalency form that is submitted to them. First, confer with International Student Services to see if you need an FTE and/or an RCL. If so, you can request FTE status and a RCL through the MMET office.

7. What about a “Reduced Course Load” (RCL) and how does that compare to the FTE?

Answer: Sometimes it is not possible to register for a full-time course load such as when certain required courses are not offered, or are closed, or there are restrictions due to course prerequisites and there are no realistic options for registering for a full-time academic load that meet degree requirements. The RCL is a one-time and never again option when events such as academic difficulty result in the inability to carry a full-time academic load during a given term. For example, a student who was required to complete English Language Center courses as a condition of admission might end up unable to register for the necessary prerequisite courses the following semester because they are not offered. In such situations, a one-time RCL can be used to get through the semester until they are back on proper sequence.

8. What is a “Program Extension?” Answer: A “Program Extension” is filed with ISS to assist them with deciding whether your extension of an I-20 or DS-2019 has merit. When your I-20 or DS-2019 was issued, it had an end date that was based upon the usual time it takes to complete your degree. When the expiration date is earlier than actual degree completion for good reason, the “Program Extension” recommendation can be requested by the student. Contact the MMET department office to initiate a “Program Extension” request.