

General Guidelines for Signing up for Classes and Dissertation Credits

If you are a first year Grad Student:

1. Take 2 or 3 three credit classes, NO more than that! You are not undergrads any more.
2. When choosing courses, consider that you will also be working half time, adjusting to a new city, living situation, altitude, etc. etc. Personally, I think it is better to do well in two classes rather than feeling overwhelmed with three—especially in Fall term.

If you are Pre-Comps III:

1. If you are taking 2 or more classes, don't sign up for any dissertation credits.
2. If you are taking 1 class, sign up for 1 dissertation credit. Please note: One dissertation credit will qualify you as a full time student IF you are funded. **A single class is part-time and invalidates your funding if you are a TA or regular RA.**
3. If you are only taking dissertation credits, sign up for 3 dissertation credits. That is because the tuition and fees for one, two, or three credits is exactly the same! There is no point in taking one credit when you can get three at the same price.
4. Exception: If you have student loans, lending institutions often require 4 or more credits to be full time. You need to check with them to see what their guidelines are to qualify for full time status.

If you are Post-Comps III:

You **must** take at least 5 dissertation credits per term regardless of how many you have. You need 30 dissertation credits total to graduate. You must have 30 but there is no point in paying for more than that. You may take a maximum of 10 dissertation credits per term.

Other Issues

1. You must sign up for the dissertation section of your professor.
 - a. If your advisor is a Physics professor, they should have a dissertation section. If you cannot find their name on the list, please contact Kirsten Apodaca. She can add a section.
 - b. If your professor is in another department but has a joint appointment in Physics, you must sign up for his/her PHYS dissertation section. NEVER sign up for dissertation credits in another department.
 - c. If your professor is in another department such as EE or Chemistry or works at NIST and does not have an appointment in Physics, you will need to sign up with a titular advisor. All you need is permission from the professor. There is no paperwork involved.
2. Make sure you sign up for a grade. Do NOT sign up for 'no credit' or 'pass/fail'. Those classes don't count. Dissertation credits appear as "IP" on your transcript which means "In Progress".
3. You may not officially audit a class.

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4. **Beware the 2 credit class:** Some Special Topics classes are only 2 credits. That can result in 10 classes but 29 credits total. (This has happened to several students recently.) You must have 30 course credits for an MS and/or PhD.
5. **SUMMER: You may NOT take Comps II or Comps III during summer session.** The only time you need to sign up for dissertation credits in Summer is if you plan to defend during summer term.

The above are general guidelines. There are always exceptions, complications, etc. If you have questions, talk to me, not your classmate, labmate, or professor! It is my job to know the ins and outs of the rules. That is what I am here for. It is best to stop by my office so we can discuss your situation in person. My office hours are 7:30-4 PM, closed noon to 12:30 for lunch. Please allow sufficient time for a conversation. Thanks.