

Feeling swamped? How to Solve or Avoid Academic Problems

Occasionally, life gets in the way and students have problems meeting their academic obligations. We generally see this when someone has registered for four or even three courses in a semester. Before you register, think about what you have going on in your life. If you have a job, a family, are a volunteer, have a serious hobby, or other obligations outside the scope of school, you really need to think about taking no more than two courses, six credits. Graduate school is different from undergraduate school. If you carried six classes in your undergrad program and pulled off all A's, it still doesn't mean that you can do well with even three graduate classes. If you do find that you are in over your head, here are some suggested strategies.

- Don't delay in speaking to your instructor(s)! Don't fool yourself into thinking that they don't notice. They always do. The longer you put off a conversation about missing work or unsatisfactory work, the worse it gets—without fail.
- Don't start skipping class. That only makes matters worse, is insulting to the professor, and hurts your chances of recovering with a decent grade. Absences, no matter what the syllabus says, generally hurt your chances of earning an A.
- Speak to the administrator at your campus site. She could help you figure out how to better manage your time, and could also advise you on how to speak to your instructor about the situation.
- Understand the grading system. Even if a syllabus doesn't say so, if you consistently hand work in late, your grade will be affected. Speak to your professor if you find you are having difficulty getting the work handed in on time. Don't delay that conversation—the work piles up making it harder and harder to find a way out.
- Don't assume that you can just take an Incomplete. Incompletes are, according to the bulletin: "Granted at the discretion of the instructor in cases of emergency or hardship. Incomplete work must be completed before the end of the next semester (excluding summers) or the student may not be able to register for the next semester." (page 15, Palmer School Graduate Bulletin) This means that you can't just fall behind and expect to be given an Incomplete. As the bulletin implies, you should be very close to the end of the course, with the work pretty much all done, and, because of some emergency, are unable to do the final bits of the course.
- If you are enrolled in a class and are having doubts about whether or not you should stay in it, you need to act quickly.

- During the first two weeks of fall or spring classes, you can drop with no financial or academic penalty. By the third week of a 14-week class, refunds are reduced if you drop a class. This entire schedule is shortened up during summer or special sessions. Please keep this in mind and get the help or advice you need sooner rather than later when debating dropping a class. The refund schedule is posted on the web here: <http://www.liu.edu/SFS/Policies/Liability-Policy>.
 - Speak to the professor so that you are fully aware of what the class will entail and whether or not you should stay in it. They are always willing to work with you.
 - Remember that for federal loans, you need to be enrolled in at least six credits, so bear that in mind when debating pulling out of a class.
 - Avoid the situation completely by reading over the syllabus before you register for something that might not be right for you. Most syllabi are linked here: http://palmerblog.liu.edu/?page_id=190. If you're still not sure after that, speak to the professor, read evaluations, or speak to the site administrator or classmates about the course.
- If you are unsure about what to take, whether to take something at all, and when to take it, speak to a faculty member, site administrator, or professionals in the field. Remember that past evaluations of all courses are available at both Post and Manhattan. Look over the comments of former students, think about your long-term goals and how a course meshes with those, and make an informed decision.