Full-time or Part-time?

The decision to enroll full-time or part-time depends on your particular work and family schedule, as well as the degree program you choose. Be sure to meet with your academic advisor so you can make the decision that is best for you.

Here are some things to think about as you decide:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full Time</th>
<th>Part Time</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pro</strong>: You will be able to complete your degree more quickly.</td>
<td><strong>Pro</strong>: You will have more time to concentrate on each course, helping you to maintain a higher GPA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Con</strong>: An overly full schedule often causes grades to suffer, which costs more in the long run.</td>
<td><strong>Con</strong>: It will take you longer to complete your degree and degree requirements might change before you finish.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* **Tip**: Expect to spend 3 hours outside the classroom for every hour you spend in class. Average work time for a 3-credit hour class would be 12 hours per week.

* **Tip**: Before enrolling part-time be sure to speak to your major advisor to get their approval and see if they anticipate any problems or program changes.

**Pro**: NIU now offers a flat tuition rate for all students enrolled 12 credit hours or more per semester, which creates cost savings if you enroll in 13 hours or more.

**Pro**: Most financial aid and scholarships are available for part-time as well as full-time students.

**Con**: If you over-fill your schedule and your GPA suffers, this can cause long-term financial problems.

**Con**: Tuition rates tend to rise over time. So you might end up paying a bit more for your degree if you go part-time.

* **Tip**: Talk to a financial aid advisor [niu.edu/fa/contact.shtml] before enrolling to estimate your costs and find out what aid will be available to you.

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**Did you know?**

The University of Houston recommends that those working 30 to 40 hours per week should enroll in no more than 7 to 10 credit hours per semester.

Take a look at their [convenient chart](uh.edu/technology/students/prospective-students/undergraduate-applicants/registration/course-load/) to see the recommended course load based on number of hours worked per week.

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“Time to degree for part-time students will vary based on their major and on their part-time status. I know a student that transferred to NIU with the A.S. and was at NIU for five years going part-time and working full-time. My advice to students going part-time and full-time is to meet with your academic advisor regularly and be certain you are hitting all of your requirements for degree.”

– Katy Saalfeld
Acting Associate Director & Transfer Coordinator for Admissions at NIU
Fitting schoolwork into your busy schedule:
Tips from NIU students and staff

- Whether you take classes online or on campus, you will be expected to complete an average of 9 hours per week of reading, writing, and studying in addition to your 3 hours of class time for a 3-credit hour course.

- NIU alum Kimberly Gartland (Bachelor of General Studies, 2014) recommends getting advice from your advisor to maximize every hour of coursework: “When I sat down with my advisor and decided on full time studies, we spoke of what I could handle and what time frame I wanted to work with. Then we chose my classes to ensure that all my requirements would be satisfied. She was a great help at showing me ways to choose my courses that would kill two birds with one stone, satisfying multiple requirements at a time.”

- NIU student and single mom Gladys Sanchez recommends scheduling very carefully in advance to help your semester go smoothly. She says: “I live in the moment after I have planned my months out.” Her advice includes:
  - Organize all of your scholarships chronologically and apply for them accordingly.
  - Set out your weekly outfits on Saturday to create smooth transitions in the morning.
  - Plan all of your projects ahead and make sure that all your homework assignments and due dates are written in your planner during the first three days of school.
  - Communicate with all your professors and program all the important departments in your phone in order to navigate a big university.

Are online classes right for me?

Online courses can fit well into a busy schedule. Here are some things to keep in mind as you decide whether online classes are right for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pro</th>
<th>Con</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Many online courses have flexible deadlines. This is part of the benefit of online learning.</td>
<td>This flexibility makes it easy to fall behind. Students need to maintain a schedule of when they will accomplish tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online courses can allow a high degree of interactivity between students and faculty. It is easy for the professor to meet online with individuals or small groups over the course of an evening.</td>
<td>In an online course it can be harder for the instructor to know if you are having difficulty. Students should reach out early and often if they are struggling.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

““It is important that students create a learning space in their home where they can be left alone and separate from their responsibilities. It works best if you make friends and family aware of school time and ask them to support you.””

John Cowan
NIU online learning expert

Gladys Sanchez, Special Education major

““When choosing your class style it is important to honestly judge the type of person you are. I tend to be pretty organized and on top of my work, so for me online classes are great. For someone who tends to crave that face-to-face interaction, or who isn’t good with self-guidance, preparation, and most importantly prioritizing, online classes would be a less desirable choice.””

Kimberly Gartland
NIU alum