

Reduced Course Load (RCL) Form

ISU International Programs Office

SEE IMMIGRATION ADVISOR

Purpose of Form

An F-1 student should not drop below full-time enrollment without prior approval from IPO. Without IPO approval to drop below full-time enrollment, an F-1 student may be considered **out of legal immigration status**. This form should be completed by any F-1 student who wishes to enroll less than full-time or drop below full-time enrollment and signed by the Academic Advisor/Head of Department where applicable.

Requirement to Maintain Full-time Enrollment Status

F-1 international students are legally required to maintain full-time enrollment status during normal enrollment periods. Full-time status at ISU is defined as:

- 12 credit hours per semester for undergraduate students
- 9 credit hours per semester for graduate students

Normal enrollment periods include the fall and spring semester. F-1 students who wish to enroll less than full-time during a fall or spring semester *must* complete this Reduced Course Load Form and submit it to the International Programs Office (IPO).

Requirement for Prior Approval for Reduced Course Load

Submission of the form does not guarantee approval of a reduced course load. Therefore, students should verify that their request has been approved:

- *before* registering for less than a full course load during a normal enrollment period (RCL must be submitted before the first day of classes) AND
- *before* dropping a course, or courses, that will result in less than a full course load.

Failure to comply with this requirement could jeopardize the F-1 student's legal status in the U.S., forcing him/her to exit the U.S. and/or apply for reinstatement.

Academic Difficulty

To request an Academic Difficulty RCL, an F-1 student must complete this form. The only USCIS-authorized reasons for an Academic Difficulty RCL are the following: (1) Initial Difficulties with English language or reading requirements, (2) Unfamiliarity with U.S. Teaching Methods and (3) Improper Course Level Placement. The student must enroll for at least one course during an Academic Difficulty RCL. An F-1 student can only be authorized for this RCL once during each academic program level (Bachelor's, Master's, Doctoral, etc.). An RCL for reasons (1) and (2) can only be approved within an F-1 student's first year in the U.S. An RCL for reason (3) is not restricted to an F-1 student's first year in the U.S.

Final Term

To request a Final Term RCL, an F-1 student must complete this form. If a student is unable to graduate within the semester for which they request a Final Term RCL, they should report to IPO immediately because they may be subject to losing legal immigration status and may require a reinstatement.

Medical Condition

To request a Medical Condition RCL, an F-1 student must complete this form and submit a letter written by a licensed medical doctor, a doctor of osteopathy, or a licensed clinical psychologist on their own professional letterhead stating that a specific (explained) illness or medical condition compelled the student to reduce **or** to interrupt his/her full course of study. The letter should also specify the semester involved and whether the medical condition is considered to be ongoing. It may not be possible for an F-1 student with an ongoing medical condition to continue to hold a visa type that requires full-time university attendance.

Immigration regulations governing reduced course loads for students with medical needs state that:

- Reduced course load enrollment for medical reasons may not exceed a total of 12 months during a student's program of study. Students are granted this 12-month limit for *each* level of study (bachelor's, master's and doctoral levels). If, after 12 months, a student is unable to resume full-time study due to medical reasons, immigration policy requires that the student either (1) exit the U.S. with the option to reapply for study once s/he is able to undertake a full course load or (2) apply to change to a new visa classification suited for continued medical treatment in the U.S.
- If a student's medical condition prevents full-time enrollment for more than one semester, medical documentation must be newly provided and IPO must newly authorize a reduced course load for each subsequent semester in which a reduced course load is required. Medical documentation and IPO authorization are not required during the summer semester.