

Reduced Course Load for F-1 Students

International Student Services Office of Admissions and Records

Immigration regulations require F-1 students to maintain full-time student status each Fall and Spring semester. The Summer term is considered to be a vacation and students are generally not required to enroll during the summer. However, if the Summer term is a student's first semester of study in the U.S., then they must be full-time. Immigration regulations only allow for a limited number of reasons for a student to drop below full-time status. In any case, the student must receive authorization from a Designated School Official (DSO) prior to reducing his or her enrollment to less than full-time or the student will be in violation of his or her immigration status.

Full-Time Study Requirements

Level of study	Full-time course load
Undergraduate	12 credit hours
Graduate students without assistantships	9 credit hours
Graduate students with quarter-time assistantships (.25 FTE)	9 credit hours
Graduate students with half-time assistantships (.50 FTE)	6 credit hours

Important Notices About Full-Time Study Requirements

- Incomplete (I) grades do not count toward the full course of study requirement.
- Correspondence courses do not count toward the full course of study requirement.
- Only **one** distance education or on-line course can be counted toward the full course of study requirement.
- Courses taken concurrently at other U.S. institutions may be counted toward the full course of study requirement if documented appropriately. See a DSO for more information.

Valid Reasons to Drop Below Full-Time

- **Students in their final semester.** A student who is in his or her final semester may enroll in only the number of credit hours necessary for completion and still be considered to be pursuing a full course of study even if they will be enrolled less than full-time.

Required documentation: Final Semester Verification form

- **Medical problems.** A student who is compelled by illness or other medical conditions may interrupt or reduce their full course of study. The student is considered to be in status only if a DSO authorizes the reduction prior to the student withdrawing or dropping classes.

Special requirements:

- ✓ Valid medical reasons must be documented with an official letter, on letterhead, from a medical professional (e.g. medical doctor, licensed psychologist, etc.) that includes a brief diagnosis and a recommendation for the student to drop or withdraw from classes.
- ✓ Student must resume full-time enrollment the semester following recovery.
- ✓ The authorization for reduction of coursework due to medical problems cannot exceed 12 months per program level.
- ✓ Student must receive DSO authorization for reduced course load each semester.

Required documentation: completed Request for Less Than Full-Time Enrollment and an official letter from a medical professional (e.g. medical doctor, licensed psychologist, etc.), on letterhead, containing a brief diagnosis and a recommendation for the student to drop or withdraw from classes

- **Initial difficulties with the English language or reading requirements.** Usually this exception is applied for the beginning semester in the U.S.

Required documentation: completed Request for Less Than Full-Time Enrollment and a letter from academic advisor, on official letterhead, recommending reduced course load.

- **Unfamiliarity with American teaching methods.** Usually this exception is applied for the beginning semester in the U.S.

Required documentation: completed Request for Less Than Full-Time Enrollment and a letter from academic advisor, on official letterhead, recommending reduced course load.

- **Improper course level placement.** This is generally interpreted to mean that a student does not have the proper prerequisites for the course. It has also been applied to cases where it can be documented that the student does not have the proper preparation or background for taking a class.

Required documentation: completed Request for Less Than Full-Time Enrollment and a letter from the professor or academic advisor, on official letterhead, verifying improper course level placement.

*****NOTE: According to immigration regulations, students may only receive authorization for one semester of under-enrollment per educational level due to academic reasons (initial difficulties with the English language or reading requirements, unfamiliarity with American teaching methods, or improper course level placement).**

Procedures

Step 1

Read the Reduced Course Load for F-1 Students information sheet thoroughly and discuss any questions with a DSO.

Step 2

Meet with your academic advisor and/or the professors involved to discuss the situation and how it will affect you academically. In cases where the reduced course load authorization is needed for academic reasons, you must obtain a letter from your academic advisor or professor.

Step 3

Students who need a reduced course load for medical reasons should meet with their medical professional to discuss the recommendation and obtain a letter recommending the reduced course load.

Step 4

Bring the required documents, as outlined above, along with your current I-20, passport, visa, and I-94 card to the Office of Admissions and Records, 121 LIB, to have the reduced course load authorized in SEVIS prior to dropping or withdrawing from the courses.

Step 5

A DSO will complete the reduced course load authorization and prepare a new I-20. Your new I-20 will have the reduced course load authorization noted on page 3. At the beginning of the next semester, you will need to resume a full course of study and your record will be updated in SEVIS by the DSO.

Step 6

Complete the normal procedures for dropping a class according to university policy.

For more information

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