

Reduced Course Load (RCL)

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Overview

International students in F-1 and J-1 status are required to maintain full-time enrollment during the school year. If you cannot or will not meet this requirement, you must request a reduced course load. Federal immigration regulations severely limit a student's ability to be less than full time, but it maybe allowed in some circumstances explained below. If you drop below full time without authorization after the drop/add deadline, the U-M International Center is required to report this to SEVIS and you will lose your F-1 or J-1 status.

According to 8 CFR (Code of Federal Regulations) § 214.2(f)(6)(iii), the Designated School Official (DSO – the International Center Advisors have this designation) may allow an F-1 student to engage in less than a full course of study as provided below. **A student who wishes to drop below full time must obtain the approval from a DSO in advance, regardless what the reason might be. A student who drops below a full course of study (after the drop-add period) without prior approval of a DSO will be considered out of status.** Please be advised that a lack of financial support does not constitute a valid reason to reduce course load according to immigration regulations.

NOTE: *If approved for reduced course load, you are still eligible for on-campus employment benefits.*

Definition of Full Time

Undergraduate students	12 credit hours
Graduate students	8 credit hours
Graduate student assistants (GSIs or GSRAs)	6 credit hours

Note: *You must be registered full-time during your first term of admission. If admitted to begin spring/summer, you must be full-time during that first spring/summer term.*

Academic Difficulties

You may apply for reduced course load due to academic difficulties if an academic advisor to verifies your situation. Immigration regulations specify four academic difficulty reasons for which a reduced course load may be approved:

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 - Initial difficulties with the English language (usable only in student's first year)
 - Initial difficulties with reading requirements (usable only in student's first year)
 - Unfamiliarity with American teaching methods
 - Improper course level placement
- A student may be authorized for an Academic Difficulties RCL basis **only for a single term during any one course of study at a particular program level**, and must resume a full course of study at the next available term (excluding summer).
- A reduced course load for academic difficulties must consist of at least 6 credit hours for undergraduate students and at least 4 credit hours for graduate students.

Source: [8 CFR § 214.2(f)(6)(iii)(A)]

Medical Conditions

A student must apply for RCL if, due to a temporary illness or medical condition, he/she is unable to be enrolled full time (or, if necessary, no course load).

- The student must provide medical documentation from a licensed medical doctor, doctor of osteopathy, or licensed clinical psychologist, to the DSO to substantiate the illness or medical condition.
- The letter from the medical provider cannot be dated more than 30 days before the start of the term for which the RCL is requested.
- The letter from the medical provider must recommend either that the student be part time or not enrolled due to medical circumstances.
- A reduced course load for a medical condition can be granted for a period of time not to exceed an aggregate of 12 months while the student is pursuing a course of study at a particular program level.
- The student must provide current medical documentation and the DSO must authorize the drop below full time for each new term.

Source: [8 CFR § 214.2(f)(6)(iii)(B)]

Completion of Course of Study

A student must apply for RCL in his/her final term if fewer courses (i.e. less than full time) are needed and required to complete the course of study.

The student must obtain a letter from his/her academic advisor to verify that the current term will be the final term for the student to complete his/her academic program.

Source: [8 CFR § 214.2(f)(6)(iii)(C)]

How to Apply for a Reduced Course Load

1. Meet with your academic advisor or licensed medical professional physician (DO, MD or licensed clinical psychologist) and request a letter. The letter must be printed on official letterhead and contain contact information of the person who signed the letter.
2. Compile and submit the following documents:
 - [F-1 Student Reduced Course Load \(RCL\) Request Form](#) [1] or [J-1 Student Reduced Course Load \(RCL\) Request Form](#) [2] completed and signed by you.
 - Legible copy of your **current** I-20 (not including instruction page) or DS-2019.
 - Copy of paper or print-out of electronic [Form I-94](#) [3] (please click on the link for instructions).
 - Unofficial transcript downloaded from [Wolverine Access](#) [4].
 - RCL Recommendation Letter
 - Completion of Studies: A letter from your academic advisor confirming that you are expected to complete degree requirements by [date] and specifying the number of credits for which you need to be enrolled in the final term.
 - Academic Difficulties: A letter from your academic advisor recommending a Reduced Course Load on the basis of [insert one of four academic difficulty reasons] and elaborating on the circumstances.
 - Medical Conditions: A letter from a licensed medical physician, doctor of osteopathy or licensed clinical psychologist recommending a Reduced Course Load on the basis of a medical condition for which you have and are receiving care. The letter does not need to detail the diagnosis or treatment but must specify whether the recommendation is for part-time study or no study (0 credits). The letter cannot be dated more than 30 days before the start of the term for which the RCL is requested.
3. If you are requesting RCL for “Completion of Course of Study” because this is your final semester of required courses, you may drop off your request form at the International Center's front desk. The U-M International Center will determine your eligibility for RCL and report your RCL to SEVIS.
4. **If you are requesting RCL for “Academic Difficulties” or “Medical Condition”, you must meet with an International Student Advisor. Call 734.647.0658 or meet with an advisor during Walk In Advising Hours.** If you are requesting an RCL for Completion of Studies you do not need to meet with an International Center Advisor in person. Please bring your RCL application to the International Center front desk during normal business hours.
5. The U-M International Center will determine your eligibility for RCL, report your RCL to SEVIS, and generate a new I-20 for you. The documented RCL authorization will be printed on page 3 of the I-20. You will then be notified to pick up your new I-20.

Reminders

- Always sign your name on the I-20 and keep a record of all I-20s issued to you.
- Ensure that you have health insurance coverage. Your request for RCL will not be processed until the U-M International Center verifies that you have health insurance.
- Update your address in [Wolverine Access](#) [4] within 10 days of any change.

Source URL: <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/students/reduced-course-load>

Links

[1] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/sites/default/files/forms/f-rclreq.pdf>

[2] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/sites/default/files/forms/j-rclreq.pdf>

[3] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/l-94>

[4] <http://wolverineaccess.umich.edu/>