

## F-1 Reduced Course Load (RCL) **Academic Difficulty**

This handout explains the requirements for an F-1 student who would like to drop below full-time enrollment and obtain approval for a Reduced Course Load (RCL) based on Academic Difficulty. An F-1 student must not drop below full-time enrollment without prior approval from ISS. Without ISS approval to drop below full-time enrollment, an F-1 student will be considered out of legal immigration status.

### DHS Authorized Exceptions to the Full Course of Study Requirement

**Academic Difficulty** - Complete the F-1 Reduced Course Load (RCL) form. The only Department of Homeland Security (DHS) authorized reasons for an Academic Difficulty RCL are the following:

- (1) Initial Difficulties with the English language, reading requirements, or unfamiliarity with U.S. teaching methods and
- (2) Improper Course Level Placement

**Application Deadline:** An F-1 student must apply and be approved by ISS prior to dropping the course(s).

**Minimum Enrollment:** An F-1 student must register for a minimum of 6 credit hours.

**Duration:** An F-1 student can only be authorized for an Academic Difficulty RCL once during each academic program level (Bachelor's, Master's, Doctoral, etc.). An Initial Difficulties RCL can only be approved within an F-1 student's first year in the U.S. An Improper Course Level Placement RCL is not restricted to an F-1 student's first year in the U.S.

### DHS and Texas A&M University Reduced Course Load Rules

It is the responsibility of the student to uphold both Texas A&M University and U.S. Government laws and regulations.

Federal regulations require F-1 students to register full-time during both the Fall and Spring semesters. Full-time enrollment is defined as 9 hours for graduate students and 12 hours for undergraduate students at Texas A&M.

F-1 students must register full-time during the summer if it is their 1st semester (including their 1st semester after readmission, a change of status, or entering a new academic program) or if they plan to graduate during the summer session. Full-time enrollment during the summer is defined as 6 hours for graduate students and 8 hours for undergraduate students at Texas A&M. These hours can be taken during the 10-week summer session or the summer II session for those students planning to graduate during the summer. A student who is eligible and intends to register for the next semester is not required to register during summer unless the department or sponsor requires it.

University full-time enrollment exceptions are described at: <http://admissions.tamu.edu/Registrar/Current/ExcpEnrlMin.aspx>.

Texas A&M policy requires graduate students with assistantships to be registered full-time regardless of the semester. Contact OGS (<http://ogs.tamu.edu/>) if you have any questions about this requirement. Certain scholarships and fellowships also require students to enroll full-time so a RCL could make a student ineligible for these awards.

### Student Acknowledgement of Terms

By signing below, I certify that I have read the entirety of this form and I understand that:

I may not drop the requested courses until I have received ISS approval.

I must work with my academic advisor to drop the requested courses after receiving ISS approval, and ensure that the reduced course load will not adversely affect my progress in pursuing my degree.

I am only eligible for one RCL based on Academic Difficulty per degree level. I have never received Academic Difficulty RCL approval at this degree level from Texas A&M or any other US institution.

If I currently have a graduate assistantship (GA), I must leave this position once the RCL is approved due to OGAPS regulations governing full-time enrollment for GAs and this may impact my health insurance verification.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date**

# F-1 Reduced Course Load (RCL) Form for **Academic Difficulties**

**This section must be completed by all F-1 students.**

First Name  Last Name   
UIN  Telephone Number:

Indicate the course name, number and hours you wish to **drop** this semester (NOTE: You must take a minimum of 6 credit hours in order to maintain status on an Academic Difficulty RCL):

Course Name	Course Number	# of Hours	Course Name	Course Number	# of Hours
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

**\*\*\*MAKE SURE THAT YOU HAVE SIGNED THE PREVIOUS PAGE!\*\*\***

**This section must be completed by student's academic department.**

Do you recommend that the student fall below full-time enrollment?  Yes  No

Requested RCL Term:  Fall  Spring  Summer Year:  Number of enrolled hours during RCL term:

Select Type of Academic Difficulty:  Initial Difficulties (only applies to students in their 1<sup>st</sup> year)  Improper Course Level Placement

If Initial Difficulties, please select an explanation below:

- English Language
- Reading Requirements
- Unfamiliarity with U.S. Teaching Methods

If Improper Course Level Placement, I certify that the student either (please select one):

- Did not complete prerequisites for the course
- Does not meet academic criteria for the course

**Academic Advisor** (Required for both Undergraduate and Graduate Students)

Name  Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date

E-mail  Phone

**Department Head or Department Graduate Advisor** (Required for Graduate Students only)

Name  Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date

E-mail  Phone

**This section will be completed by an ISS Advisor. Do not write in this section.**

ISS Advisor's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date