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F-1 Reduced Course Load (RCL)

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). 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

Medical Condition - Complete the F-1 RCL 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 (state which one) 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.

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

Minimum Enrollment: None - An F-1 student may register for as few as 0 credit hours dependent upon the physician letter and the RCL form.

Duration: An F-1 student may receive a Medical Condition RCL for a maximum aggregate of 12 months per degree level.

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.

Final Term - Complete the F-1 Reduced Course Load (RCL) form. If a student is unable to graduate within the semester for which they request a Final Term RCL, they should report to ISS immediately because they may be subject to losing legal immigration status and may require a reinstatement. All students who apply for a Final Term RCL will be blocked from registering for class in future semesters.

Application Deadline: An F-1 student must apply by the 1st class day

Minimum Enrollment: An F-1 student must register for a minimum of 1 credit hour and must apply for graduation.

Duration: An F-1 student may receive a Final Term RCL during their final academic semester only.

*Note: The I-20 will be shortened to the graduation date.

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.

Sponsored F-1 students must have their RCL request approved by Sponsored Student Programs before submitting the F-1 RCL form.

All students will receive an e-mail from ISS when their RCL has been approved.

"State law requires that you be informed of the following: (1) you are entitled to request to be informed about the information about yourself collected by use of this form (with a few exceptions as provided by law); (2) you are entitled to receive and review that information; and (3) you are entitled to have the information corrected at no charge to you."

F-1 Reduced Course Load (RCL) Form

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

First Name _____ Last Name _____

UIN _____ Telephone Number _____

Select one (1) DHS-authorized RCL reason: ◯ Medical Condition ◯ Academic Difficulty ◯ Final Term

If Academic Difficulty, please select: ◯ Initial Difficulties ◯ Improper Course Level Placement

If Initial Difficulties, please select: ◯ English Language ◯ Reading Requirements ◯ Unfamiliarity with U.S. Teaching Methods

Indicate the course name, number and hours you will take during the RCL semester:

Course Name	Course Number	# of Hours	Course Name	Course Number	# of Hours
Course Name	Course Number	# of Hours	Course Name	Course Number	# of Hours

I understand that if I currently have a graduate assistantship (GA), I must leave this position once the RCL is approved due to OGS regulations governing full-time enrollment for GAs and this may impact my health insurance verification. I will contact healthinsurance@tamu.edu with questions. I understand that if I obtain a Final Term RCL and do not finish my program before the end of the semester, I risk losing OPT employment, may be required to enroll full-time and pay late fees, and/or may fall out of legal status. I have read the F-1 RCL Handout and understand the rules pertaining to an RCL.

Signature: _____ Date _____

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: _____

Does this student have an academic reason to enroll during the RCL semester indicated above? ◯ Yes ◯ No

Set Date of Defense (if applicable): _____ Expected Graduation: ◯ Dec ◯ May ◯ Aug Year: _____

Explain Medical Condition or Academic Difficulty (if applicable): _____

Specific degree requirements remaining (thesis corrections, etc.): _____

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 must be completed by sponsored F-1 students only.

Sponsored students must obtain a Sponsored Student Programs (SSP) Advisor's signature before submitting this form to ISS.

SSP Advisor's Signature: _____ Date _____

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

ISS Advisor's Signature: _____ Date _____

"State law requires that you be informed of the following: (1) you are entitled to request to be informed about the information about yourself collected by use of this form (with a few exceptions as provided by law); (2) you are entitled to receive and review that information; and (3) you are entitled to have the information corrected at no charge to you."