



RCL

Reduced Course Load

Information for F-1 International Students

What is Reduced Course Load (RCL)?

F-1 students are normally required to enroll full-time each semester to maintain immigration status. A Reduced Course Load (RCL) is special authorization from a Designated School Official (DSO) that allows an eligible student to take fewer than the required full-time credits while still maintaining F-1 status.

Students must receive DSO approval **before** dropping below full-time enrollment.

Important Reminder

Dropping below full-time enrollment without prior authorization may result in:

- Loss of F-1 status
- SEVIS termination
- Possible loss of future immigration benefits, including OPT eligibility

Always speak with your DSO before making schedule changes.

Common Reasons for an RCL

Academic Difficulties

Students in their first academic term may qualify due to:

- Initial difficulty with the English language
- Initial difficulty with reading requirements
- Unfamiliarity with U.S. teaching methods
- Improper course level placement

Important:

- This type of RCL is limited to the student's initial academic term.
- Students must still enroll in at least 6 credit hours (or equivalent).

Medical Reasons

Students experiencing a temporary illness or medical condition may qualify for an RCL.

Requirements:

- Documentation from a licensed medical doctor, doctor of osteopathy, psychologist, or clinical psychologist
- DSO authorization each semester the RCL is needed

Medical RCL authorization may allow:

- Part-time enrollment
- Or, in some cases, no enrollment temporarily

Medical RCLs are limited to a cumulative 12 months per program level.

Final Semester

Students in their final semester may take fewer credits if they need less than a full-time course load to complete degree requirements.

Students must still:

- Be enrolled in at least one required course
- Receive DSO approval before reducing credits

Special Student Relief (SSR)

Some students may qualify for an RCL through Special Student Relief when authorized by the U.S. government for certain countries or situations.

How to Request an RCL

Students should:

1. Contact their DSO before dropping courses
2. Discuss eligibility and documentation requirements
3. Submit any required medical or academic documentation
4. Wait for official authorization before reducing enrollment

Approval is not automatic.

Important Things to Know

- RCL authorization is semester-specific.
- Students must return to full-time enrollment after the approved RCL period ends unless another authorized RCL is approved.
- Academic advisors cannot authorize an RCL for immigration purposes.
- Only a DSO can approve and authorize an RCL in SEVIS.

Questions?

Please contact your Designated School Official (DSO) before making enrollment changes. Early communication is important to protect your F-1 status.