



## **Reduced Course Load (RCL) Instructions for F-1 Students**

To maintain lawful immigration status, F-1 international students must be enrolled full-time each semester. Full-time enrollment is defined as:

- 12 credit hours for undergraduate students
- 8 credit hours for graduate/seminary students

DO NOT drop below full-time status until you receive approval from the Office of International Affairs. A student who drops below a full course of study without prior approval of a DSO will be considered out of status.

**Click here for RCL Application:**

**[F-1 Student Reduced Course Load Request Form](#)**

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**Authorized reasons to drop below full-time are listed below:**

**A) Academic Difficulties:** Immigration regulations specify four academic difficulty reasons for which a reduced course load may be approved **during the first semester only:**

1. Initial difficulties with the English language
2. Initial difficulties with reading requirements
3. Unfamiliarity with American teaching methods
4. Improper course level placement

An RCL authorization on the basis of Academic Difficulty **may only be issued once per program and level of study** and the student is required to enroll full-time the next available fall or spring term. It is only available to students during their first semester of study at NPU.

During an Academic Difficulty RCL, students must remain enrolled in a minimum of 6 credit hours for undergraduate students and at least 4 credit hours for graduate students.

*Source: [8 CFR § 214.2(f)(6)(iii)(A)]*

**B) Medical Condition:** A student can apply for a Medical RCL he/she needs to enroll part-time or take a leave of absence due to a medical (mental or physical health) condition.

- The student must provide a letter signed by a licensed medical doctor, psychiatrist, doctor of osteopathy, licensed psychologist, or clinical psychologist which confirms 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 and must recommend either that the student be part time or not enrolled due the medical condition.
- An RCL for a medical condition can be granted for up to 12 months per program/degree level, but the student must submit an updated form and medical documentation each semester to OIA to be re-authorized for the RCL.

*Source: [8 CFR § 214.2(f)(6)(iii)(B)]*



**NORTH PARK  
UNIVERSITY**

The Office of  
International Affairs

**SAMPLE DOCTOR'S NOTE:**

[DATE]

To Whom It May Concern,

This letter is to inform you of my recommendation that student [STUDENT'S NAME], [STUDENT'S BIRTHDATE], be placed on a reduced course load for the [FALL or SPRING] [YEAR] semester due to medical reasons that prevent them from being a full-time student at this time [OR] that prevent them from taking any courses during this semester.

Sincerely,

[DOCTOR'S SIGNATURE]

**IMPORTANT NOTES:**

- The student must provide a letter signed by a licensed medical doctor, psychiatrist, doctor of osteopathy, licensed psychologist, or clinical psychologist which confirms 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 and must recommend either that the student be part time or not enrolled due the medical condition.
- Doctor's note should be on letterhead and/or contain contact information for the provider.