

Reduced Course Load for F-1 and J-1 Degree-Seeking Students (Medical Reasons)

A reduced course load (RCL) is permission from International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS) for F-1 and J-1 degree-seeking students to drop below full-time study during a semester in which a student is required to be full-time (spring and fall). A reduced course load can be for either **academic** or **medical** reasons. If you are non-degree seeking exchange student on a J-1 visa, please schedule a **Sponsored Student Advising** appointment at ISSS as soon as possible.

***** You may not drop a course(s) resulting in part-time study before receiving authorization from ISSS. You are not authorized for a Reduced Course Load without ISSS approval *****

What is a Medical Reduced Course Load?

Any request for a **medical reduced course load** must be approved by ISSS on the basis of a compliance with federal visa policy and a recommendation from a U.S. medical doctor, doctor of osteopathy, or a licensed clinical psychologist. The physician must complete and sign the **Medical Reduced Course Load Provider Form** (see page 3).

Enrollment Options:

- **Full Time:** As an international student, you must register for full-time study each semester unless you are on a summer vacation semester or if you are approved for a reduced course load from ISSS. Full-time enrollment at the U consists of **12 credit hours** for undergraduate students and **9 credit hours (or 3 thesis credit hours)** for graduate students.
- **Part Time:** With ISSS approval for Medical Reduced Course Load, you may be enrolled in less than full time for the approved semester. This would be 1-11 credits for undergraduate students or 1-8 credits for graduate students.
- **Zero Credit:** With ISSS approval for Medical Reduced Course Load, you may be zero credit hours for the approved semester (Fall or Spring).
 - You must also submit a Leave of Absence Form (LOA) to the Registrar's Office in order to remain active in your academic program. Failure to complete an LOA form will result in a discontinuation of your academic program and require an application for re-admission to the University. The LOA form is linked in the Medical Reduced Course Load E-form.
 - You may not be eligible for other U of U services (e.g., Student Life Center, Counseling Center).
 - You may not be approved for zero credit on your first semester.

Employment:

Full-time employment is not permitted during a medically reduced course load semester. However, part-time employment may be approved if it is directly related to promoting the student's health and wellness. The ISSS office, in consultation with the medical professional, may evaluate whether continued employment is appropriate or advisable for a student experiencing medical problems severe enough to interfere with full time study.

Applying for a Medical Reduced Course Load:

Step 1 and Step 2 can happen in any desired order

Step 1: Meet with ISSS advisor (required).

Step 2: Meet with your physician (U.S. medical doctor, doctor of osteopathy, or a licensed clinical psychologist) for recommendation. Ask your health provider to complete the Medical Reduced Course Load Provider Form to recommend you for reduced course load. If your health provider holds a different title, they can ask for a counter-signature from one of the three acceptable professionals.

Step 3: Submit "Medical Reduced Course Load E-form" using the UAtlas link found at www.iss.utah.edu. Your request may be denied if you do not meet with ISSS advisor before you submit your Medical Reduced Course Load request and you will be asked to re-submit the request.

Repeated Medical Reduced Course Load:

You are allowed **three (3) semesters** or **twelve (12) months** of medical reduced course load per degree level. Each RCL authorization applies to a single semester. If you require another RCL semester, a new request must be submitted to ISSS, along with a new Medical Reduced Course Load Provider form from your physician addressing the need for an RCL for the next semester.

Important Reminders:

- You are considered to be maintaining status even if you are not registered in a full course of study only for the semester your reduced course load request has been approved for. You will continue to be eligible for F-1 and J-1 benefits, if you are not otherwise ineligible.

- **You may not drop course(s) resulting in part-time study before receiving authorization from ISSS. You are not authorized for a Reduced Course Load without ISSS approval.** A request for an RCL authorization must be updated in your immigration record **prior** to reducing your course load. If you drop below a full course of study without the approval of ISSS, you may fall “out of status”, which will require you to apply for Reinstatement. If you have dropped or withdrawn from a course without prior Medical Reduced Course Load authorization from ISSS, please schedule an appointment with an Advisor immediately to discuss your situation.

***Disclaimer:** International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS) provides support and information related to U.S. immigration laws and regulations related to F and J status at the University of Utah. ISSS staff are not attorneys and any information provided by ISSS should not be construed as legal advice. Individuals are welcome to consult a qualified immigration attorney for specific legal advice, particularly in complicated cases. For a list of local Utah attorneys please visit our website [here](#).*

***Maintaining Status:** USCIS states that it is the student’s responsibility to understand the rules and regulations governing their visa [see 8 CFR 214.2(f)].*