

Reduced Course Load (Medical)

Office of International Programs, Sam Houston State University
1908 Avenue J, Box 2150, Huntsville, TX 77341-2150
Fax: (936) 294-4620 – Email: oip@shsu.edu

In order to authorize a reduced course load based upon a medical condition, **the student must provide medical documentation** from a licensed medical doctor, doctor of osteopathy, or licensed clinical psychologist, to the SHSU Office of International Programs to substantiate the illness or medical condition. The student must provide current medical documentation and the International Office must reauthorize the drop below full time for each new term, session, or semester.

The following information is to be completed by the student:

Student Name: _____ Phone: _____ family name(s) given name(s)
SamID# _____ Email: _____
I wish to (choose one): <input type="checkbox"/> Register for less than full-time enrollment for the _____ semester for _____ credit hours. <input type="checkbox"/> Drop course(s) # _____ resulting in _____ credit hours.
Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Recommendation Form for Physician or Licensed Clinical Psychologist

The following information is to be completed by the Physician or Licensed Clinical Psychologist:

Physician or Licensed Clinical Psychologist: As the physician or licensed clinical psychologist of the student named above, please place an "X" beside the statement below that best fits your recommendation regarding the student's involvement in taking coursework for the indicated semester. Following my consultation with _____ on _____: Student's name date a. ____ I recommend that this student take a reduced course load for the semester indicated below. b. ____ I recommend that this student not enroll in any classes for the semester indicated below. c. ____ Other: Please explain in an attached letter. Circle the semester for which you recommend the reduced course load: Fall 20__ / Spring 20__ Printed Name of Physician or Licensed Clinical Psychologist: _____ Formal Medical Credential or Title: _____ Office phone: _____ Office email: _____ Office Address: _____ _____ _____ Important: <i>This Medical RCL cannot be approved without attached documentation to substantiate the illness or medical condition for which it has been completed.</i> Signature: _____ Date: _____
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Information for students who require a reduced course load during a Spring or Fall Semester or who enter as an F1 in a summer semester.

International students who are admitted to the United States in F-1 status are required by the Department of Homeland Security or DHS (formerly INS) to maintain the terms and conditions of their nonimmigrant status. Failure to do so can result in deportation. One of the requirements for maintaining F-1 status is to pursue a "full course of study" every semester, not including the summer break. A "full course of study" is considered full-time study, which at SHSU is defined as **9 credit hours for graduate and non-degree graduate students** and **12 credit hours for undergraduates**.

A course load that falls below the full-time requirement, i.e. a reduced course load, requires approval from a DHS Designated School Official (DSO). F-1 students must first complete this form and return it to the Office of International Programs to request authorization to drop a course.

DHS makes an allowance for two primary sets of circumstances in which international students may drop below full-time hours and still maintain legal status. Most situations involve dropping below full time hours after having enrolled in a full course of study. The International Office is required to report to the DHS students who drop below full-time hours for the reasons specified in #1 and #2 below.

1) Academic Reasons

- a) Initial difficulty with the English language and/or reading requirements or
- b) Unfamiliarity with American teaching methods or the US educational system.
- c) Improper course placement. (This means that after enrolling in the course, you discover that you do not have the proper background for the course. Failing grades (Fs) in the course can be considered evidence of improper course placement.)

✘ Authorization for a reduced course load based on an academic reason listed above may be used only once during your degree program. If you use an academic reason more than once, you will violate the terms of your F-1 status and must apply for reinstatement to DHS or leave the U.S. and reenter using a new I-20.

2) Medical Reasons

If a physician or licensed clinical psychologist will recommend that you drop below full-time hours for health reasons, then you may do so for up to a cumulative total of 12 months and still be considered in status.

✘ **Counseling Center Procedures:** Any student, who has been to the Counseling Center at college for any number of sessions, including an initial consultation, may request a letter stating the dates/number of sessions attended, however this is not considered "medical documentation". Apart from this information, it is up to each individual counselor to determine whether it is appropriate to write a letter of support/documentation for a given client. Students would need to request to be assigned to a psychologist if they wanted to pursue the possibility of having CC staff complete the required documentation for a reduced course load. Students should not expect to receive documentation of a medical condition unless seeing a psychologist regularly.

Besides the two primary types of circumstances mentioned above, there are several other circumstances in which international students can be below hours yet still be considered full time and still maintain legal status. These cases often occur when you are unable to initially register for full-time hours. The International Office is not required to report students who are below full-time hours for reasons #1 through #5 below to the DHS.

- 1) You are concurrently enrolling in the SHSU English Language Institute or are concurrently enrolling at another school (LSCC, for example) for a combined total of credit hours that amounts to a full course of study.
- 2) Evidence of completion of the coursework will be required.
- 3) You are a graduate student who has completed all required coursework, and are completing a thesis or comprehensive exams. **Please note:** you must continue to maintain normal progress when completing your thesis or exams.
- 4) You are completing your final semester and need fewer courses to complete your course of study.
- 5) You are participating in full-time authorized practical training (Curricular Practical Training or Optional Practical Training).

Please note: If the above descriptions of types of circumstances do not clearly address your situation, you may need to make an appointment through the International Office reception desk to speak with an IO advisor about your options.