

Reduced Course Load (Academic)

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

IMPORTANT: Please read the back of this form before proceeding with this request.

To Be Completed by the Student: (do not omit any information)

Name: _____ Phone: _____
(Please Print) Family/Last Given/First

SamID#: _____ Email: _____

I wish to (choose one):

- Register for less than full-time enrollment for the _____ semester for _____ credit hours.
 Drop course(s) # _____ resulting in _____ credit hours.

I understand that if no authorized exception applies and I then register for or drop to less than full-time enrollment, I will be out of lawful F-1 status and must either apply to DHS for reinstatement, which could result in denial and possible deportation, or exit the U.S. and reenter with a new I-20 for a new program of study.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

To Be Completed by an International Office Advisor:

- Engaged in authorized practical training for the _____ semester
 Concurrently enrolled at _____ for _____ credit hours (documentation required)
 Correspondence Course. Expected to complete course by _____.
 Initial difficulties with the English language, reading requirements, or in adjusting to the U.S. educational system

DSO Signature: _____ Date: _____

To Be Completed by an Academic Advisor, Chair, or Dean:

I agree with this student's request for a reduced course load based on the following exception (please choose one):
(If you do not agree or have comments, please explain below.)

- This student needs a lesser course load to complete the degree program during the current term.
 This student is a graduate student who is (please check one):
 engaged in thesis or dissertation work or
 preparing for comprehensive examinations

To Be Completed by the Instructor of Course to be dropped:

NOTE: F-1 students may use "Academic Difficulties" as an excuse to drop, only ONE TIME in their entire Program of Study.

- Academic Difficulties – there are three types of academic difficulties that are listed below (please circle one):
1) Initial difficulty with the English language or reading requirements
2) Unfamiliarity with U.S. teaching methods
3) Improper course level placement. (Failing a course could indicate that the student was placed at an improper course level, however, this category should only be used if the student has completed required assignments and exams and if s/he has not had excessive absences that could have affected his or her performance in the class).

**I disagree/have comments:* _____

Name & Title: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____ Phone: _____

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 Texas State University is defined as **9 credit hours for graduate and non-degree graduate students and 12 credit hours for undergraduates.***

SHSU helps F-1 students maintain lawful status by preventing them from enrolling for less than full-time. There are, however, specific authorized exceptions to the full-course-of-study rule in which case DHS considers F-1 students to be maintaining status even if they are not enrolled full-time. A course load that falls below the full-time requirement, i.e. an 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 an override.

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 Office of International Programs 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.)

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.

✘ 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.

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 for a combined total of hours that amounts to a full course of study.
- 2) You are concurrently enrolling at another school (Lone Star CC, for example) for a combined total of credit hours that amounts to a full course of study. 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 Office of International Programs reception desk to speak with an advisor about your options.