

An aerial photograph of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte campus, featuring various academic buildings, green spaces, and a prominent clock tower. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent teal color.

Reduced Course Load 101

ISSO
UNC Charlotte



Purpose of Presentation

To understand maintaining full-time enrollment, the meaning behind a Reduced Course Load, and if you might need one during your F-1 academic career at UNC Charlotte.



Maintaining Legal Status

- Valid SEVIS ID, valid I-20
- Valid passport
- Maintain full-time enrollment
 - One online course allowed per full-time courseload



Full Time Enrollment

- Undergraduate students: 12 credits
- Graduate students: 9 credits

UNLESS.....YOU QUALIFY FOR A REDUCED COURSE LOAD!



Reduced Course Load (RCL)

- There are **four** exceptions to the full time enrollment requirement for international students.
- You **MUST** first obtain approval from ISSO before reducing your course load in order to maintain your legal status.
- ISSO approvals are then reported to the government via SEVIS.



RCL #1

- **Illness or other medical condition:** a U.S. doctor must recommend a reduced course load for one semester at a time; a U.S. doctor's note is required. Students may be approved for a maximum of 12 months medical reduced course load per degree level (which converts to 2 fall or spring semesters for semester schools).
- What kind of doctor note does the ISSO accept?
 - Must be completed by a U.S. Medical Doctor (MD), Doctor of Osteopathy (DO) or Licensed Psychologist



RCL #2

- **Difficulty understanding the English language or unfamiliarity with American teaching methods or reading requirements***: To qualify, your academic advisor must recommend a reduced course load before you can drop below full time enrollment.
- **Improper course level placement***
 - This means not having the prerequisites or preparation for a course and is not limited to the first semester.
 - Academic advisor must sign off and explain the academic concern
 - Can only be used once

*This is generally only allowed during the first semester in an academic program in the U.S.



RCL #3

- **Student will graduate at the end of this semester and needs less than the full-time credit load to complete coursework**
 - Academic advisor sign off needed
 - For this RCL type **ONLY**, if you've never used this RCL reason before, you may drop your course load to less than full-time prior to ISSO approval of the RCL-app
 - E.g. don't hang onto classes unnecessarily if you plan on using this RCL



How To Apply for an RCL



← → ↻ isso.charlotte.edu



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<https://isso.charlotte.edu/current-students/reduced-course-load>





How to Apply for a Reduced Course Load

If a student's reason for requesting approval of less than full-time enrollment meets one of the four criteria listed under the "Exceptions" tab, the student completes the following online application request:

[Apply for a Reduced Course Load](#)

To resume a pending RCL application, or to check the status of other applications in the ISSO Portal use the same link above and navigate to your "Requests" tab.

A student applying for an RCL should typically also meet with both his/her Academic Advisor and his/her International Student Advisor.



UNC CHARLOTTE



ISSO PORTAL

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ISSO PORTAL Services Home Page

Online Services for International Students, Scholars, and Staff: Update your institutional information, request signatures, work authorization, certificate of enrollments, sign-up for sessions, and more.



Notifications

DELIVERED ON: DEC 18, 2024 AT 04:12 PM

Untitled



F-1 Student Services

View My Information



Add F-1 Student Dependent



Chartwells SSN Letter Request



Concurrent Enrollment at Two
SEVP-Certified Schools



Edit or Remove F-1 Student
Dependents Request



F-1 Program Extension



I-20 Reprint (Travel Signature)
Request



Off-Campus Severe Economic
Hardship I-20 Request



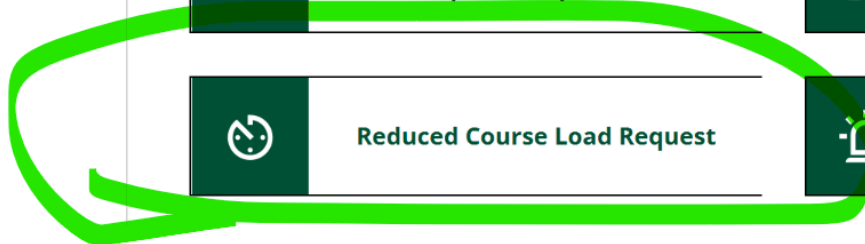
Optional Practical Training



Reduced Course Load Request



Reinstatement After a Visa
Status Violation





Frequently Asked RCL Questions



- **I am a graduate student in my last semester with only three credits left to take. I have been approved for a medical RCL in the past...am I still eligible for a final semester RCL?**

YES! You are eligible for a final semester RCL based on the fact that you only need these three credits to complete your degree.



- **How long does it take for my RCL application to be approved? Are there any hard deadlines?**

We process RCL apps within 5 business days of submission, unless there is some kind of issue that needs to be clarified. Typically, a student will want to submit the RCL app as soon as they know they won't meet the minimum course load requirements for a term. The actual deadline for us to report the RCL to the government is by the end of the term (last day of classes), but we **STRONGLY** recommend not waiting until then



- **I am a graduate student in my second semester. I have previously been approved for an RCL in my first semester based on academic difficulties. I'm having trouble in one of my three courses this semester...can I use an RCL for academic difficulties again?**

NO! This RCL reason is generally only allowed during the first semester in an academic program in the U.S. You can only use it one time.



- **If my Academic Advisor needs to complete part of the RCL app, what do they have to do? Do they need to write a letter?**

If a particular RCL request requires an Academic Advisor recommendation (not all do), he or she will need to complete a 3-4 question e-form—that is it. They do not need to write a “recommendation letter”.



- **If my RCL is approved, are the courses I no longer want automatically dropped or dropped by the ISSO?**

No! If your RCL is approved before add/drop, you still need to manually drop your classes. After that date, you may need assistance from your academic advisor to drop the classes. Additionally, if you apply for and receive an RCL approval after the last withdrawal date, you may need to file a special petition (Academic Petition for Late Withdrawal) with the Office of Student Assistance and Support Services to actually get the courses removed from your record.