

REQUEST FOR EXCEPTION TO THE FULL COURSE OF STUDY REQUIREMENT

Questions, please email chiolero@montana.edu

An international student in F-1/J-1 status is considered to be pursuing a full course of study even though enrolled for less than the "full-time" credit load under specified circumstance certified by a school official, designated by the USCIS and International Student & Scholar Advisor. Please refer to back for legal reasons a student can reduce their course load.

Full-time enrollment is considered:

- Undergraduate students: Must be enrolled for 12 credit hours
- Graduate students: Must be enrolled for 9 credit hours

TO BE COMPLETED BY STUDENT: Please print

Name: _____

Last/Family

First/Given

MSU ID: _____ Department: _____

Semester requesting reduced course load: Fall Spring Year _____

Number of credits you will take: _____

TO BE COMPLETED BY COURSE INSTRUCTOR: Please print

There are limited situations in which an international student may take a reduced course load. Listed below are the only legally acceptable reasons; **please check the one that apply and a written explanation justifying request.**

Student is having difficulty in their first or second semester with:

English Language: __ Reading Requirements: __ American Teaching Methods: __ Improper Course Placement: __

Student will graduate at the end of the semester: _____

Student taking a course at another university during Fall or Spring Semester: _____ Please attach a registration confirmation from other school with class name, number of credits and approval from Academic Advisor

Graduate Students Only:

I have a Graduate Teaching or Graduate Research Appointment: Yes __ or No __ (Must be enroll in 6 credits)

Graduate student needs 1 credit extension to finalize dissertation: _____

Medical condition: _____ (**REQUIRED** Please attach documentation from a licensed medical doctor to substantiate the illness or condition).

Academic Advisor (Print Name)

Signature

Date

Graduate School (Print Name)

Signature

Date

International Student Advisor (Print Name)

Signature

Date

This exception is available once in each program level for one semester, and the student must enroll in and pass at least 6 credits during the exception semester. A “program level” is the level of degree sought: Bachelor’s, Master’s, and Ph.D. A change in major or course of study within the same degree level is not a change in “program level.”

The student may reduce the course load or withdraw from classes completely for an aggregate period of 12 months per program level. New medical documentation is required for each new semester.

Legal references for Reduced Course Load:

(A) **Academic difficulties.** The PDSO may authorize a reduced course load on account of a student's **initial difficulty** with the English language or reading requirements, unfamiliarity with U.S. teaching methods, or improper course level placement. **The student must resume a full course of study at the next available term, session, or semester, excluding a summer session, in order to maintain student status.** A student previously authorized to drop below a full course of study due to academic difficulties is not eligible for a second authorization by the DSO due to academic difficulties while pursuing a course of study at that program level. A student authorized to drop below a full course of study for academic difficulties while pursuing a course of study at a particular program level may still be authorized for a reduced course load due to an illness medical condition as provided for in paragraph (B) of this section.

(B) **Medical conditions.** **The PDSO may authorize a reduced course load (or, if necessary, no course load) due to a student's temporary illness or medical condition for a period of time not to exceed an aggregate of 12 months while the student is pursuing a course of study at a particular program level.** 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 PDSO to substantiate the illness or medical condition. The student must provide current medical documentation and the PDSO must reauthorize the drop below full course of study each new term, session, or semester. A student previously authorized to drop below a full course of study due to illness or medical condition for an aggregate of 12 months may not be authorized by a PDSO to reduce his or her course load on subsequent occasions while pursuing a course of study at the same program level. A student may be authorized to reduce course load for a reason of illness or medical condition on more than one occasion while pursuing a course of study, so long as the aggregate period of that authorization does not exceed 12 months.

(C) **Completion of course of study.** **The PDSO may authorize a reduced course load in the student's final term, semester, or session if fewer courses are needed to complete the course of study.** If the student is not required to take any additional courses to satisfy the requirements for completion, but continues to be enrolled for administrative purposes, the student is considered to have completed the course of study and must take action to maintain status. Such action may include application for change of status or departure from the U.S.

(E) **SEVIS reporting requirements.** **In order for a student to be authorized to drop below a full course of study, the PDSO must update SEVIS prior to the student reducing his or her course load.** The PDSO must update SEVIS with the date, reason for authorization, and the start date of the next term or session. The DSO must also notify SEVIS within 21 days of the student's commencement of a full course of study. If an extension of the program end date is required due to the drop below a full course of study, the PDSO must update SEVIS by completing a new SEVIS Form I-20 with the new program end date.