



UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS - FORT SMITH

Office of International Relations

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## 6 Steps to Obtaining Approval for Reduced Course Load

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1. Print the F-1/J-1 Reduced Course Load (RCL) handout and form from the International Relations Website: [international.uaafs.edu](http://international.uaafs.edu). The form is located under the Application Forms Tab
2. Read over the F-1/ J-1 Reduced Course Load Handout. Complete the top portion of the RCL form attached to handout.
3. Make an appointment to see your International Student & Scholar Advisor or Designated School Official (DSO).
4. Obtain the first approval from International Student & Scholar Advisor or DSO. **(If you are applying for reduced course load due to final term, you may skip this step.)**
5. See your academic advisor for approval.
6. Obtain the second/ final approval from International Student & Scholar Advisor or DSO.

## **F-1/J-1 Reduced Course Load (RCL)**

This handout explains the requirements for an F-1 student who would like to drop below full-time enrollment and obtain approval for a Reduced Course Load (RCL). An F-1 student must not drop below full-time enrollment without prior approval from Office of International Relations (OIR). Without OIR approval to drop below full-time enrollment, an F-1 student will be considered out of legal immigration status.

### **Medical Condition**

Complete the F-1 RCL form and submit a letter written by a licensed medical doctor, a doctor of osteopathy, or a licensed clinical psychologist on their own professional letterhead stating that a specific (explained) illness or medical condition compelled the student to reduce or to interrupt (state which one) his/her full course of study. The letter should also specify the semester involved and whether the medical condition is considered to be ongoing. It may not be possible for an F-1 student with an ongoing medical condition to continue to hold a visa type that requires full-time university attendance.

- Application Deadline: An F-1 student must apply and be approved by OIR prior to dropping the course(s).
- Minimum Enrollment: None - An F-1 student may register for as few as 0 credit hours dependent upon the physician letter and the RCL form.
- Duration: An F-1 student may receive a Medical Condition RCL for a maximum aggregate of 12 months per degree level.

### **Academic Difficulty**

Complete the F-1 Reduced Course Load (RCL) form. The only Department of Homeland Security (DHS) authorized reasons for an Academic Difficulty RCL are the following: (1) Initial difficulties with the English language, reading requirements, or unfamiliarity with U.S. teaching methods and (2) Improper course level placement.

- Application Deadline: An F-1 student must apply and be approved by OIR prior to dropping the course(s).
- Minimum Enrollment: An F-1 student must register for a minimum of 6 credit hours.
- Duration: An F-1 student can only be authorized for an Academic Difficulty RCL once during each academic program level.
- An Initial Difficulties RCL can only be approved within an F-1 student's first year in the U.S.
- An Improper Course Level Placement RCL is not restricted to an F-1 student's first year in the U.S.

### **Final Term**

Complete the F-1 Reduced Course Load (RCL) form. If a student is unable to graduate within the semester for which they request a Final Term RCL, they should report to OIR immediately because they may be subject to losing legal immigration status and may require a reinstatement. All students who apply for a Final Term RCL will be blocked from registering for class in future semesters.

- Application Deadline: An F-1 student must apply by the last day to add/drop courses.
- Minimum Enrollment: An F-1 student must register for a minimum of 1 credit hour.
- Duration: An F-1 student may receive a Final Term RCL during their final academic semester only.

### **Reduced Course Load Rules**

- It is the responsibility of the student to uphold both UAFS and U.S. government laws and regulations.
- Federal regulations require F-1 students to register full time during both the Fall and Spring semesters. Full-time enrollment is defined as 12 hours for undergraduate students at UAFS.
- UAFS students approved for RCL will receive a new I-20.
- All students will receive an e-mail from OIR when their RCL has been approved.



# F-1/ J-1 Reduced Course Load (RCL) Form

**This section must be completed by student requesting RCL**

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Middle Initial: \_\_\_\_\_

UAFS ID #: @ \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

UAFS Email: \_\_\_\_\_@g.uafs.edu

Requested RCL Term: \_\_\_\_\_ Fall \_\_\_\_\_ Spring Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Select (ONE) DHS- authorization RCL Reason:

\_\_\_\_\_ Medical Condition \_\_\_\_\_ Academic Difficulty \_\_\_\_\_ Final Term

If RCL is requested for Academic Difficulty, please select one of the following:

\_\_\_\_\_ Initial Difficulties \_\_\_\_\_ Improper Course Level Placement

Explain selection: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If Initial Difficulties, please select reasoning:

\_\_\_\_\_ English Language \_\_\_\_\_ Reading Requirements \_\_\_\_\_ Unfamiliarity with US Teaching Methods

Explain selection: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I understand that if I obtain a Final Term RCL and do not finish my program before the end of the semester, I risk losing OPT employment, may be required to enroll full time and pay late fees and/ or may fall out of legal status.

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

OIR Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**(OIR signature not required above in requesting RCL for final term)**

**This section must be completed by student's Academic Advisor**

Do you recommend that the student fall below full-time enrollment (12 credit Hours)?  Yes  No

Requested RCL Term approved:  Fall  Spring Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of enrolled hours during RCL term: \_\_\_\_\_

Indicate the course name, course subject, number, and hours you will take during the RCL semester:

Course Name	Course Subject	Course Number	# of Hours

Student's Expected Graduation/ completion of program:

Fall  Spring  Summer I  Summer II Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Explain medical condition or academic difficulty (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Specific degree requirements remaining: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Academic Advisor Information**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone extension: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_@uafs.edu

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**This is must be completed by International Student Advisor or DSO**

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ Denied: \_\_\_\_\_ I-20 issue date: \_\_\_\_\_

OIR Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_