

Student Name _____ Student Number _____

Major _____ Department _____

STUDENT:

I understand that my signature below certifies that I have read and understand the Less Than Full Load requirements as outlined by U.S. Immigration for the specified semester.

Signed _____ Date _____

ACADEMIC ADVISER:

This form is provided to facilitate the communication of certain information required by regulations of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Its completion is needed for a student in F-1 and J-1 status to be granted permission to carry less than a full-time academic load and still maintain visa status during the academic semester specified below. (At Florida Tech, 12 credit hours constitute full-time status for undergraduate students, while 9 credit hours are considered full-time status for graduate students.) **Please consult the reverse of this form for full details of USCIS regulations pertaining to reduced course loads.**

Please complete this form by providing a full explanation of the student's circumstances and return it to the student. Direct any questions to the ISSS Office, ext. 8053.

Based on USCIS regulations requiring that F-1 and J-1 visa holders maintain status by carrying a full-time academic load, I recommend that the above named student carry less than a full-time academic load for the semester indicated:

Fall _____ Spring _____ Summer _____

The following reasons and explanations support this recommendation:

- English language difficulties (acceptable only in the first semester of enrollment)
- Unfamiliarity with American teaching methods and requirements (acceptable only in the first semester of enrollment)
- Improper course level placement (can only be approved ONCE per academic level)
- Completion of course requirements (Petition to Graduate has been filed)
- Medical (official documentation attached)

PLEASE NOTE THAT FINANCIAL PROBLEMS OR FAILURE OF A COURSE ARE NEVER AN ACCEPTABLE REASON FOR A LESS THAN FULL-TIME COURSE OF STUDY. PRIOR TO DROPPING A COURSE/S, STUDENTS ARE ADVISED TO CONSULT WITH FINANCIAL AID REGARDING ANY POTENTIAL LOSS OR REDUCTION OF SCHOLARSHIP.

Adviser's Name _____ Extension _____

Adviser's Signature _____ Date _____

All recommendations are subject to final review by the Office of International Student and Scholar Services.

Final recommendation _____ Date _____

Additional notes _____

Federal regulations require that ALL students in F-1 status be registered for a full-time course load each fall and spring semester until graduation. Failure to be registered as a full-time student is a violation of non-immigrant status; this may result in the loss of F-1 benefits (including employment eligibility both on and off campus), and can prompt federal immigration sanctions.

A full-time course load varies according to academic level:

<u>Academic Level</u>	<u>Full-Time Course Minimum Load</u>
Undergraduate	12 credits per semester
Graduate*	9 credits per semester

*In accordance with Graduate Policy 4.3, graduate international students are considered compliant with U.S. immigration stipulations that normally require a minimum 9 hour registration per semester if they are enrolled for at least: a) 3 semester credit hours in a full-load course, OR b) 3 semester credit hours if they have been awarded a full GSA, OR c) 6 semester credit hours if they have been awarded a half GSA. A complete list of full load graduate courses can be found at www.fit.edu/grad-programs/fulcrs.html.

EXCEPTIONS: There are very few exceptions to the full-time course load rule, and the criteria for each is strict. Those exceptions include academic difficulty, a medical condition or completing the last semester of the program of study.

In every instance, the student must obtain PRIOR authorization from the Office of International Student and Scholar Services. Once authorization is received, the student can then drop a course. An F-1 student who drops below a full course of study without the prior approval of the ISSS Office will be considered out of status and must be reported in SEVIS as having dropped below a full-time course load without authorization. A student must resume a full course of study in the next available semester to maintain student status; except for a possible medical excuse or has a petition to graduate on file.

The authorization form for Less Than Full-Time Course Load is available at the ISSS Office. This form must be signed by the student, the academic adviser and the International Student and Scholar Services Office BEFORE any action can be taken.

ACADEMIC DIFFICULTY

Dropping below a full-time course load for academic reasons is limited to the choices below. If the drop is approved, the student must then be registered for at least six credits. Federal immigration regulations define academic difficulty as:

- initial difficulty with the English language
- initial difficulty with reading requirements
- unfamiliarity with U.S. teaching methods
- improper course placement

A student authorized to drop below a full course of study due to academic difficulties will not be eligible for a second authorization due to academic difficulties while pursuing a course of study at that program level. However, the student may still be authorized for a reduced course load due to an illness or medical condition, should such a condition arise.

MEDICAL CONDITION

The ISSS Office 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 on a medical condition, the student must provide current medical documentation from a licensed medical doctor, doctor of osteopathy or a licensed clinical psychologist to the ISSS Office to substantiate the illness or medical condition. The ISSS Office must authorize the drop below full time for each new 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 the ISSS Office to reduce his or her course load on subsequent occasions while pursuing a course of study at the same program level.

COMPLETION OF COURSE OF STUDY

The ISSS Office may authorize a reduced course load if the student is in his or her final semester and if fewer courses than a full-time load are needed to complete the course of study. If the reduction is authorized, the student must then be registered for those credits needed to complete the course of study. In addition, the student must also have filed a Petition to Graduate. These forms are available in the Graduation Office.

Note: Students should be absolutely certain that they will be graduating in the current semester before choosing to register for less than a full-time course load. Failure to graduate after dropping below a full-time course load can result in the student being out of status and the loss of F-1 benefits.

An F-1 student who drops below a full course of study for reasons other than the ones described above will be out of status, and that information is reported to the federal immigration authorities via the SEVIS system.

F-1 students who fall out of status may be eligible to apply to the Department of Homeland Security for reinstatement, provided they meet the eligibility requirements as described in the U.S. federal regulations. Applying for reinstatement is not a guarantee that the student will be reinstated.