

Lunch & Learn: Academic Reduced Courseloads

January 26, 2023



Presenter



Randa Meyer (she/her)
International Student
Advisor

Caseload:

- Wisconsin School of Business
- Economics & Econometrics



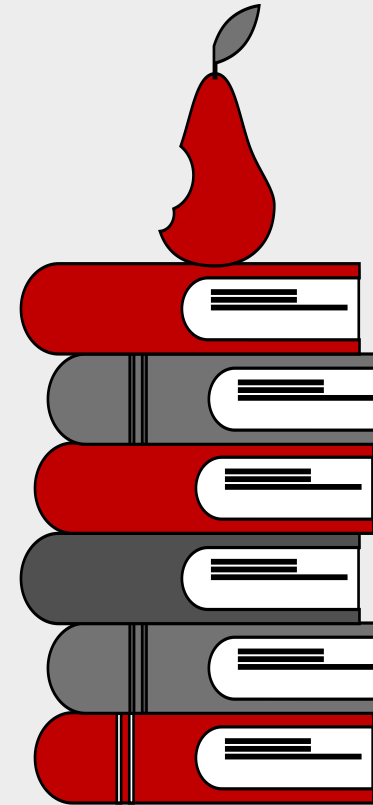
Housekeeping

- This meeting is being recorded. Recording will be available on the ISS website, once it has been captioned.
- Slides will also be posted on the ISS website in the same place as the recording.
- Q&A time at the end, please use the Q&A function.
- Each student's case can be nuanced. International students are encouraged to join drop-in advising or schedule an appointment with their international advisor to discuss the specifics of their situation.



Agenda

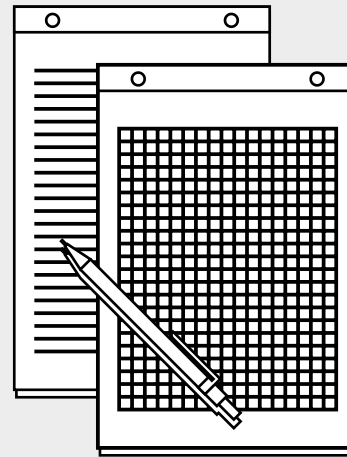
- Enrollment Reminders
- Reduced Course Loads
- Types of RCLs
- Academic RCLs
- RCL Verifications
 - Initial Difficulty with English Language
 - Unfamiliarity with US Teaching Methods
 - Initial Difficulty with Reading Requirements
 - Improper Course Level Placement
- Other RCLS
- Deadlines
- Things to Keep in Mind
- Get in Touch with ISS
- Questions





Enrollment Reminders

<https://iss.wisc.edu/students/current-students/>





Students: New & Continuing

- Initial Attendance/Transfer-Pending I-20 (January 24, 2023)
 - May have started program outside the U.S., but their F-1 status begins once they are physically on campus
 - Program start date on the I-20 may not match the student's actual program start date
- New students must complete **International Student Orientation & ISS Check-in**
 - **DEADLINE:** January 24 (no later than February 8)
 - Must report a US address in SIS (US Mailing Address field)
 - Change of Education Level students must complete ISO as well



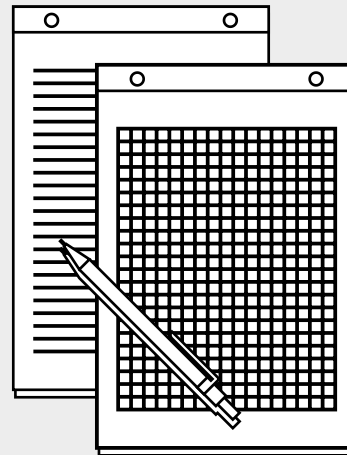
Enrollment

- All students must enroll in a full-time course load:
 - Undergrad: **12 credits** (minimum 9 credits in-person or hybrid)
 - Graduate: **8 credits** (minimum 5 credits in-person or hybrid)
 - Dissertators: **3 credits** (in-person or hybrid)
- Only **3 online credits** can count towards full-time enrollment. Once full-time enrollment is met, students can take additional online credits.
 - Students in J-1 visa status must enroll full-time in in-person courses. Online credits do not count towards their full-time enrollment.
- Full-time Load exceptions:
 - TAs, RAs, ECE co-op, etc.
 - Load exceptions **MUST** be entered into SIS



Reduced Course Load

<https://iss.wisc.edu/students/current-students/reduced-course-load/>





Reduced Course Load (RCL)

- Students must receive approval from ISS **before** dropping their courses. The F-1 visa is for full-time enrollment so there are limited reasons that a student can be approved for a RCL.
- The authorization and reason for a RCL is put directly into the student's SEVIS records and is (often) printed on the student's I-20
- In general, students can only reduce to half the level of required full-time enrollment (Graduate: 4 credits, Undergraduate: 6)
 - Exceptions: Medical Reasons & Final Semester
- Even with an approved RCL, students still need to enroll in in-person or hybrid credits.





Types of Reduced Course Loads

- **Academic Difficulty RCL** – one per degree level
 - First Academic Year (2 semesters)
 - Initial Difficulty with English Language
 - Unfamiliarity with US Teaching Methods
 - Initial Difficulty with Reading Requirements
 - Improper Course Level Placement (any semester)
- **Coursework Completed RCL** – can be requested multiple times
 - Graduate level, only used with thesis/comprehensive/preliminary exam remaining
- **Final Semester RCL** – one per degree level
 - Only required to enroll in credits needed to graduate
- **Medical RCL** – can be approved for 3 semesters
 - Can be approved for 0 or 1 credit
 - Requires a medical letter signed by a U.S. medical doctor, doctor of osteopathy, or licensed clinical psychologist.

Academic Difficulty RCL



- **First academic year (2 semesters)**

- 1) Initial Difficulty with English Language
- 2) Unfamiliarity with US Teaching Methods
- 3) Initial Difficulty with Reading Requirements

- **Any semester**

- 4) Improper Course Level Placement

Considerations

- **Max:** 1 Academic Difficulty RCL per degree level
- Explore other options for full time enrollment
- Must remain enrolled at least half time
- Student expected to enroll in a full course load the following semester
- **Advisor verification:** explanation must relate to the type of RCL



Reduced Course Load Verification

- Since the RCL is part of the student's permanent immigration records and because RCLs are only allowed in limited scenarios, we must have proper documentation to show why a RCL was authorized.
- ISS relies on the **professional opinion** of academic/faculty advisors and departments to verify that a student is indeed having academic difficulties that fall under one of the four options.
- The verification form is used to collect information directly from the advisor, because ISS cannot authorize based on a student's word alone. Advisors should be completing the verifications in their own words.
- Academic/Faculty advisors should feel confident when they approve verifications for students. We recommend meeting with a student if you receive an unexpected RCL verification in your Inbox.
- If you are ever in doubt, contact ISS and we will be happy to discuss a specific scenario with you!

Reduced Course Load- Example



Staff/Faculty for Verifications : Verification Form

General Information:

Staff/Faculty's Name	Kathleen Finnegan
User Name:	Stacy Woodward
Request:	Request Authorization for Academic Reduced Course Load
Year & Term:	Fall, 2022



Reduced Course Load- Example

Reduced Course Load Verification:

Instructions:

International Student Services must verify the following information in order to assess the student's necessity for a reduced course load for the term indicated above. Please complete the information below as it relates to the student's request and your position. We appreciate your assistance.

By completing this request, you hereby recommend the above-mentioned student be granted permission to reduce their full-time enrollment. If you have any questions about this electronic form or the process, please [contact our office](#) directly.

(*) Indicates the question is required.

1. Reduced Course Load Reason (*)

ACADEMIC DIFFICULTIES: INITIAL DIFFICULTY WITH THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

- Student must remain enrolled for at least half of the required full-time course load required.
- An RCL for academic difficulties may be used only once during the current degree level, as it is indicated on the I-20/DS-2019.
- Acceptable only within first year on campus or after an extended leave of absence.

ACADEMIC DIFFICULTIES: INITIAL DIFFICULTY WITH READING REQUIREMENTS

- Student must remain enrolled for at least half of the required full-time course load required.
- An RCL for academic difficulties may be used only once during the current degree level, as it is indicated on the I-20/DS-2019.
- Acceptable only within first year on campus or after an extended leave of absence.

ACADEMIC DIFFICULTIES: UNFAMILIARITY WITH AMERICAN TEACHING METHODS

- Student must remain enrolled for at least half of the required full-time course load required.
- An RCL for academic difficulties may be used only once during the current degree level, as it is indicated on the I-20/DS-2019.
- Acceptable only within first year on campus or after an extended leave of absence.

ACADEMIC DIFFICULTIES: IMPROPER COURSE LEVEL PLACEMENT

- Student must remain enrolled for at least half of the required full-time course load required.
- An RCL for academic difficulties may be used only once during the current degree level, as it is indicated on the I-20/DS-2019.
- Should be used if student does not have proper prerequisite for course(s) or can otherwise justify the improper course placement.

FINAL SEMESTER OF STUDY:

- Student must enroll for at least the number of credit hours needed to complete the degree program. Student must be enrolled for a UW-Madison course offered on campus in the final term of study. The end date on the I-20/DS-2019 will be changed to reflect the end date of the current term, if it does not already.

COMPLETED COURSE WORK:

- This option is only available for PhD and Master's students.
- Student must have completed all coursework and have only their thesis/comprehensive examination (Master's) or preliminary examination (PhD) left to complete.
- Student must enroll in 2 graduate level (300+) credits at a minimum. The Graduate School Academic Policy on enrollment requirements can be reviewed on their website.
- PhD students whose dissertator status is still pending at the start of the semester should apply for this authorization.

Please select one

2. Academic Difficulties: Please indicate intended course(s) to drop.

(Course #, credit hours and explanation)

3. Final Semester of Study: Number of credit hours remaining to complete degree program

(numeric data only: 0-9 and decimal point)

4. I confirm that I have assessed the student's academic progress and eligibility for an RCL (*)

Examples of RCL reasons that cannot be approved, per federal regulations, include:

- Fear of poor grades
- Dissatisfaction with mode of instruction

Please select one

5. Your first and last name (*)

Enter the first and last name of the UW-Madison professional staff member completing the RCL verification.

4000 characters left

6. Your position title at UW-Madison (*)

4000 characters left

7. Your email address (*)

We may need additional information from you to fully assess the student's RCL eligibility.

4000 characters left

8. Your relationship to the student (*)

Indicate your primary relationship to the student's RCL request. You may select more than one option.

Academic advisor
 Academic dean
 Faculty advisor
 Graduate program coordinator

9. I hereby recommend the student for the RCL reason indicated above (*)

Initial Difficulty with English Language



Student is struggling with the English language. English is often times our international students' second or third language.

- Initial Difficulty with English Language Verification Example:
 - ISS 222, 4.0 credits. *Although student has background knowledge for this course, he is constantly using a translator in class and his language skills are causing challenges in completing the necessary level of work. Student is seeking ESL tutoring when they are able.*



Unfamiliarity with US Teaching Methods

Student is having a difficult time adjusting to the various teaching methods used in an U.S. classroom. In general, students are not prepared for the differences between an U.S. classroom and what they have experienced in their home countries.

- Unfamiliarity with US Teaching Methods Verification Example:
 - ISS 222, 4.0 credits. *I spoke with student extensively about the course. They were overwhelmed by the large lecture style classes and did not know how to reach out to the TA for help.*

Initial Difficulty with Reading Requirements



Student is struggling to keep up with the reading requirements for a particular course or a combination of courses.

- Initial Difficulty with Reading Requirements Verification Example:
 - ISS 222, 4.0 credits. *Reading workload in ISS 222 has been a struggle for the student in her first semester at UW-Madison. She is having difficulty keeping up with her reading assignments and it is impacting her ability to participate in class discussions. Student did not anticipate the large amount of reading that would be required for specific course.*



Improper Course Level Placement

Student is enrolled in a course that is not appropriate for their current education level. They were improperly placed by through their own doing, testing or instructor permission.

- Improper Course Level Placement Verification Example:
 - ISS 202, 5 cr. *Student transferred in credit for ISS 201 which is the prerequisite for 202. They report that their transfer course was not appropriate preparation for 202.*
 - ISS 352 3cr. *Student is enrolled in ISS 351 & 352, but 351 is a pre-req for 352, hence the request for improper course level placement.*



Other Reduced Course Loads

- **Coursework Completed RCL** – can be requested multiple times
 - Graduate level, only used with thesis/comprehensive/preliminary exam remaining; PhD students whose dissertator status is still pending at the start of the semester should apply for this authorization.
- **Final Semester RCL** – one per degree level
 - Only required to enroll in credits needed to graduate, cannot have 0 credits.
 - I-20 will be shortened when FS RCL is approved
- **Medical RCL** – can be approved for 3 semesters
 - No advisor verification
 - Can be approved for 0 or 1 credit
 - Requires a medical letter signed by a U.S. medical doctor, doctor of osteopathy, or licensed clinical psychologist.



Deadlines

- Academic Difficulty:

- Drop date to avoid course on transcript: **February 1st**
- Drop date with 100% tuition adjustment: **February 3rd**
- Drop date with 50% tuition adjustment: **February 17th**
- Drop Deadline: **April 21st**
 - Otherwise student must get Dean's approval

- Final Semester & Coursework Completed:

- Strongly recommended to submit before the start of classes
- Follow Registrar's drop deadlines

- Medical RCL:

- Submit as soon as possible. ISS must receive documentation before the last day of classes for the semester.



Things to keep in mind when advising international students

- Students whose I-20/DS-2019 start on January 24 must complete ISO and ISS Check-in
- Students must always have an updated US and foreign address on file
- Graduation Date and I-20/DS-2019 end date do not always match
 - I-20/DS-2019 end date is considered the date that the student completes all degree requirements
- Employment (no more than 20 hours on-campus)

Check out the [ISS website](#) for more information!



Get in touch with ISS

- Check out the ISS website: <https://iss.wisc.edu/>
- Know who your Assigned ISS Advisor is
 - Each advisor may have different preferred methods of communication
- Advisors work remote & in-person
 - If you are trying to call use the ISS office phone: 608-262-2044
- Drop-in advising is for students only



Questions?