

## REDUCED COURSELOAD

### REQUEST FOR F-1 LEAVE OR REDUCED ENROLLMENT

F-1 status is granted for those who intend to pursue a *full course of study* in the US at a specific institution. For international students at Clarion University of Pennsylvania this means that an F-1 undergraduate student must enroll for and complete 12 credits at Clarion each semester (9 credits are required for graduate students). ***A student who drops below a full course of study at Clarion without prior written approval of the International Student Advisor will be considered out of status.*** Exceptions to the *full course of study* requirement for F-1 purposes can only be granted in writing by the OIP **before** a student drops below 12 credits at Clarion under the following circumstances:

- **Illness or other medical condition.** *The International Student Advisor 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. The student must provide current medical documentation and the DSO must reauthorize the drop below full course of study each semester.* USCIS regulation 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(iii)(B).

A letter from your doctor, who must be a *licensed medical doctor, doctor of osteopathy, or licensed clinical psychologist*, on professional office letterhead to *substantiate the illness or medical condition* is required by OIP to consider a request for an exception to the *full course of study* requirement due to *illness or medical condition*. The letter must include:

1. **Verification** that the *licensed medical doctor, doctor of osteopathy, or licensed clinical psychologist* advises that you take a reduced load or not take any classes because of a current illness or medical condition.
  2. **Duration** of time, including a beginning and end date, that the doctor advises you reduce your course load or suspend your study.
  3. If a **reduction** is advised, the doctor must specify whether he or she advises you to take  $\frac{3}{4}$  load,  $\frac{1}{2}$  load, or  $\frac{1}{4}$  load.
- **Academic difficulty** (reduced course load only—students must maintain a minimum of 6 credits). Requires faculty or academic advisor's verification. Only the following reasons are permitted for academic difficulties under USCIS regulation 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(iii)(A).
    - *Initial difficulties with the English language or reading requirements*
    - *Unfamiliarity with U.S. teaching methods*
    - *Improper course level placement*
  - **Completion of program during current term.** Requires faculty or advisor's verification. Permitted under USCIS regulation 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(B).
  - **Concurrent enrollment.** *An F-1 student may be enrolled in two different USCIS-approved schools at one time as long as the combined enrollment amounts to a full time course of study.* USCIS regulation 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(iv). Requires OIP

verification and print out verification of enrollment and grades at the end of the semester from other school. Students must maintain administration of F-1 status with the school from which he or she intends to earn his or her degree.

After reviewing the documents and verifying that your request for an excuse from the full-time study at Clarion University requirement is acceptable, the International Student Advisor will be able to approve you under USCIS regulations for F-1 students for reduced enrollment or a leave from study for no more than one semester.

If you are approved for reduced course load or leave, you will receive an approval letter from the OIP. You must keep the approval letter with your I-20.

***Students are responsible for completing course withdrawal procedures at the Office of the Registrar and any other procedures or approvals with the appropriate office(s) at Clarion University, if necessary. You are also responsible for resuming a full course of study at Clarion during the next semester or obtaining approval for other permissible plans with the OIP well before the beginning of the next semester. Failure to do so will result in the automatic loss of your F-1 status and termination of your I-20 record in SEVIS! Failure to maintain valid F-1 status may result in serious legal consequences for you.***

Although immigration regulations regarding reduced courseload for J-1 visa holders are similar, there are some variations of which students need to be aware. J-1 visa holders should contact the Responsible Officer for details about reduced courseload.