Any reduction of course load MUST have the prior approval of ISSO

1. ACADEMIC REDUCED COURSE LOAD (May only be determined by ISSO)
   a. International students are only permitted to be on Reduced Course Load ONCE per academic level DURING THE FIRST TWO SEMESTERS of such level. ISSO is only legally able to authorize an Academic Reduction of Course Load for “English Language concerns”, “Unfamiliarity with US Education System”, and “Improper Course Placement”. It is difficult to make a legal case beyond the first two semesters for any of above-mentioned reasons.
   b. Students on “Language” Education Level 1–20 are NEVER permitted to be on Reduced Course Load.
   c. Pathway students can only be considered for an Academic Reduction of Course Load in their first semester of matriculated status as they were to have received the proper academic assistance while in the Pathway program.
   d. Student must remain registered for at least six semester or quarter hours, or half the clock hours required for a semester of full course of study. Imminent danger of failing a class is not a permissible reason for authorizing a reduced course load in and of itself.
   e. Please provide the course # you wish to withdraw from _____________________. ISSO will process the withdrawal at the time of Form I–20 issuance. Students will not be considered for an Academic Reduced Course Load after the Drop with a grade of 'W' deadline.

2. LAST SEMESTER REDUCED COURSE LOAD
   A. Undergraduate Students or Master's Non-Thesis students are only permitted to be on Last Semester Reduced Course Load ONCE and only if in their last semester they have less than full-time required academic work remaining for the completion of their degree. They simply register for their required remaining course load. Reduced Course Load Form is due at ISSO by the first day of the semester student is requesting this action.

3. THESIS OR DISSERTATION STUDENTS IN LAST ACADEMIC PHASE OF THEIR PROGRAM
   A. Master’s Thesis/Required Project or Doctoral students are permitted to go onto Reduced Course Load status as soon as they have passed qualifying exam, and completed all required coursework and thesis or dissertation credits.
   B. How long can Master’s Thesis or Master’s Project or Doctoral students be on Last Phase Academic Reduced Course Load? The U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) understands that Thesis or Dissertation students may sometimes need more than
one semester of Reduced Course Load to complete the writing of their thesis or dissertation.

- **Master’s Thesis students** can take one semester of Reduced Course Load to finish their thesis.
- **Master’s Project students** are not permitted to be on Reduced Course Load beyond one semester.
- **Doctoral students** may take 2–3 semesters of Reduced Course Load to finish writing their dissertation.

C. Thesis/Project/Dissertation Students requesting Reduced Course Load beyond the above-mentioned will be referred to the Office of Graduate Administration for additional review. Reduced Course Load Form is due at ISSO by the first day of the semester student is requesting this action.

### Registration Requirements:

**Master’s Project,** must obtain course # from their UMass Lowell Faculty Project Advisor

**Master’s Thesis or Doctoral Dissertation students,** register as follows:

- **3-Credit Continued Graduate Research** – for students with more than one year to complete program
  
  Course # = Two-Digit Dept. Code, followed by 763, followed by three digits referring to student’s Thesis or Dissertation Advisor

- **1-Credit Continued Graduate Research** – for students with less than one year to defend/complete program
  
  Course # = Two-Digit Dept. Code, followed by 761, followed by three digits referring to student’s Thesis or Dissertation Advisor

*Any doctoral student with an RA/TA while on an RCL must submit a Graduate Academic Petition. In section “OTHER REQUEST” of the petition, please write “I wish to maintain my TA/RA benefits while registered for fewer than nine credits. I have completed all of the courses required for my degree and have the appropriate number of dissertation credits in progress.” (Petition can be found [here](#)).

4. **MEDICAL WITHDRAWAL OR MEDICAL REDUCTION OF COURSE LOAD** – Students requesting a Medical Reduced Course Load will not need to obtain the following signatures. ISSO will provide the “International Student Medical Leave or Course Reduction Request Process” form to be completed by the Wellness Center. Students will not be considered for a Medical Reduced Course Load after the Drop with a grade of “W” deadline.