Reduced Course Load for Final Semester Checklist
(F-1 and J-1 Students)

As a student in F-1 or J-1 status you are required to maintain full-time registration each semester unless you are authorized by the ISSO for a Reduced Course Load (RCL). Below is a checklist of items you need to complete your request to the ISSO for an authorized Reduced Course Load for your final semester of study.

A full description of eligibility for reduced course load authorization can be found on the ISSO web site: http://www.bu.edu/isso/immigration-status/maintaining-status/courseload/

Before coming to the ISSO, complete these steps with your academic unit or the University Registrar:

☐ Register for graduation: http://www.bu.edu/reg/graduation/
Register online to indicate that you intend to graduate and allow sufficient time for your school/college or department to confirm that part-time registration is sufficient for you to meet all remaining academic requirements in your program.

☐ Obtain proof of your expected graduation date
Once your school/college has reviewed your academic record, they will need to confirm (electronically or in writing) that you are registered for all remaining academic requirements in your program.
  o Your expected graduation date should appear in the StudentLink, under the “Academics” tab, under “Diploma and Graduation Summary”
  o Alternatively, you may also obtain a letter from your school/college verifying that you need only a part-time course load to complete your program in the current term.

An ISSO advisor will be able to assist you with the following steps:

✓ SEVIS Semester Verification and Reduced Course Load Authorization
Your ISSO advisor will enter your semester verification and authorization for a reduced course load for your final term into your SEVIS record. A new I-20 will be issued to reflect your RCL authorization and will be ready to pick up within a few days’ time.

✓ Sign Add/Drop Form to Drop Below Full-Time
If you are registered for a course that is not required for your graduation, and wish to drop it, bring your completed add/drop form to the ISSO: http://www.bu.edu/reg/files/2014/09/add-drop.pdf. Once this form is signed by an ISSO advisor, you will need to take the form in person to the University Registrar in order to drop below full-time registration.

✓ Student Employment Authorization Override
If you are working on campus, an ISSO advisor will modify your BU Student Employment Authorization to permit you to continue working while you are registered part-time.

When you come to the ISSO to talk about your final semester RCL, don’t forget:

• Bring your original immigration documents (most current I-20/DS-219, passport, F1/J1 visa, Port of Entry Stamp and I-94).
• Confirm that your expected graduation date is reflected in the Student Link.
• Bring the Add/Drop form for the ISSO advisor on call to sign, as needed.
• Tell the ISSO advisor if you will be working on campus during your final semester or not.
• Your final semester RCL request will be passed on to your specific international student advisor for processing.
Frequently asked questions about Final Term Reduced Course Loads (RCL)

**How early can I request a reduced course load?**
You may request an authorized reduced course load from the ISSO when you are registering for your final semester classes – usually in the middle of the semester before your final term. Submitting your request this early is beneficial since it (1) allows an ISSO advisor to review your request before the start of the semester, (2) allows your department to adjust your certification to “part-time” so that you are billed correctly. However, a new I-20 authorizing your final term RCL will not be produced until after you complete semester verification in your final semester.

**When will my new I-20 be issued to show I have been approved for a reduced course load?**
Your ISSO advisor will review your request and issue a new I-20 showing your ISSO authorization for a reduced course load in your final term is issued after:

- You have submitted a complete request to the ISSO for a final term RCL,
- Your gradation date is reflected in your UIS record (or you have provided a letter from your department), and
- You have completed semester verification in your final semester

If one of these steps is delayed, the ISSO will not be able to approve your final term RCL. You will receive an email from the ISSO to let you know when your new I-20 is ready to pick up.

**Why was my I-20 end date changed?**
At the time you are admitted to your program of study, Boston University estimates the length of time that will be required for you to complete your program. When your final term RCL is authorized, the ISSO shortens your I-20 end date to reflect your new expected graduation date if the estimated end date on your I-20 is longer than necessary. For instance, if you were admitted to BU with an I-20/DS-2019 expiration date of September 25, and are requesting a final term RCL for spring, then your I-20/DS-2019 will be corrected to reflect your new expected graduation date in May.

**I am a graduate student in my final semester and my department will “certify” my registration as full-time. Do I still need a final term RCL authorization from the ISSO?**
If you are a graduate student taking less than 12 credits, but engaged in non-course related academic requirements that are the equivalent of full-time status (such as a doctoral dissertation, or a teaching fellowship/research assistantship in your program for which you have been awarded full tuition and stipend), then your school/college may determine that your university registration code can be changed to “certify” you as a full-time student. In this case, you are considered to be taking the equivalent of full-time study, and do not need ISSO authorization for an RCL.

**Why am I being charged for full-time tuition if the ISSO approved my RCL?**
While ISSO authorized your reduced course load for SEVIS, we do not change the coding on your registration record. Please work with your school/college or the University Registrar to change your coding to “part-time” so that your tuition charge can be adjusted.

**What happens if I don’t graduate as I expected this term?**
The ISSO cautions students from requesting a final term RCL unless you are confident that you will be able to complete all remaining academic requirements in the current semester (including all courses, projects, as well as meeting the GPA requirement for graduation). If you request a final term RCL, the ISSO confirms to the USCIS that you are on track to complete your program of study in that semester, and may amend your program end date on your I-20/DS-2019.

F-1 students: If, due to unusual academic circumstances, you will not be able to complete your program after being approved for a final term RCL, the ISSO can grant one further I-20 extension and RCL to complete your degree. Any request for an I-20 extension must be submitted to the ISSO in advance of your I-20 expiration in order to maintain status. A request for extension after a final term RCL, requires a complete extension request and a detailed letter from your academic department outlining the complications that prevented you from graduating as expected. If you are granted a 2nd final term RCL, further I-20 extensions cannot be granted. In this case, you should contact the ISSO for guidance about your legal options.