



# UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI STUDENT DISABILITY SERVICES

## **Reasonable Modification of Policies Related to Full-Time Student Status**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to provide full-time status to students with significant disabilities who, because of the impact of their disability, may be unable to carry a full-time course load. This modification will guarantee these students the benefits and privileges provided to full-time students, allowing them full participation in and access to the services, programs, facilities, and activities of The University of Mississippi.

### **The Law**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act mandate that no otherwise qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of that disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs or activities of a public entity, or be subjected to discrimination by any such entity. Subpart E of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act allows for the possibility that among the reasonable academic adjustments that may be appropriate (subsection 104.44) is extended time for a course of study. As such, under certain circumstances, students with verified disabilities may be allowed to take a lower course load without penalty or loss of privileges if their disability precludes their being able to handle the traditional full-time course load.

### **Policy**

The modification of a Reduced Course Load (RCL) is generally defined as being registered for fewer than twelve (12) hours, for undergraduate students, and fewer than nine (9) hours for graduate students, during a particular semester provided that such a reduction in course load does not fundamentally alter or affect the academic integrity of the program in which the student is enrolled. Under this policy, undergraduate students may drop to no less than six (6) credit hours and graduate students may drop to no less than three (3) credit hours. This modification is not considered to be permanent and students are approved only on a semester basis. Students must resubmit a request for each semester the modification is wanted.

Students requesting this modification must be registered with the Office of Student Disability Services (SDS). Under extraordinary circumstances, SDS may approve a RCL as a modification for a student whose disability is having a significant impact on his/her ability to carry a full-time course load. Unlike part-time academic status, authorization of a RCL allows a student to register for a course load that is less than full-time while still being considered a full-time student. Students approved for this modification are entitled to all services enjoyed by full-time students, except in situations controlled by external entities not bound by this policy or when the modification would substantially alter the academic program.

Examples of university services that fall under this policy may include, but are not limited to, Student Health Services, athletic tickets, full use of facilities, participation in organizations, eligibility for academic honors (provided the required GPA is met), and residing in Residence Halls.

All requests for this modification, including the student letter and supporting documentation detailed in the procedures listed below, must be made no later than 10 business days before the first day of classes during the semester in question in order to allow ample time for review. Requests received after the University's established deadline will be considered only under extreme circumstances.

Please note that monetary charges other than tuition, such as housing, are not affected by this modification.

### **Possible Impact of a RCL**

It is the student's responsibility to be aware that there are academic and financial implications when a RCL is requested and approved.

Students are encouraged to discuss a RCL with their academic advisors. A RCL may cause delays in academic progress that are essential to the student's program of study. Students are responsible for collaborating with their academic School or College to ensure that all mandatory requirements of the program are successfully met.

It is also important to note that a RCL may not satisfy the definition of full-time status for federally regulated agencies such as financial aid, veteran's benefits, Vocational Rehabilitation, etc. Other outside organizations, such as the NCAA and insurance carriers, may also not recognize the University's definition for full-time status under this policy per their own guidelines and policies. Students are strongly encouraged to contact any such agencies to discuss the possible impact of this modification prior to submitting a request for this modification to SDS.

### **Procedure for Requesting a RCL**

1. Students must be registered with SDS before requesting this modification.
2. All requests for this modification should be submitted to SDS in writing. The student should include the following information in the written request:
  - Name and contact information
  - University ID number
  - The semester for which the modification is being requested
  - Details, in the student's own words, regarding how the student's current functioning significantly impacts the student's participation in a full-time course load.
3. The student should submit medical and/or psychological documentation or letter of support which details a *current* impact in functioning from an appropriate professional who has met with the student. The documentation should support the student's request for a RCL and should include the following:
  - The documentation/letter of support should be written on letterhead and should include the professional's contact information.
  - It should include a detailed narrative indicating how the student's current functioning substantially impacts and limits his/her ability to take a full-time course load.
  - The documentation/letter of support should be signed and dated by the professional who wrote it.

4. Once the student's request and the supporting documentation are received, SDS staff will review the reasonableness of the request. During this review, SDS staff will look at the student's reasons for requesting the modification, the supporting information, and the student's history with the SDS office. The student and the professional who provided the supporting documentation may be contacted for additional information if needed. The student's academic Dean and/or advisor may also be consulted for specific program information.

5. When a decision is made, the student will be contacted and a meeting will be arranged:

If the modification request is **denied** the student will be provided with a written explanation for the denial and the reasons for the denial will be discussed with the student. In addition, the student will be given information about how to appeal the decision.

If the modification request is **approved** the policy for this modification will be given to and reviewed with the student. The student will then be required to sign an Approved Reduced Course Load form indicating that the student has received a copy of the policy and is aware of the possible academic and financial implications of the modification.

6. Copies of the signed Approved Reduced Course Load form will be forwarded to the following departments, if applicable:

- Office of the Registrar
- Financial Aid Office
- Department of Housing and Residence Life
- The student's academic advisor
- The dean of the College or School
- Office of the Provost