

# Reduced Course Load Policy

## for Undergraduate Students with Documented Disabilities

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### **I. APPLICABILITY**

This policy applies to undergraduate students who wish to take a reduced course load as accommodation for a disability. Approval of such a course load under this policy entitles the student to maintain NDMU institutional aid on a prorated basis and to remain in the residence halls while carrying a less than full-time course load.

Students who are not requesting to maintain institutional aid or scholarships that require full-time attendance or to remain in campus housing while carrying less than a full-time course load do not need to submit a request for an accommodation but may simply register for a reduced course load under regular registration processes. However, registration for a reduced course load may impact progress toward degree completion and should be discussed with the student's academic advisor. Students should also consult with Financial Aid before registering for a reduced course load.

### **II. POLICY**

Students with disabilities that significantly limit their ability to manage a full-time course load (12 or more credits) may be accommodated by receiving approval to take a reduced course load. While it is typically preferable for a student with a disability to be accommodated through academic advising, priority enrollment, and academic accommodations, it may be necessary for a student to request a reduced course load because of a more severe academic impact of a significant disability.

***The following factors are not acceptable reasons for a reduced course load under this policy, including, but not limited to, employment, extracurricular activities, family/personal obligations, failure to use appropriate academic accommodations, or poor class attendance.***

Requests for this accommodation will be considered on a semester-by-semester basis, and students must submit a request to the Office of Accessibility as soon as possible but no later than two weeks before the start of each semester.

#### **A. Billing and Financial Aid**

1. Students who drop below a full-time load will be billed for tuition and fees on a traditional student prorated per credit basis.
2. Federal Direct Loan Eligibility: A student approved for a reduced course load can take as few as 6 credits and still be eligible for a Federal Direct Loan.
3. Federal Pell Grant Eligibility: Federal Pell Grants are based on enrollment status.
4. Notre Dame of Maryland University's institutional aid (NDMU grants and merit scholarships): All NDMU institutional aid will be based on credits taken proportional to full-time status (15 credit hours)

5. Federal Work-Study Program: The Federal Work-Study Program is limited and only offered to students with federal need who are enrolled in 6 credit hours.
6. Other Financial Aid: Students who receive any other type of aid should check with financial aid to determine the effect of such aid on less-than-full-time enrollment status.
7. State Educational Assistance (EA) and Guaranteed Access (GA) Grants: Unless a disability appeal has been approved by the Maryland Higher Education Commission's Office of Student Financial Assistance, recipients of State EA or GA grants must enroll full-time (12 credits) to order to maintain their award. The following website has the appeal form and related information: [https://mhec.maryland.gov/preparing/Pages/FinancialAid/ProgramDescriptions/prog\\_appeals.aspx](https://mhec.maryland.gov/preparing/Pages/FinancialAid/ProgramDescriptions/prog_appeals.aspx)

## B. Health Insurance

Students who are registered for NDMU's student health insurance program must be registered for the credit requirement of the college's insurance provider.

## C. Honors and Awards

Certain honors and awards may require full-time status as a condition of eligibility; such restrictions may be established by the donor or organization supporting such awards, and the college is unable to modify such requirements. Under this policy, students carrying a reduced course load are, however, eligible to receive any honor or award that does not carry such a restriction.

## D. Full-time status:

1. To be considered full-time in a reduced course load term a student must register for a minimum of 8 credits during a regular semester. In limited circumstances, an exception may be made by the Director of Accessibility and Inclusion.
2. If a student approved for a reduced course load is required to verify full-time status to a third party, such as a health insurance company or a landlord, a request for a verification letter should be made to the Registrar. Generally, with the student's consent, the Registrar will confirm with the third party that the student maintains full-time status if the student has registered for at least 8 credits and has been granted a reduced course load accommodation. It is important for students to note that the decision to maintain third-party benefits for a student with full-time status on a reduced course load rests solely with the third party. NDMU's role is simply to verify that it is providing the student with full-time status. In most cases, the college's determination of full-time status results in the preservation of third-party benefits, but NDMU is not responsible for guaranteeing this outcome.
3. Full-time Enrollment Requirement for International Students (F-1 visas) – International students are required by the Department of Homeland Security's Federal visa regulations to enroll full-time and maintain full-time status. There are very limited circumstances in which the Designated School Official (DSO) may approve a reduced load to accommodate documented disabilities. **To maintain immigration status in the United States, an international student must be approved for a reduced course load by the DSO prior to reducing the course load and pursuing institutional exceptions.** An international student who is granted a reduced load for

reasons related to a documented disability may be granted such reduction for not more than 12 months, which may or may not be consecutive. The Director of Accessibility & Student Inclusion and the student will coordinate with the DSO.

4. Athletics Participation – The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), Division III: Regulations, *Section 14.1.8.1.7.2. Student-Athlete with Education-Impacting Disabilities – 12-credit hour requirement only*, provides: “The Management Council, or a committee designated by the Management Council to act for it, may waive the 12-hour requirement for a student-athlete when objective evidence demonstrates that an institution defines full-time enrollment for that student-athlete to be fewer than 12 hours to accommodate for the student’s education-impacting disability.”

Under this policy, students must be enrolled in at least 8 credit hours to maintain eligibility to participate in intercollegiate sports. The Director of Accessibility and Inclusion and the student will coordinate with the Director of Athletics.

5. Housing – Students approved to take a reduced course load as an accommodation are entitled to remain in college housing but must maintain a course load of at least 8 credits.

### III. REQUEST PROCESS

- A. Requests for reduced course loads under this policy should be made to the Office of Accessibility Services with supporting documentation **as soon as possible and no later than two weeks prior to the first day of classes** for the semester in which this status is sought. Requests for reduced course load status will not be considered after the drop/add deadlines.
- B. Reduced course load status is not automatically renewed. Students are required to request this status every semester.
- C. Office of Accessibility will evaluate the documentation to determine the impact of the disability on the student’s ability to carry a full course load. The student will be asked to sign the Reduced Course Load Approval Form, which includes a statement acknowledging that the student has reviewed the consequences of reduced course load status and accepts them.
- D. The reduced course load accommodation is approved by the Office of Accessibility & Inclusion. “The student is responsible for contacting their academic advisor, who will explain to the student progress toward meeting graduation requirements, as well as other relevant offices.” The student will receive Reduce Course Load Approval Form to submit to relevant offices to confirm accommodation.
- E. The student is responsible for contact the Offices of Financial Aid and Business regarding financial aid and billing questions, and the DSO regarding F-1 VISA questions, if applicable.
- F. ***If the student wishes to drop below the approved reduced course load at any time during the semester after the add/drop deadline, the student will need to follow regular withdrawal policies.***
- G. If a student’s application for reduced course load status is denied, the student may appeal the decision after a denial letter has been issued. The Appeal procedure will be issued by the Office of Accessibility.