



OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS & SCHOLARS

1111 UNIVERSITY CAPITOL CENTRE
THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA
IOWA CITY, IA 52242-5500

PHONE: 319-335-0335
FAX: 319-335-2021
EMAIL: OISS@UIOWA.EDU

MEDICAL CONDITION AUTHORIZATION

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F-1 and J-1 students are required by federal immigration regulations to be engaged in a “full-course of study,” which means **12 semester hours** each fall/spring semester for **undergraduates**, and **9 semester hours** each fall/spring for **graduate students**. You must obtain authorization from an OISS adviser to be enrolled less than full-time during any fall or spring semester. The OISS adviser must indicate the authorization in the SEVIS system in order to make it official.

Rules:

- Enrollment below full-time for medical reasons cannot exceed a total of 12 months.
- If the condition prevents full-time enrollment beyond one fall or spring semester, new documentation must be provided from your physician and authorization must be granted from an OISS adviser each subsequent fall or spring semester.
- If a student later moves to a higher degree level (such as from MA to PhD), the student receives an additional 12 month limit permitting part-time enrollment due to medical reasons.
- If after 12 months the student is still unable to resume full-time studies, the student must either leave the U.S. and reapply when he/she is able to handle full-time studies again, or apply to change to another nonimmigrant status appropriate for continuing medical treatment in the U.S.

Procedure:

1. Obtain a letter from your physician (Medical Doctor, Doctor of Osteopathy, or Licensed Clinical Psychologist only).
 - a. The letter must be typed, dated, and signed by the physician on the physician’s letterhead, *and*
 - b. must indicate that you have a medical condition which prevents you from registering full-time during a specific semester, *and*
 - c. must specify the number of semester hours for which you can register, *and*
 - d. must specify the date by which you will be expected to return to full-time studies.
2. Send this letter to the OISS as soon as possible, preferably before the semester begins, or as soon as possible after the onset of your medical condition if it occurs after the semester starts. If you need to drop classes after the semester begins, you will not legally be able to do so until the OISS receives this letter.

Sample Letter: Your physician might use this as a template for writing the letter. The sample includes all information required to receive an authorization.

Student First/Last Name

Date of Birth

Today’s Date

Ms. XX is a patient currently under my care, who has a medical condition which prevents her from pursuing full-time studies for the Fall 2003 semester. As her physician, it is my recommendation she be allowed to register for only 3 semester hours during the semester. It is expected that she will be able to resume full-time studies during the Spring 2004 semester.

Physician Name and Signature

A Note to Pregnant Students or Students Who Have Recently Had a Baby:

Most people understand how difficult and challenging it is to be pregnant and recover from childbirth. However, aside from such things that threaten the health or life of baby or mother, or complications experienced during delivery the USCIS may take a different point of view. While the OISS will not second-guess any recommendations provided by a qualified physician, we urge students to use caution when requesting authorization for a medical condition that relates to pregnancy or childbirth. Such things as breastfeeding and getting no sleep, or even a “normal” pregnancy, may present challenges, but it is not clear that the USCIS will really view these as “medical conditions” should they ever have reason to review the situation of a student who has received such authorization. It may be helpful as a guide to remember that U.S. law, through the Family Medical Leave Act, protects American workers’ jobs only up to 12 weeks maximum. To be safe, you may want to use 12 weeks as your guide, unless you have a real medical condition that prevents you from enrolling full-time.

Another thing to consider is how missing one or more classes will affect your plan to graduate. If you miss a course that is required for your degree program, and it is only offered every other year or semester, this will present you with some registration problems in the future. Remember, you must always be enrolled full-time during semesters for which you do not have a medical excuse. For example, if you complete all courses in Spring 2003, and have only one more required course, but that course is not offered until Spring 2004, you cannot simply not register for classes or register below full-time during the Fall 2003 semester. In such instances you risk being viewed as delaying graduation and potentially violating your immigration status. To prevent this, you may be required to leave the U.S. until the next semester begins, or change to F-2 dependent status if possible, until the next semester begins – things which always cause difficulty and extra expense, more so with a new baby in the family. If you wish to be granted authorization based on pregnancy or childbirth, you are strongly advised to discuss your situation with an OISS adviser first.