As an international student on a student visa you are required to undertake a full-time study load and complete your program by the end date of your Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE).

This means most students need to be enrolled in 48 units of credit (UOC) in a year and at least 12 UOC a term.

If there are reasons why you cannot study 48 UOC in a year or 12 UOC a term you will need to apply to reduce your study load.

There are potentially serious consequences to your CoE and student visa when reducing your study load. Your CoE and student visa will only be extended in limited circumstances and for reasons which must be documented and approved.

For more info about your student visa conditions visit The Department of Home Affairs.

You do not need to apply for a reduced study load if any of the following conditions apply.

You are:

- in your final term of study and can complete your program by your CoE end date
- ahead in your program, enrolled in at least 2 courses a term, and can complete your program by CoE end date
- enrolled in 48 UOC / 8 courses in the year over three terms
- dropping a course with an Academic Penalty (AW) grade after the census date. (However, we strongly recommend you see an International Student Advisor.)

Valid reasons/circumstances for a reduced study load

Compassionate and compelling circumstances

These are circumstances beyond your control and affect your ability to attend classes and study. Examples include:

- Serious medical illness or injury to you or a close family member.
- Death of a family member such as a parent or grandparent.
- A major political upheaval or natural disaster in your home country requiring emergency travel or disruption to your studies.
- A traumatic experience e.g. accident or crime.
- Delay in receiving your student visa.

Supporting documentation required for your application: A Professional Authority Form must be completed by your treating medical or health professional.

Academic difficulties
Academic Intervention Strategy

If your academic standing is below Good Standing, you may be advised by your academic advisor or faculty to reduce your study load as part of an academic intervention strategy.

Supporting documentation required for your application: A copy of the action plan or interview record from your meeting with the academic advisor or faculty.

At risk of failing a course

If you have failed assessments or are at risk of failing a course, your academic advisor may recommend withdrawing from the course.

Supporting documentation required for your application: Proof of failed grades or consultation trail with course coordinator e.g. email.

Other academic reasons

Core course/s not available

Courses you require for your program or major are not offered and no other courses (General Education, electives) are available to maintain a full enrolment of 48 UOC.

Don’t meet pre-requisite requirements or program rules

The University is unable to offer a pre-requisite course, or you have failed a prerequisite course/s, and you are therefore unable to progress with your study plan.

Granted Credit Transfer

You have been granted credit transfer and are ahead in your degree program.

Invalid reasons/circumstances for a reduced study load

- The course is difficult or not what you expected.
- You are having financial problems
- You want to improve your Weighted Average Mark (WAM) by studying less.
- You want to change your major or program in the future.
- You are having difficulty adjusting to living in Australia or academic life.
- You failed to enrol in your course by the enrolment date.
- You failed to understand or seek clarification of key dates or withdrawal procedures.
- Your accommodation is too far from the UNSW Campus.
- You want to move to another provider.
- You have work commitments that interfere with your studies.

What you can do if these things are affecting you

If any of the above circumstances are affecting you, you can access support from your faculty, International Student Experience Unit (ISEU), or other services on campus.

How a reduced study load may affect your student visa

If you are at risk of failing the course, then your academic may support your application to reduce your study load.
The National Code 2018 (Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000) requires international student visa holders to complete their program within the time specified on their COE.

Reducing your study load may lengthen the time it takes for you to complete your program which would mean that you would not be able to complete your program within the duration of your CoE and student visa.

There will be additional costs associated with extending your student visa e.g. for an administration fee, overseas student health cover, medical assessment.

Please note if you have reduced your study load without approval or supporting documents and require a new CoE, UNSW may refuse to issue you with a new CoE. This will prevent you from completing your program.

What is a Study Plan

A Study plan is a record of the courses you are currently enrolled in and what you need to study in future to complete your degree. You MUST include a study plan for the rest of your degree in your application.

It is important that you complete the study plan using the UNSW handbook for the year you started your degree to ensure it is correct.

How to complete a Study Plan:

1. Use the study plan template and upload it to your application, or
2. Build your study plan in the application.

If you do not know the course code or name, simply enter “Elective” or “Core Course” or General Education”.

If your study plan is incomplete or incorrect, your program authority will not approve it, and this may delay the outcome of your application.

How to apply

1. Check your CoE and student visa end date.
2. Register with ISEU booking system and book in to attend an information session to check if you meet the criteria to reduce your study load.
3. Include your study plan (See, What is a study plan?)
4. Prepare supporting documents.
   - Professional Authority Form (if you have compassionate & compelling reasons)
   - Action plan or interview record from your academic advisor (if you are below good standing)
   - Proof of failed grades or consultation trail with course coordinator e.g. email (if you are at risk of failing)
   - Letter of support from sponsor (if you are a scholarship or sponsored student)
   - Parent Authority Form (if you are under 18 years of age)
5. Complete the online reduce study load form. Note: If you wish to withdraw before census date you should submit it at least 10 working day before census date.

REMEMBER to include your study plan (uploaded or built in the application).

A decision will be made based on the information you have provided and sent to your UNSW student email within 10 working days.

If your application is approved, you can then drop the course on myUNSW.