

Policy on Teaching Loads and Distribution of Effort

Teaching Loads

It is the goal of the College of Education to strengthen its performance as part of a Carnegie Doctoral Research University (Extensive). Achieving that goal requires allocation of sufficient faculty time and effort to research and scholarly productivity. While other colleges of education in doctoral research universities have varying policies concerning teaching loads, in the vast majority of cases these teaching loads are a maximum of four courses per academic year. Given these facts, the College of Education believes it is desirable to move toward a four-course teaching load for its entire regular title series faculty.¹

While special title faculty play an essential role in the college, this document emphasizes uniformity of workloads primarily for regular title series faculty. Establishing college-wide guidelines for special title faculty is impractical if not impossible, given their wide-ranging assignments and responsibilities. In this circumstance, the department chair must continue to play a key role in determining distribution of effort for special title series faculty.

As a secondary benefit, greater uniformity of workloads across the college also would reduce inequities in teaching loads across departments in the college. At the present time, some departments have 5-course teaching loads, while others already are at the 4-course load goal.²

An important question that arises when contemplating a 4-course load for faculty is whether this would result in a loss of student enrollment for the college, and if this were to result, whether it would have negative consequences for college resources, particularly faculty lines, allocated from the campus to the college. Based on Dean James Cibulka's consultation with Provost Michael Nietzel, it is realistic to make the following assumption: The college will not be penalized for adjusting enrollments between programs, e.g., reducing the number of undergraduates while increasing the number of graduate students. However, these adjustments should be "enrollment neutral" in seeking to maintain the overall enrollment level of 2240. This will require careful planning within departments. While it is desirable to establish a common 4-course policy across the college, it is recognized that departments vary in their programmatic needs and in their capacity to adjust their teaching loads with no net enrollment decline. Thus, there will be a need for college-level discussions on the college's enrollment goals and capacity, as well as on issues related to this question. The dean will convene and consult with appropriate faculty committees to initiate these deliberations.

It is imperative that department chairs, in consultation with the dean, retain flexibility to establish teaching loads appropriate to their respective departments, and to

¹ Regular title series faculty members are to be distinguished from members of the faculty who are in the special title series. Ordinarily, special title faculty have heavier teaching and/or service loads because there is not the same expectation regarding research and scholarship as is the case for faculty in the regular title series.

² In some cases, regular title series faculty members teach more than five courses a year.

individual faculty. The department chair is expected to make teaching assignments taking into account various factors that must be balanced in order to meet departmental needs, such as the number of students in the course, the level of the course, the number of different preparations a faculty member has, and so on. For example, a programmatic exigency may necessitate asking one or more faculty members to assume a heavier teaching load. With flexibility, however, comes responsibility to administer the policy fairly. For example, faculty members should not be expected to teach an additional course on an overload repeatedly, and every effort should be made to exempt assistant professors from such “emergency” assignments. Moreover, such assignments should not result in practices that would jeopardize accreditation. At the same time, some faculty who choose not to pursue an active scholarly agenda and funded research may be asked to focus greater efforts on teaching. In other words, a college policy on teaching loads should neither be a straightjacket constraining a chair nor an opportunity to make unfair and inappropriate teaching assignments.

Establishing a common policy on teaching loads will require departments to evaluate the range of programs they have in place currently, the quality of those programs, and the level of enrollments appropriate to those programs and to the college’s mission. Given the resource constraints that have faced the college over a period of years, including some absolute declines in state funding levels in some years, it is unrealistic to expect aggregate growth in faculty lines on any order of magnitude. Thus, the college faces the reality that it is trying to offer its presently wide range of programs at baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral levels, with inadequate resources to achieve and maintain excellence. Furthermore, programmatic demands too often divert faculty efforts away from pursuit of scholarship and external grants. In view of this reality, in order to increase excellence and relieve faculty, the college must make strategic investments in those programs that are absolutely essential to its mission and those with a strong potential for excellence using national benchmarks. One consideration in such a self-assessment is whether the college should concentrate more of its efforts on graduate programs, particularly at the doctoral level, and on recruitment of highly qualified, full-time students from a national pool. Another consideration is whether some labor-intensive teaching, such as practica/clinical experiences, or doctoral dissertation supervision, currently generates sufficient student credit hours and could be increased appropriately.

Departments that currently are operating on a 4-course load should not be relieved of self-evaluation of their programs and enrollments. Program quality, the number of small enrollment courses, and degree production should not be assumed to be optimal in any department without careful analysis. To the extent possible, the college should not allow wide variation among departments in their overall enrollment productivity. If the college is to move forward in its excellence, it will require the full participation of faculty from all departments, working together.

It is worth noting that as the college seeks to strengthen its doctoral research university stature, it cannot abandon its special obligations as a land-grant institution. The University of Kentucky’s College of Education shares the same attributes as other colleges of education that are located in institutions that are both doctoral research university in status and land-grant in nature. Despite the apparent tension between

national and regional goals, between research and service, there are opportunities to combine both responsibilities, such as focusing on educational problems and issues pertinent to Kentucky citizens. The College of Education needs to articulate clearly and persuasively how it creates new knowledge that benefits Kentuckians, and how its role differs from that of other colleges and universities in the state. Indeed, clearer differentiation of roles may strengthen opportunities for collaboration with many of these other post-secondary institutions.

Distribution of Effort

There has been a lack of clarity and consistency concerning the calculation of distribution of effort for faculty members. While there may be individual exceptions, the college endorses the following template to guide distribution of effort for faculty in the regular title series:

Teaching and Advising	
Teaching	50 percent (Each course release= 12 1/2 percent) Minimum of 25 percent (two courses per academic year)
Advising	10-20 percent
Research	30-40 percent
Service	10-20 percent
Administration and Professional Development	0-49 percent
Total	must equal 100 percent

Exceptions to this template might be proposed by an individual faculty member working with the department chair and the dean.

The above template is intended to accomplish a number of objectives. First, it should allow faculty members to devote sufficient time to sponsored and nonsponsored research. A specific issue that arises out of teaching load policy concerns the appropriate “buy-out” of faculty time when a grant proposal is written.³ Accordingly, it shall be the policy of the college to buy-out an appropriate share of a faculty member’s teaching time. Ordinarily, it would be expected that a faculty member’s distribution of effort to nonsponsored research would remain unchanged by receiving a grant. The college wishes to create reasonable incentives for faculty to pursue external funding. Further, we recognize that research activities may or may not coincide with a faculty member’s sponsored research project(s).

³ In order for a faculty member who receives a grant to be released from a teaching assignment, salary savings are required to hire part-time instructors. The Dean’s Office will continue to share salary savings with departments for this purpose. Indeed, as overall levels of salary savings increase in the college, it may be possible to return a higher share of those salary savings with individual departments to promote research and to reward faculty research efforts. Also, salaries paid to part-time instructors must be high enough to attract qualified candidates. This issue will be addressed.

A second objective in building the above template for calculating distribution of effort is to provide some flexibility in the portion of effort devoted to teaching and advising, as well as to service. Faculty members should receive sufficient credit for their contributions in these areas, but the percentage of their time devoted to each may vary.

A third objective is to assure that faculty with administrative or professional development assignments will receive appropriate adjustments for those activities.

This policy will not resolve how to evaluate faculty performance in each category. Greater consistency is needed across the college in establishing expectations for performance. Presently, the process for determining distribution of effort is not well linked to policies for evaluating teaching performance, e.g., student evaluations, research productivity, and so on. That task, while needed, is beyond the purpose of this document and should be undertaken separately.

It should be noted that the college must maintain its programs and its obligations to students, even as it focuses more heavily on funded research. Ordinarily, therefore, it will be expected that faculty members minimally will teach the equivalent of one course per semester. Again, department chairs need the flexibility to interpret this policy in a manner that is respectful both of the faculty member's needs and those of the department. For example, an exception could be made for faculty members with multiple grants.

While this policy strives to provide clear guidelines for grant buyouts, it is recognized that many special circumstances will arise. For example, grants may begin too late to arrange a course release for that semester. Each department chair must address these issues, with assistance from the Dean's Office.

**Adopted in principle by the College of Education Faculty
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