

COLLEGE OF SCIENCE FACULTY WORKLOAD GUIDELINES

Updated: Spring 2023

changes/updates in blue ink

1. INTRODUCTION AND MOTIVATION

The faculty of the College of Science are dedicated to advancing the scientific boundaries of research in their disciplines and providing an excellent educational experience for our students. We seek to ensure workload equity, and to maximize the efficient use of our teaching, research, and service resources.

The COS teaching load policy is consistent with the Mason teaching load policy as stated in the Office of the Provost Teaching Load Policy, August 25, 2021:

1. *Each faculty member with an instructional appointment must teach regularly.*
2. *Research grant and Scholarship “buyouts” may be used to reduce but not eliminate teaching responsibilities in a given year, except when the circumstances of research would preclude being able to do so (e.g., travel abroad to a remote region). In such circumstances, teaching responsibilities may be rearranged on a case-by-case basis, but arrangements must be documented, approved by the Office of the Provost and reflect the principle of Mason’s commitment to research/scholarship/creative work and teaching.*
3. *All tenured, tenure-track and term faculty are expected to perform some university or professional service (appropriate to rank and appointment) without impact on the standard teaching load.*
 - a. *Local Academic Unit Administrators. Faculty who serve as the head of a local academic unit (other than deans) may receive a reduction in teaching load in accordance with the college-level academic units’ workload policies.*
 - b. *Other Service. A reduction in teaching load shall be assigned on the basis of service only in cases where the obligation is significant and labor-intensive, and, except for service as a department chair (or equivalent), no single grant of reduction in load shall exceed one year.*
4. *Tenured faculty with administrative faculty appointments as assistant/associate deans and assistant/associate provosts with tenured faculty appointments may receive a reduction in teaching load in accordance with the College-level academic units workload policies or as specified in their contracts.*

Teaching load reductions shall not be used as a form of faculty compensation in lieu of an increase in salary.

2. GENERAL WORKLOAD GUIDELINES

Workloads in the COS consist of research and teaching responsibilities, as well as service duties. A full workload can be expressed as a percentage of working time spent on each element of the workload. The base workloads for full-time faculty in the College of Science consist of:

- Tenure-track and Tenured (focus on both research and teaching)

- 40% Teaching (2:2 base teaching load) (exceptions may be granted by the department chair)
- 40% Research
- 20% Service
- Term Instructional Faculty (primary focus on teaching)
 - 80% Teaching (exceptions may be granted by the department chair) (4:4 base teaching load)
 - 20% Service
- Term Research Faculty (primary focus on research, typically funded 100% on external funds)
 - 100% Research (exceptions may be granted by the department chair)

Although faculty have significant discretion with the use of their time, these percentages can be used as a guide for weekly performance. In an average 5-day, 40-hour work week a Tenured or Tenure-track professor may expect to spend two full days dedicated to teaching (including preparation, office hours/emails, and class time), two full days dedicated to research activities, and one full day dedicated to service. Tenure track Assistant professors are expected to spend more time dedicated to building their research portfolio and are generally assigned a reduced teaching load during the first one to three years of their time at Mason. Term Instructional faculty members should expect to spend four full days on teaching activities, and one full day on service activities every week.

3. GUIDELINES FOR 9 MONTH FULL-TIME FACULTY BASE TEACHING LOADS

There are two base teaching loads for full-time instructional faculty:

- 1) *2 courses per semester for tenured Associate and Full professors (2:2 teaching load)*
- 2) *1 course per semester for Tenure-track Assistant professors who are building their research portfolio during first 1 to 3 years of appointment (1:1 load)*
- 3) 4 courses per semester (4:4 load) for Term Faculty

(Note: In the rare cases of existing 12-month instructional faculty positions, the workload is 2 courses per term (2:2:1)).

4. GUIDELINES FOR FULL-TIME FACULTY RESEARCH EXPECTATIONS

Although the size of external grants, h-index of journals and number of publications per year may vary significantly across disciplines, the expectation of research excellence remains the same, and involves receipt of significant external funding and publication of high-impact articles, as well as making high-visibility presentations at national and international conferences. Assessment of the quality of the research publications, the number of publications and the prestige of the funding source shall be made at the departmental level, based on discipline-specific parameters. Faculty positions with contractual language for external funding support will be evaluated on this performance measure. The amount of research funding (indirect, as well as direct) received by the department and the college should be considered when evaluating research productivity.

If faculty research productivity is significantly below the norm for more than two years (based on departmental annual performance evaluations), adjustments to increase teaching or service workloads

should be made at the discretion of the Chair.

Workload assignments involving research on sponsored projects must comply with University, State, Federal and project terms in relation to effort reporting. All research effort should be reflected accurately and match actual effort worked throughout the year. If research is performed – or students funded by the award are supervised – during the academic year (AY), effort must be budgeted and reflected on externally funded projects as AY effort in alignment with policies of the sponsoring agency. Summer effort should be reflected for work performed during the summer, rather than for work performed throughout the academic year.

5. GUIDELINES FOR FULL-TIME FACULTY SERVICE EXPECTATIONS

All faculty members are expected to be good citizens of their academic unit, the COS, the university, and their discipline. Acceptable service to the discipline is largely determined at the departmental level when evaluations for promotion, tenure, and merit advances are made, and can include participation in professional academic organizations, reviewing of journal articles, and participation on editorial boards. Acceptable service to the college and department includes:

- Participation in the committee governance structures of both the COS and the department
- Degree and program coordination and advising
- Participation in collegial activities (departmental meetings, retreats, outreach)

Full-time faculty members have a responsibility to be present on campus in order to meet with students and to perform departmental and college citizenship duties.

The extent to which a faculty member meets their required service expectations will be an important criterion for all performance evaluations and a component of all compensation decisions.

6. DEVIATIONS FROM BASE WORKLOADS

6.1 Reductions in Base Workload

Reductions in base workload can be made for a number of reasons. If a reduction is granted, the reason for the reduction should be documented in departmental personnel files for the faculty member and approved by department chair. Reductions should be granted for a limited time, normally no more than one year, and in no case may workload reductions be continued indefinitely.

Partial Appointments

Partial appointments (and concomitant reduction in salary) in the College of Science are very rare and carry a proportional reduction in workload.

6.1.1 Reductions in Teaching workload based on research productivity of Tenure-Track/Tenured Positions

The 2:2 teaching load can be decreased by the department chair based on research productivity

as indicated by a combination of (i) external funding, (ii) high-impact publications (iii) supervision of productive graduate students and (iii) leadership and management of large research projects. Parameters of research productivity and excellence in research are discipline-specific and shall thus be determined at the department level. Where these expectations of high research productivity and excellence are attained, a course buyout (specified in the section below) is **not** required. Assessment of research productivity will be based on information contained in the faculty member's annual performance review. The review should also be used to set the expectations for research activities in the following year. Research productivity and appropriate teaching workload adjustments will be documented by each department, using a "Teaching Responsibility Worksheet" that may be adapted by each department. Some departments may choose to develop their own version of the suggested worksheet based on the same metrics of research productivity.

The base teaching load of 2:2 can be reduced to 2:1, 1:1, or even 1:0 under specific circumstances.

6.1.2 Course Buyouts for Tenure-Track/Tenured Positions

Regardless of research productivity, when sufficient research funding is available, the 2:2 teaching load may be reduced to 2:1 or 1:1 through a course buyout. Buyout requests must be approved in advance by the department chair. The percent of salary which must be covered by external funds for course buyouts for full time 9-month faculty with a full base load are:

- **15%** of contract salary plus benefits to buy down **one** teaching load in an academic year (2:1)
- **30%** of contract salary plus benefits to buy down **two** teaching loads in an academic year (1:1 or 2:0).

Faculty with reduced base teaching loads for reasons other than research activities are still responsible for providing the full amount of external funding supplement listed above to receive a further reduced expected teaching load. In accordance with University Policy 3008, no instructional faculty member may eliminate all teaching duties through course buyout reductions.

6.1.3 Administration

Administrative workload reductions can be received for service as a Departmental Chair or for service in COS or university administrations.

In accordance with university policy, faculty who serve as the head of a local academic unit (other than Deans/Directors) shall receive a reduction in teaching load of at least one course per semester but shall maintain a minimum 1:1 teaching load *unless their research load necessitates another course release*. Department chairs are expected to maintain their research productivity and to serve as advisors and on theses and dissertation committees. Department Chairs with pre-existing 12-month appointments shall have a 1:1 teaching load, *unless their research load necessitates a course release*.

Associate Deans with tenured faculty appointments generally teach at least one course per year without additional remuneration and are expected to maintain their research productivity.

6.1.4 Start-up Teaching for Tenure-Track Positions

It is expected that Tenure-track or Tenured professors will be involved in teaching, research, and service duties from the time they begin their appointment. *The teaching load of tenure track faculty can be reduced to one course per semester (1:1) during the first one to three years of their employment at Mason.* Extension of this arrangement can be granted by the department chair.

6.1.5 Extraordinary Service with College-wide Impact

Workload reductions for extraordinary service may be negotiated with the chair. In accordance with university policy, such a release would only be granted where the obligation is significant and labor-intensive, while going well beyond typical service obligations.

6.1.6 Reductions in Teaching workload for Term Faculty

The teaching load for Term faculty may be reduced below the 4:4 baseline by the department chair due to exceptional service, research, student mentoring, administrative, or other obligations that require significant time, [in line with the Fall 2021 Guidance for Workload Policies](#)

6.2 Increases in Base Workload

Base workloads, particularly teaching and service workloads, may be increased if faculty productivity in other areas is found to be lacking. Specifically, at the discretion of the Chair, teaching or service workloads can be increased based on:

- Insufficient research productivity
 - When Tenured and Tenure-track faculty are evaluated each year by the department chair, an assessment of research productivity should be made.
 - If research productivity is deemed to be below average for more than two consecutive years, the faculty teaching load, or service load (or both) should be increased.
 - The number of additional courses (e.g. 3:2) or additional service activities, should be based on the faculty member's [research productivity when compared to that of their peers in the department](#). Assessment of research productivity will be based on information contained in the faculty member's annual performance review. Research productivity and appropriate teaching workload adjustments will be documented by each department, using the "Teaching Responsibility Worksheet" that may be adapted by each department. Some departments may choose to develop their own version of the suggested worksheet based on the same metrics of research productivity.

- Insufficient service activities
 - If the Department Chair determines that Tenured, Tenure-track and Term faculty are not participating fully in service activities, the teaching load should be increased.

- Small class sizes or classes cancelled due to low enrollment*
 - If a faculty member has small enrollment numbers over two or more offerings of a particular course, then:

- The course should be offered less often, or
- The course or program should be actively marketed by the department to increase enrollment, or
- The faculty member should take on additional courses
- If a course is cancelled due to low enrollment, the faculty member may be required to teach an additional course to make up the difference in the following term.

*A model/structure for minimum course enrollment and credit for mentorship of students is still in development.

6.3 RESPONSIBILITY FOR WORKLOAD ASSIGNMENTS

On the Dean's charge, department chairs are responsible for ensuring that faculty workload assignments are met. The Chairs should use the annual performance review process and the "Teaching Responsibility Worksheet" to assess and document teaching load consistent with college expectations as expressed in these guidelines.