

Faculty Release Time Practices

The University of Mississippi recognizes that faculty members perform three major work activities: teaching, research/creative activities, and service (to the institution, public, and profession). The percent effort in these three major areas will vary among disciplines and will sometimes change for a given faculty member as he or she moves through the faculty ranks and takes on specific duties, including administrative appointments.

Each faculty member will be assigned courses to teach each semester. Exceptions to this norm include the following cases: a faculty member who has extensive administrative commitments (e.g., vice-chancellors); a faculty member who is hired into a non-tenure research faculty track; a faculty member who is on leave (i.e., sabbatical, health reasons, service to government); or a faculty member who accepts a temporary change in assignment to focus on research, service, or administration. Examples of such temporary changes include appointment to an interim administrative position, assignment to perform a substantial, non-routine, semester-long activity (e.g., authoring an accreditation report), or taking on a major externally-funded research commitment. These examples will usually lead to a partial, rather than full, reduction in teaching assignment.

Any reduction in teaching assignment, from the normal range for faculty in a department, must be approved by the department chair and dean, and, in the case of extensive administrative assignments and leaves, by the Provost. In the case of faculty members who apply for major external grants, any proposed reduction in teaching duties must be approved before the grant request is submitted for funding. (If the budget for the grant contains salary support for the faculty member, the “released salary” will usually be kept by the academic department for the purpose of hiring temporary instructors.)

Practices related to the assignment of courses to faculty within a department are established by the academic dean and department chair. The University does not require that all faculty within a department have the same teaching load. The chair and dean may take into consideration commitments to research and service in making teaching assignments. The University recognizes that the normal teaching assignment is four courses (12 credit hours per semester, typically four 3-hour courses) for a full-time instructor or a faculty member with no research and service commitments. If a faculty member has active research, is directing research by graduate and undergraduate students, is active in University service (e.g., student advising, committee assignments, etc.) or professional service (e.g., editorial work for a journal, leadership in professional societies, work with state or federal agencies, etc.), the teaching load may be reduced proportionally.

(This statement was originally a 2002 Supplement to a pre-existing Workload Policy for Faculty. The latter policy is no longer active.)