8.4 Policy of the Office of Academic Affairs on Teaching Loads

1. Normal Teaching Load

The normal teaching load for full-time, tenured/tenure-track faculty is two full-credit courses (or the equivalent) per semester. Other continuing faculty normally teach five full-credit courses per year, subject to the details of the particular appointment. There are two kinds of established exceptions:

a. In some departments the customary teaching load may be greater than two courses per semester because of a significant number of studio or other special courses. The overall workload should be comparable to that in departments where two courses per semester are taught.

b. In some departments the customary teaching load may be fewer than two courses per semester because their faculty members have additional responsibilities, such as the generation of research grants or the management of a graduate research lab. If individual faculty members do not bear such additional responsibilities, their course load will be adjusted accordingly. The overall workload should be comparable to that in departments where two courses per semester are taught. The divisional deans will review the practices of departments in their divisions and establish appropriate policies and guidelines for the division.

2. Deployment of Faculty

Department chairs should monitor teaching assignments and deploy faculty members to areas where teaching strength is needed. Courses that tend to enroll fewer than five students should be offered only as frequently as is required by the structure of the major. Except by special arrangement, courses with fewer than five students will not be credited to the instructor’s teaching load. The instructor will be expected to make up the deficit in a later semester, typically within the next academic year. Departments with few majors should balance their offerings to attract significant numbers of non-majors.

3. Special Types of Courses

In the interests of equity among faculty members, the vice president for academic affairs (VPAA) will monitor three instructional practices: the teaching of courses with fewer than five students; team-taught courses where each instructor takes a full teaching credit; and courses for which an individual instructor receives more than one teaching credit. Departments or instructors should apply to the VPAA if they wish to establish that an existing or a proposed course might properly follow one of these practices.
a. Enrollment thresholds

(3) Special arrangements may be made for courses with fewer than five students that must be offered in order to sustain the major, a graduate program, or for other compelling reasons. Without such special arrangement, a course with an enrollment of fewer than five students should be converted to a tutorial.

(4) Except by special arrangement with Academic Affairs, very large courses will carry only one teaching credit for their instructor. Instructors of such courses may apply for extra resources for graders to reduce their burden.

b. Team-Taught Courses

See Policy on Team-Taught Courses.

4. Responses to Discrepancies

Immediately following the end of the drop/add period each semester, the divisional deans and the VPAA examine the courses and enrollments for faculty in all departments. If they find reductions in the teaching responsibilities of individual faculty that cannot be accounted for by the approved departmental norm or by Leaves or teaching reductions approved by Academic Affairs, they will follow up with the chair to see how the deficit can be made up in a later semester.

5. Course Relief

Course relief is granted for a heavy burden of service on a committee or as department chair. A heavy burden of service is defined as one comparable in its time demands, over the course of a year, to the time required to teach a semester course.

Course relief is expressed as a fraction of a faculty member’s nominal teaching load (e.g., .25). It is expected that course relief will be taken during the period of the burden that led to the relief. Course relief may be banked and used later in two kinds of circumstances:

a. If a last-minute assignment makes it difficult to take course relief in a timely fashion, a faculty member may apply to the VPAA for permission to bank the relief.

b. Course relief amounting to a fraction of a course may be routinely banked until enough has accumulated to be used.

Course relief banked for either reason should be taken as soon as possible. Banked course relief must be used prior to the faculty member’s next sabbatical; it may not be carried over and used in the subsequent sabbatical
cycle. In no case shall course relief for duties as chair or on committees result in a faculty member having a semester of service with no assigned courses.

Where judgments are to be made on special cases the VPAA will make them, acting in consultation with the divisional deans and the chair(s) of the relevant department(s).

6. Course Relief for Committee Service

Course relief of .25 is awarded to all members of the Advisory Committee and to the chair of the Educational Policy Committee. Other faculty members whose assignments on committees and task forces appear to constitute a “heavy burden of service” in the sense given above may apply to the VPAA for course relief.

Committee chairs should limit the amount of work assigned to untenured faculty. Untenured faculty members whose overall burden of service to the University and their department becomes excessive may apply to the VPAA for exemption from further committee service for a time.

Faculty members who have served for two consecutive years on standing committees, the Advisory Committee, or as vice-chair/chair of the faculty, may be excused from nomination to these committees, and the offices of vice-chair and chair of the faculty for a period of three years after said service. Those serving for three full years may be excused from nomination as above for four years. These “immunity” periods are intended to be in addition to (not concurrent with) the immunity from committee service permitted to department chairs.

7. Course Relief for Service as Chair of a Department

The VPAA maintains a table of course relief allotted to department chairs. In general, course relief for chairs is determined with a view to the number of faculty in the department, the number of majors, the number of courses mounted, the complexity of the department, and similar factors, including whether there are auxiliary programs administered from the departmental office. Course relief for a chair may not exceed one-half of the nominal teaching load of the department.

Additional course relief may on occasion be granted to a chair who incurs a special burden of work: for instance, a review of the department, or an unusual number of searches or tenure cases. Application should be made to the VPAA.