



Teaching Releases in Support of Research IST_AC-09 Administrative Guideline

Course releases are an appropriate and useful way to provide faculty with additional time necessary to effectively conduct ongoing externally funded research so results can be delivered. This is important since by accepting the funding there is a commitment to deliver on the proposed activities. At the same time, these same course releases will allow faculty to continue to be engaged in the pursuit of support for future research activities, which is critical since the duration of each grant is limited and many proposals are not funded, making continuous engagement in the pursuit of external support important if one is seeking to establish a robust collection of scholarly activities.

All tenured and tenure-track faculty are expected to maintain an active research program in addition to their contributions through both teaching and service. The college's workload document specifies that tenured faculty will teach a total of four courses per year if they have "a productive line of research." This same document includes provisions for increasing or decreasing the number of courses an individual is expected to teach as part of their contribution to advancing the college. This document provides guidance regarding what constitutes "a productive line of research" and under what conditions an individual will be asked to teach more or fewer courses.

An individual will be considered to have "a productive line of research" if the overall rating of their research activity is at or above the midpoint (e.g., successful, meets expectations) of the rating scale used during the annual review process. To provide additional clarity, to receive the midpoint rating, tenured and tenure-track faculty are expected to be actively engaged in the pursuit of external funding to support their research activities and must also be sharing the results of their research activities through a variety of appropriate venues including high-impact venues.

An overall research rating below the midpoint will be considered an indication that the individual does not have a productive line of research. If an individual does not to have a productive line of research for any two years in a three-year period, workload expectations will be adjusted resulting in an increase in the number of courses the individual teaches each year with a corresponding decrease in research expectations. The number of courses would be increased to up to six per year depending on the level of research activity. In an effort to minimize the likelihood of such an adjustment, anyone with an overall research assessment below the midpoint is urged to engage in a discussion with the dean regarding a plan that will lead to a productive line of research.

To support growth in the college's research activities, course releases will be granted to tenured faculty who meet the following criteria:

- Individuals must have a productive line of research for each of the previous three years as assessed via the annual review process (operationalized as meeting expectations or higher).
- Individuals must receive an overall rating of meets expectations or higher on the most recent annual review.
- Individuals must be serving as PI on externally funded projects that fund students as part of the research team as described below.
 - One course release will be granted if external funding¹ is being used to support at least one graduate student on a research assistantship for a full academic year (Fall/Spring semesters). External funds must already be available and the students must be hired.
 - A total of two course releases will be provided if external funding is being used to support at least four graduate students on research assistantships for a full academic year (Fall/Spring semesters). External funds must already be available and the students must be hired.
 - A total of three course releases will be provided if external funding is being used to support at least eight graduate students on research assistantships for a full academic year (Fall/Spring semesters). External funds must already be available and the students must be hired.
 - Three course releases are the maximum that individuals can receive for the graduate student support from external funding. Course buyout, as described in the policy IST_FN-14, is handled separately and independently from the current teaching release policy.
 - For the purpose of determining if course releases will be granted, four wage-based students working 15+ hours/week each throughout the academic year will be considered equivalent to one graduate student on a research assistantship.
 - Also, for the purpose of determining if course releases will be granted, supporting one postdoc for a full year (Fall/Spring/Summer semesters) will be considered equivalent to supporting a single graduate student on a research assistantship.

These course releases may be used by the college as cost sharing when faculty seek external funding. Course releases will be granted based on a default of teaching four courses per year. Faculty, who by default teach fewer than four courses per year, may not be granted the course releases as described above. These individuals should consult the dean to understand if and when course releases will be granted. Under no circumstances will course releases be granted if they would reduce an individual's teaching expectations to zero. Faculty with circumstances not specified here, but who may warrant a course-load release consideration, can discuss this with the dean.

The following examples illustrate how this would work in several scenarios for tenured faculty:

- Pat has two internal grants, from PSU, for each 50k/year. There is no course reduction.
- Chris has an NSF grant that supports 1 graduate student, there is no course buyout in it. Chris teaches 2-1 the semester after the graduate student starts.
- Lindsey has two NSF grants with two grad students, Lindsey teaches 2-1 the semester after the graduate student starts.
- Morgan has an ONR grant with a course buyout and a post-doc, Morgan teaches 1-1 after the buyout and the semester after the graduate student starts.
- Fu has a DARPA grant with a course buyout and 2 students and a post-doc, and an NSF with a student, and an AFSOR with a student on it. After all are up and running, Fu teaches 1-0.

¹ External funding refers to grants received from sources external to the university. College and university seed-grant programs, endowments associated with chairs and professorships, and start-up funds do not constitute external funding.

By default, pre-tenure faculty teach three courses per year (or fewer as determined by startup arrangements) until the year when a tenure and promotion review is conducted. For the year when the promotion and tenure review is conducted, the guidelines for tenured faculty outlined above apply. Tenure-track faculty teaching three courses per year will be granted a single course release if they meet both of the following criteria:

- Individuals must have a line of research that resulted in a rating of meets expectations or higher on the most recent annual review.
- Individuals must be serving as PI on externally funded projects that fund students as part of the research team as described below.
 - One course release will be granted if external funding is being used to support at least one graduate student on a research assistantship for a full academic year (Fall/Spring semesters). External funds must already be available, and the students must be hired.
 - A total of two course releases will be provided if external funding is being used to support at least four graduate students on research assistantships for a full academic year (Fall/Spring semesters). External funds must already be available and the students must be hired.
 - Two course releases are the maximum that tenure-track faculty teaching three courses can receive for the graduate student support from external funding. Course buyout, as described in the policy IST_FN-14, is handled separately and independently from the current teaching release policy.
 - For the purpose of determining if a course release will be granted, four wage-based students working 15+ hours/week each throughout the academic year will be considered equivalent to one graduate student on a research assistantship.
 - Also, for the purpose of determining if course releases will be granted, supporting one postdoc for a full year (Fall/Spring/Summer semesters) will be considered equivalent to supporting a single graduate student on a research assistantship.

NOTE: These guidelines currently focus on individuals serving as PI on external funding. However, it is understood there are situations where someone is not officially identified as the PI on external funding, but they should still receive credit for financially supporting students or postdocs. Examples include faculty who are actively engaged in externally funded projects where the PI is housed in another college at Penn State as well as some situations where the PI may be within the college. At this point, these situations will be addressed individually.

Similarly, there may be some situations where an individual is officially the PI on externally funded projects, and there are students or postdocs being supported financially, but this support may not result in credit toward course releases as a result of these individuals being supervised by individuals outside the college.

Approved by: Dr. Andrew Sears, Dean 05/31/2018
Revised 12/19/22
Revised 9.3.24