

# 7.5 Guidelines on Teaching Assignments

## Governing Policies

Section 6.1.2, Faculty Handbook – Teaching Assignment Guidelines  
Section 3.13, Procedures Manual – Course Chargeout and Buyout  
Section 4.5, Procedures Manual – Hiring Research and Affiliate Faculty,  
Guidelines for Joint Appointments and Interdisciplinary Programs

### PROCEDURE

The three major categories of faculty productivity at Mines are teaching, scholarship, and service. A full workload can be expressed as a distribution of effort across these categories. Per the Faculty Handbook, the nominal expected distribution of effort for full-time faculty at Mines is:

- Tenure Track and Tenured: 40% Teaching, 40% Scholarship, 20% Service
- Teaching Track: 80% Teaching, 20% Service

Generally, faculty should use these percentages as a guide for normalized workload distribution. There are circumstances, however, in which different distributions are appropriate. These guidelines provide a framework for Department Heads to make teaching assignments that are equitable, transparent, and responsive to individual faculty productivity profiles while balancing overall workload across faculty. There is no current language in Handbook or Procedures specifying the distribution of effort for Professors of Practice at this time, so Department Heads should work with those faculty to determine an appropriate load.

Teaching assignments must be made according to institutional, departmental, and program curricular needs/priorities, as well as discipline-specific norms and expectations. Department Heads, in collaboration with Interdisciplinary Program Directors where their faculty are affiliated with these programs, have primary responsibility for determining individual faculty workload assignments, including assembling the correct mix of courses to meet these needs and priorities (noting that some Interdisciplinary Programs have course headers and teaching needs independent of departments). In determining individual faculty teaching assignments, Department Heads must exercise professional judgment in establishing minimum course-enrollment criteria given competing goals, which may include but are not limited to: pedagogical differences in the structure and delivery of course material, historical and projected enrollments in course offerings, and whether the course is typically enrolled by graduate or undergraduate students. Department Heads will communicate their approach to teaching assignments to their respective portfolio Dean on a regular basis. The teaching assignments in a Department and/or Program are expected to be in general agreement with their Dean's thoughts and vision for the Portfolio.

These guidelines are intended to help Department Heads:

1. Ensure that students receive high-quality instruction;
2. Facilitate the productivity of faculty members with highly active research programs and/or exceptional service responsibilities through appropriate adjustments to teaching loads;
3. Rebalance the workload of tenure-line faculty members whose research productivity or service contributions are not consistent with the distribution outlined above; and

4. Personalize the workload of each faculty member in accordance with items 1-3.

## Standard Teaching Load

Per Faculty Handbook Section 6.1.2, the teaching expectation for all full-time faculty on campus is 12 credit hours per semester, with a standard 3-credit hour release per semester for service and another 3-credit hour release for scholarship among tenured and tenure-track faculty. Additionally, the Handbook indicates that no faculty member shall teach less than 3 credit hours per semester unless approved by the Department Head, Dean and Provost. Teaching load calculations exclude semesters in which a faculty member is on sabbatical, research leave, parental leave, unpaid leave, or similar. Faculty with less than a 1.0 FTE appointment will be expected to teach a proportionate share of the course load.

Given these allowances, according to the Handbook, the nominal loading for faculty is as follows:

- Teaching faculty without service: 12 credit hours per semester
- Teaching faculty with full service: 9 credit hours per semester
- Tenured or tenure-track faculty with full service and scholarship: 6 credit hours per semester

While the 3-credit hour course releases for service and scholarship have been granted historically based on a faculty member's position (i.e., teaching faculty or tenure-line faculty), these releases are intended to be allocated based on minimum requisite productivity. Department Heads may consider various scholarship productivity factors when determining whether to adjust a faculty member's teaching load, such as: producing scholarly publications, peer-reviewed activity recognized by the discipline, obtaining grants, engaging in entrepreneurship or commercialization, supervising graduate students, serving on graduate committees, and supervising undergraduate research opportunities. Service is required for promotion on both tracks, and should be considered carefully as part of a faculty member's load. Department Heads are responsible to ensure each faculty member contributes adequately to the university's mission, and should rebalance teaching loads as necessary to ensure fairness among the faculty.

## Teaching Load Balancing

All full-time faculty members are expected to teach a fair assignment of course credit hours annually as determined by the Department Head and, where appropriate, Interdisciplinary Program Directors. Faculty should not teach, on average, significantly less than others in the department without justification and permission of the Department Head. According to the Handbook, "Many combinations of courses, labs, senior design sections, special problems, and load rearrangements can be used to meet the teaching assignment guidelines." For non-standard instructional loading, Department Heads will determine the combination of instructional responsibilities constituting a "course equivalent" or otherwise achieving the desired total teaching load per academic year. Justification will be provided to the appropriate Dean and any member of the Department/Program faculty as needed.

Three course types will typically be subject to overall load balancing by the Department Head: independent-study courses, under-enrolled courses, and large lecture classes.

- Independent-study courses generally do not count toward an instructor's teaching load unless the Department Head assigns those courses to the faculty member, or an exception is approved by the

portfolio Dean. Even where required or approved, independent study courses may not constitute a full 3-credit-hour course equivalent as determined and documented by the Department Head and/or Program Director.

- Under-enrolled courses should be offered infrequently, typically only when required for program delivery. Under-enrolled courses are generally considered to be those with fewer than 15 students for undergraduate courses and fewer than 10 students for graduate courses. Under-enrolled courses based on these numbers require Department Head/Program Director and Dean approval to be offered, and even when they are approved, they may not count as a full 3-credit-hour course equivalent as determined by the Department Head in conversation with an Interdisciplinary Program Director, if needed. If a course is cancelled, the Department Head should derive an alternative teaching assignment for the faculty member. Faculty should not be compelled to teach an under-enrolled course that does not count as a full course equivalent.
- All lecture classes involve instructor-student contact outside of lecture, e.g., during office hours etc. These contacts are intrinsic to an effective academic environment and foster student achievement and should be encouraged. A reasonable number of office hours should be provided by faculty teaching lecture courses, as noted in Handbook Section 6.1. Large lecture classes may involve a greater need for instructor-student contact out of class, which should be considered when determining faculty workload.

## Teaching Load Reductions

Per Procedures Manual section 3.13, tenured and tenure-line faculty may use external funding to chargeout of a 3-credit hour course equivalent, presuming they do not go below the minimum required 3-credit-hour course load per semester. The required funds for the “chargeout” is 12.5% of the faculty member’s academic salary per 3-credit course.

Additionally, Department Heads may grant teaching release time (“course equivalents”) to individual faculty members who are new/transitional or who engage in high-impact instructional, scholarship, or service activities, such as:

- **New faculty:** Newly hired faculty, especially those on the tenure line who need to get their research program started, can be provided with an initially reduced teaching load for up to their first two years.
- **Research productivity:** Tenure-line faculty with substantial research productivity are eligible for course release. Adequate research productivity is determined by the Department Head and/or Program Director according to program, department, and institutional expectations for publication, sponsored research, and graduate-student/post-doctoral scholar advising.
- **High-commitment courses:** A limited number of courses across campus demand exceptional instructional or administrative commitment because of high enrollment, extensive coordination responsibilities, or unique assessment requirements that cannot be offset by TAs or other support staff. Department Heads and/or Program Directors may recommend to their Dean instructional credit-hour equivalent releases associated with these types of course responsibilities. Equivalent credit-hour adjustments may also be made for misalignments between allocated credit hours and contact hours, such as with some labs, field-based courses, and studio courses.
- **Extensive academic advising:** A certain amount of advising is expected as part of every faculty member’s instructional responsibility. Answering student questions, listening to their

concerns, and helping them with their course schedules, degree plans, and other needs are complements to classroom instruction and, thus, part of the ordinary academic workload. However, in some departments and/or programs, student advising is concentrated among a small number of faculty, which Department Heads and/or Program Directors may determine qualifies for instructional release.

- **Academic administration:** Department Heads may provide a course “buyout” and release a faculty member from a course assignment to assign them administrative responsibilities in the department (e.g., course coordination, Associate Department Heads, Directors of Interdisciplinary Programs or Centers, coordinators of major institutional initiatives, etc.). The work assignment must be defensible as something that clearly supports the mission of the university, and that justifies faculty-level oversight. Where necessary, the administrative buyout is expected to cover the cost of hiring an adjunct to deliver the course that the faculty member would have been assigned.

The criteria for and release time established for any teaching release granted for the above reasons should be available to the Dean and appropriate faculty upon request.

## Teaching Load Increases

Faculty who consistently underperform in any component of their allocated responsibilities are subject to rebalancing of their allocated responsibilities as determined by their Department Head in conjunction with Interdisciplinary Program Directors, as described above. Tenure-line faculty whose scholarship productivity falls below expectations may be allocated additional teaching or service responsibilities. Similarly, if tenure-line or teaching faculty have limited-service contributions, they may be redirected to additional teaching. In short, all faculty members are expected to contribute equally (but not identically) to the Mines mission, and Department Heads are tasked with ensuring fair distribution of teaching, service, and research. Department Heads will communicate with faculty the rationale for teaching adjustments according to these expectations.

A Performance Improvement Plan, as described in Section 7.3 of the Faculty Handbook, is recommended before significant rebalancing of faculty responsibilities. This remediation plan should include reasonable productivity expectations, including metrics where possible, and a clear timeline for achieving them.

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