

Memo

To: Faculty, Department Heads, Deans, and all others who help run academic units
From: Scott Walsworth, Vice- Provost, Faculty Relations
Date: February 12, 2024
Subject: Assignment of Duties

Greetings,

Having spent close to two decades as a faculty member, I know firsthand that the assignment of duties can be a difficult time for faculty. I joined a team in the provost's office committed to serving faculty and supporting unit leaders (deans/executive directors and department heads). In that spirit, I offer the following guidance on the assignment of duties process. I aim to support your work and add clarity by discussing the main considerations, but this short note is not a comprehensive review. Please consult [Article 11](#) of the collective agreement; it is the ultimate authority on procedural considerations, including several additional provisions not discussed here.

Deadlines are approaching. For departmentalized colleges, department heads must complete the process and submit assignments to the dean by March 31st. Deans then have one month to approve. For all units, including departmentalized and non-departmentalized colleges and schools, as well as the library, deans must approve the assignments by April 30th. Although final authority to approve and assign duties rests with the dean/executive directors, consultation with faculty at a meeting is required prior to finalizing assignments.

Transparency and fairness should always anchor the process. Units must strike a balance between several, often competing, priorities including: the effective deployment of unit resources; the delivery of academic programs; protecting time for RSAW; the administrative needs of the department, college, and university; individual preferences and circumstances of faculty including conditions in the employment letter; relevant standards; and rank, status (PT/FT) and type of appointment. Achieving an equitable distribution of work is one of the more difficult challenges embedded in the collegial process. While assignments will not look the same for every faculty member, they should achieve a fair and reasonable distribution of workload.

The academic year is divided into three terms: T1 (fall), T2 (winter), and T3 (spring and summer). For professorial and librarian ranks, teaching assignments, as much as possible, are distributed and assigned across a maximum of two terms. One of the three terms is designated a non-teaching term, and teaching duties can only be assigned in T3 once in a three-year period. Unless stipulated otherwise in the letter of offer, all ranks of professorial and librarians are expected to perform service duties relative to the level required by the appropriate department, college, and university standards.

The expectations are different for instructors and lecturers. These ranks are focused on meeting the teaching needs of the unit. Normally they are not assigned service, and the appointments do not

I acknowledge that I live and work on Treaty 6 territory and the homeland of the Métis. We pay our respects to the First Nations and Métis ancestors of this place and reaffirm our relationship with one another.

require, neither do they provide the protection of time for RSAW, just as they are not eligible to apply for, hold or administer research funds. Teaching assignments for instructors and lecturers shall not exceed 30 credit units per academic year. I recognize that in exceptional circumstances, it is advisable to assign less than 30 credit units of teaching to term and without term lecturers and instructors; however, normally it is expected that units make full use of available teaching resources. It is also important to note that teaching duties for these ranks should be distributed across all three terms; however, either the spring or summer session should be set aside for the use of vacation entitlements.

Units are required to develop guidelines for the assignment of duties; these must be approved by a secret ballot vote at a meeting of the faculty and periodically revisited. I suggest this review take place every five-years. While final authority to approve assignments rests with the dean/executive director, there is an expectation that the guidelines are administered with fairness and transparency and that the process allows for the consultation needed amongst the faculty. At the meeting of faculty, it is helpful to make available and share a spreadsheet listing all the assignments in the unit before the assignments are finalized to ensure transparency and meaningful consultation.

A final note on teaching releases. Used appropriately, a release can be an effective mechanism to free up faculty to complete work that is critical to the unit's success. However, teaching releases are also expensive for a unit and should be treated as a valuable and limited resource. To be transparent, the list of teaching releases should also be presented to all faculty in the unit along with a justification for the release and the compensation received by the unit for the release. Notwithstanding tri-council regulations, when external bodies such as funding agencies or other third parties 'purchase' or protect a portion of faculty time in the form of a teaching release, departments and colleges should expect fair compensation. For instance, the true replacement cost of the release time for a full professor is not the cost of hiring a sessional. It is important that teaching releases address the current needs of the unit; they should be revisited every year. While there may be exceptions, it is important to recognize that service work is a required component of the assignment of duties for professorial and librarian ranks, and a degree of service is expected without a release.

The fair and transparent assignment of duties is critical to ensure department resources are effectively used while faculty are supported, sometimes in unique ways, and units are able to operate. I wish you the best for the winter term. Should you have any questions about assignment of duties I would advise you to first check the collective agreement (sort of like asking students to check the course outline!), your department head and dean/executive director are also a good resource, particularly to support the consideration of individual needs, and please feel free to contact my office at vpfaculty.relations@usask.ca.



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