UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
DIVISION OF SCIENCE

Workload Guidelines for Full-time Faculty

I. Introduction

This document provides guidance on the implementation of the University College (UC) Faculty Workload Policy as applied to the Division of Science. The Science Division of University College consists of faculty members from the academic disciplines of astronomy, biology, chemistry, physics, earth and mineral sciences, and the agricultural sciences.

Faculty workloads consist of three components: (1) the instructional workload; (2) research, scholarship, and creative accomplishments for professional development and improvement of instructional skills; and (3) service activities. The Science Division is committed to the principle identified in the college workload policy of equitable workloads as articulated in the college workload policy. Further, the Science Division endorses the establishment and maintenance of workloads with the specified “appropriate customization” when necessary.

All Science faculty members, regardless of the type of appointment, are obligated to the University and the UC to work diligently toward promotion when they have not achieved the highest rank. Faculty members at the highest rank are obligated to continue to work to attain excellence in the three categories of scholarship: teaching and learning; research and creative accomplishment; and service according to the basic tenets of Policy HR-23 “Promotion and Tenure Procedures and Regulations.”

II. The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: Teaching Assignment Guidelines

The normal teaching course load by type of appointment is as follows:

- Instructors and senior instructors are expected to teach twelve contact periods per week each semester averaged over a three-year period.
- Tenure-track and tenured science faculty members are expected to teach nine contact periods per week each semester averaged over a three-year period.

In the normal 15-week semester, a 50-minute class counts 1.0 period; a 75-minute class counts 1.5 periods, and so on. Three contact periods equal a “one-course” workload assignment in most other disciplines. Recitation and laboratory class times are counted the same as lecture time when assigning workloads to science faculty members.

Faculty members teaching First Year Seminars (FYS) may receive either extra compensation for this 1-credit course or a 1-course release for every three credits they accrue from teaching these courses if the FYS hours cause them to exceed the normal workload for the year. Guidelines exist for the accrual and discharge of released time. This practice is under review.
All full-time science faculty members may be expected by the DAA to teach outside the normal workweek (8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday) periodically.

All full-time science faculty members are expected to advise students as assigned.

**Recommended Number of Preparations**

Faculty members do their best work with a reasonable number of course preparations.

- It is generally preferable not to assign more than one new course preparation to a faculty member in a semester.

- No more than three different preparations should be assigned to any science faculty member in a given semester without his or her consent.

- Courses taught for extra compensation may be negotiated by the faculty member and his or her DAA. However, overloads for extra compensation should not exceed the normal course load of the faculty member by more than three contact periods per week per semester.

- DAAs may, at their discretion, reduce the regular teaching load for faculty members who are supervising undergraduate research courses such as Chemistry 389. Generally, unless someone is supervising an unusually large number of undergraduate students, a reduction is not recommended for tenure-track and tenured faculty since their workload assignments already provide time for research activities. However, due to their workload assignments with no research expectations, a reduction in the teaching load may be appropriate for instructors supervising a large number of undergraduate students.

- Experimental courses (e.g., Chemistry 297), should be counted the same as regular courses when assigning workloads to Science faculty members.

**Laboratory Classes and Science Instruction**

With the exception of astronomy, all branches of science are intrinsically experimental. Consequently, the laboratory experience for students will always be a very important part of science education. Because of safety considerations or constraints due to space or equipment availability, laboratory classes at University College campuses are typically restricted to 24 or fewer students.

A well-intentioned science instructor, expecting to have laboratory class time counted equally with lecture time, will necessarily spend a significant amount of his or her time devoted to improving the laboratory experience for students. Periodically, the time spent on lab class improvement is disproportionately higher than that devoted to classroom instruction.

Conscientious science laboratory instructors will be morally, ethically, and legally obligated to provide a safe working environment for their students. This obligation shall include but not be limited to
ensuring that students are always aware of the rules of safety in general and as these rules might apply to a specific procedure;

testing new procedures before asking inexperienced students to carry them out;

ensuring the safe use of chemicals and biohazards;

becoming adept at using safety equipment that deals with injuries, fires, and spills;

anticipating and reacting in a calm manner to accidents when they occur;

leaving the laboratory classroom after every use in a clean and safe condition by double checking that special equipment and supplies are secure and that gas, water, air outlets, and lighting are turned off.

Administratively, a conscientious laboratory instructor’s responsibilities shall include but not be limited to the following:

- working cooperatively with the University Department of Health and Safety, particularly to ensure the safe disposal of waste materials in accordance with prescribed procedures;

- participating in safety training sessions when they are scheduled;

- using and cataloging Manufacturers’ Safety Data Sheets;

- helping to maintain an inventory of equipment and supplies by ordering expendables as needed and providing the information needed so that expendables and equipment are purchased appropriately;

- helping (if necessary) to operate and oversee storerooms for student labs;

- helping to check periodically and repair student equipment if possible so that it can be operated in the proper manner;

- helping to train student assistants and supervise them when necessary;

- working continually to improve the quality of the lab experience for students by the frequent application and acquisition of funds, both internal and external, to upgrade the laboratory facilities and the equipment used by students.

III. The Scholarship of Research and Creative Accomplishments: Expectations

Science instructors and senior instructors are expected to remain current in the disciplines that they teach. Senior instructors are expected to maintain an active scholarly agenda that includes attending disciplinary conferences and occasionally making presentations.
Tenure-track science faculty members are expected to attend disciplinary conferences, make presentations, and to publish their accounts of research in appropriate refereed journals. Depending on the expertise of the faculty member, publications may describe research that is basic, applied, interdisciplinary, and pedagogical, or some combination thereof. Also, tenure-track science faculty members are expected to seek internal and external funding to support their scholarship of teaching and learning and their scholarship of research and creative accomplishment. Faculty members are also expected to participate in outreach activities that make significant use of their disciplinary expertise.

Tenured science faculty members are expected to continue to develop their agenda of research and scholarship through conference presentations and refereed publications in their area(s) of expertise, as well as relevant grant-seeking and outreach.

IV. Service and the Scholarship of Service to the University, Society, and the Professions: Expectations

All science faculty members are expected to contribute significant service to the University and the community. The scope of this service as it applies to individual faculty members should be commensurate with the faculty member’s rank and years of experience. At the campus level, service may involve participating on committees, advising student groups, assisting with student recruitment activities, or taking a role in campus governance bodies. In the community, service may involve speaking in one’s area of expertise to civic groups or consulting in one’s area of expertise with these groups. Senior instructors and tenured faculty members with the rank of associate professor or higher are expected to contribute as needed on promotion committees. All are expected to assume positions of leadership occasionally, for example, by chairing an important committee or working on the UC College Faculty Council or the University Faculty Senate or other administrative support work.

Consideration for a course release from teaching will be rare except for substantial service (e.g., Director of Honors Program, Chair of the University Faculty Senate, Assistant DAA, developer of new four-year degree program).

V. Adjustments

Although all full-time Science faculty members have responsibilities in teaching; research, scholarship, or creative accomplishment; and service, their assignments may warrant adjustment within these categories. Reasonable flexibility is desirable for the mutual benefit of the university, campus, and faculty member. Any adjustment in workload assignment is made by the Director of Academic Affairs in consultation with the faculty member on an individual, case-by-case basis. Courses taught for extra compensation may be negotiated by the faculty member and his or her DAA. However, regular course loads higher than 4-4 during the academic year are discouraged. No modification of a course load, whether an increase or a decrease, is automatic or guaranteed.

Generally workload adjustments may be made yearly, and faculty members will not have their normal course load increased during the academic year. However, a bona fide campus emergence (such as a colleague’s hospitalization) might warrant an adjustment midyear.
Science instructors and senior instructors will not have their normal course load increased during the academic year unless they are accepting an approved overload assignment for extra compensation. On the other hand, a reduction in the course load may be warranted if the instructor or senior instructor is taking on an unusually substantial responsibility.

In light of the obligation of research of tenure-track Science faculty members, a course load reduction might be appropriate. A reasonable goal is a reduction of three contact periods from the usual nine for all first-year tenure-track science faculty members. Tenure-track science faculty members in the second through fifth years of their probationary status may receive a reduction of three contact periods for a major scholarly project or in response to receiving a significant grant or fellowship.

In light of the continuing obligation of newly tenured or middle-term tenured faculty members in research, a course load reduction may occasionally be fitting, particularly for faculty members seeking promotion. A time-intensive scholarly or creative project or a significant grant or fellowship may warrant such a reduction. Also, a newly tenured or middle-term tenured science faculty member may be involved with a substantial programmatic innovation or major service commitment that would warrant reduction in the teaching load.

As with newly tenured or middle-term tenured science faculty members, a time-intensive scholarly or creative project, a significant grant or fellowship, or a substantial programmatic innovation or major service commitment as qualified above, also may warrant a reduced teaching load for advanced tenured science faculty members.

A tenured science faculty member who, for a given year or more, does not seek promotion to full professor, does not have a significant involvement with an agenda in research or creative accomplishment, and does not wish to be evaluated with the usual weight given to research or creative accomplishment, may wish to discuss with his or her DAA increased responsibilities in teaching, service, or both. A DAA may also initiate a discussion of this topic. The goal is a reasonable adjustment that is mutually reached. An adjustment may also be considered during a post-tenure review. If, in a future year, the faculty member becomes significantly re-engaged in research or creative accomplishment, this adjustment may be reversed with mutual consent.

Tenure-track science faculty members are discouraged from teaching summer courses or overloads during the academic year to permit adequate time to develop their research or creative accomplishment.

In line with University policy, any teaching, course development, or other work for a separate Penn State unit (including Outreach or World Campus) must be approved in advance by the DAA.
VI. **Related Documents**

The University College documents relating to these guidelines are listed below.

**Policies on Workload**

- **Faculty Workload Policy**
- **Workload Guidelines for Teaching Online Courses**

**Policies for Tenure-System Faculty**

- “Division of Science–Distinctive Features in Research,” Section K, *Promotion and Tenure Handbook*
- **Statement of Expectations and Criteria for Promotion and Tenure of the University College**

**Policies for Faculty not in the Tenure System**

- **Statement of Scholarship Expectations for Faculty Members not in the Tenure System**
- **Guidelines for the Promotion of Full-time, Non-Tenure Track Faculty**

Endorsed by Faculty Affairs and Research Committee, Commonwealth College Faculty Senate 4/14/04

Approved by Diane M. Disney, Dean
   Interim approval 8/9/04
   Final approval 6/27/05

Revised for changes made in 7/1/05 through reorganization: 8/05, 8/06