

Assignment of Duties

by Eric Neufeld

Like all collegial processes, *Assignment of Duties* (Article 11) should be an open and transparent process that requires your participation to ensure fairness.

The face-to-face meeting

This process should be wrapped up for departments by the end of March and approved by Deans by the end of April. Although duties are assigned by your Department Head or Dean (in non-departmentalized colleges), this follows "consultation with departmental [College] faculty in committee," specifically, a face-to-face meeting of all faculty to discuss workload.

Fairness means that workloads must be equitable, but not necessarily equal. Not much has been written about this at the institutional level, so what does this actually mean in practice?

In some cases, there are easy answers:

1. Many units recognize that a fresh hire has many startup challenges – designing and delivering new courses, recruiting graduate students, building a lab, applying for grants – not to mention the work associated with moving to a new institution and/or starting a family life. Accordingly, many units reduce teaching and administrative duties until the new employee hits her/his stride.
2. Some units also recognize that certain administrative jobs (typically, the headship, graduate/undergraduate chair) warrant teaching offloads or research support in some form.
3. Faculty members awarded research chairs often receive teaching and administrative offloads to facilitate a research focus. In some cases, granting agencies provide resources to compensate the unit for the lost teaching and administrative resources.

Other cases are not so easy, and the face-

to-face meeting provides you with an opportunity to discuss workload with your colleagues. Do you fully understand the workload behind your colleague's contributions? And do they fully understand yours?

For example: How many hours a year does an active researcher spend writing grant applications, not all of which are successful? Is giving a graduate seminar with no exams as much work as teaching a first year class of 350 students? If "yes," would you gladly exchange teaching assignments? Do you know how much time it takes (on average!) to supervise a graduate student through to graduation? Do your colleagues? Is graduate student supervision part of the workload in your unit or is it *pro bono*? What contribution is expected of a full professor with a large established research enterprise, as compared to an associate professor in mid-career? How much work is it to assess course equivalencies for transfer students? Should all faculty teach the same number of 3-CUEs? Do you know how many hours your colleagues spend on labor intensive committee work at the college/university level?

There are no easy answers to these questions. However, a face-to-face meeting gives faculty members an opportunity to air concerns and talk out solutions. Once pragmatic answers to these questions are found that meet the unit's circumstances, they might become part of your unit's Guidelines for the Assignment of Duties.

Guidelines for the Assignment of Duties

Your unit should by now have developed (and approved by secret ballot) a set of Guidelines for the Assignment of Duties to address many of these questions and ensure fairness. Some are detailed and complex; others are phrased in terms of general principles.

A career can be ruined because the assignment of duties was not done right. All parties have a stake in ensuring that the final documents are the result of committee discussion and are open to amendment as circumstances change.

We have found that teaching and academic cultures differ enough that it is challenging to provide hard and fast answers. Here are some solutions to questions raised in the previous section, loosely adapted from actual situations.

A compensation expert could probably write a dissertation on teaching load alone! For now, let's start with the situation mentioned above where one faculty member teaches 350 students in a single classroom and another teaches a small number of students in a seminar class.

The two situations are certainly different. Are they equitable? If so, we are done.

If they are not, faculty members in the unit simply recognize that in the long run, everyone takes a turn with the large first year classes, as well as other classes that pose particular challenges. Equitability is achieved over the long term.

Alternately, a faculty member who teaches 350 students in a semester receives additional instructional support – more markers, more access to instructional support staff, for example, while the faculty member delivering the seminar class receives less. Some units have decided that a heavy 3-CUE load can be banked towards an eventual offload. Perhaps large class sizes are treated as overload and given extra compensation. It may also be possible such a workload is considered meritorious and is rewarded with a special increase.

Managing equitability of research workload can be an even bigger challenge. Some research cultures require a large well-funded team to produce results; some require an intense one-on-one relationship between the supervisor and the student, but do not create the same funding opportunities externally or even internally, if, for example, you do not belong to one of the university "signature areas."

Our understanding is that most colleagues agree that all faculty should have a basic time allocation to do research. Some units award faculty "credits" for publications, completed graduate students, and research grants, that can also be banked towards teaching and administration offloads. In some units, the time to produce a

measurable unit of research (paper, graduate student, patent, grant) can vary widely.

This also edges us towards the sensitive territory of the tradeoff between research and teaching, and how equitability is achieved in units that make these tradeoffs. Again, it is important that equitability is achieved by discussing priorities at the unit level.

The short game and the long game

The preceding discussion gave several examples of faculty receiving differential workloads to accommodate administrative appointments, research chairs, teaching loads, and point in career.

As well, differential workloads arise due to the vicissitudes of life. A gap in the teaching program may arise when a faculty member experiences a health problem. Or, enrolments may unexpectedly double.

Regardless, faculty members (including the Deans and Department Heads responsible for faculty workload) should keep their eye the long game. Tenure requires contributions in research, teaching, and administration, and promotion to full professor typically requires not only significant research contributions, but also significant contributions to administration at all levels, for all faculty (including those who hold a special chair).

Your standards for renewal, promotion, and tenure should specify the kinds of work necessary to meet these standards, and your assignment of duties over the long term must give you the opportunity to meet these standards. Your department head and/or dean should be aware of these needs, and should be able to explain to you how the committees that evaluate your promotion and tenure cases will evaluate your cases. As an extreme example, you may consider the reporting duties associated with teaching or the leadership contributions in the research community to be administrative work, but there is a good chance the committees reading your tenure case will not.

The various committees defined in the Collective Agreement (including USFA committees) and in the documents of University Council, or your College clearly constitute administrative service. For other tasks, it is not always so clear cut. Is being editor of a major journal a contribution to research or administration? Many would argue that it increases the university's research profile, but it is not a contribution to running the university. And not everyone would say that

such an appointment is automatically meritorious. Yet almost everyone would say that it is a good thing for your career. Questions like these merit a good discussion at the unit level.

Teaching in only two terms per year

The new Collective Agreement has made an important change regarding assignment of duties during the summer (May-August) term. The spirit of this discussion at bargaining was to accommodate the needs of certain units whose programs necessarily deliver parts of their programs during the summer.

However, *all faculty members are entitled to an annual non-teaching term, including term faculty. A non-teaching term is **not** a term off.* The following points summarize the key changes in the new agreement.

1. Faculty are required to perform their duties on a 12-month basis, unless specified otherwise in the letter of appointment.
2. The new Collective Agreement defines three terms: T1 (Fall), T2 (Winter), and T3 (summer). You cannot be assigned to teach in all three terms *except by mutual agreement*, and you may be assigned to teach in T3 only once every three years, in which case no teaching must be assigned in another term.
3. The non-teaching term (typically T3) is intended to give faculty the opportunity to perform scholarly work. This includes research, or (for those with term appointments or heavy teaching assignments), preparation and updating of classes, and maintaining currency in your area of expertise. This is also the term when vacation is normally taken.
4. You may **agree** to teach during your non-teaching term. In this case, **either**
 - a. You have **agreed** to distribute the teaching load you would normally receive for the other two terms over three terms. That is, if you would normally teach two three-credit classes per term, you may elect to teach two three-credit classes in one term, and one three-credit class in each of the other two terms, **or**
 - b. The teaching during your non-teaching term (in addition to the other two terms), **is considered to be in addition to your regular duties** – that is overload – and you will receive

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extra compensation of \$9,900 for a 6 credit unit course or \$4,950 for a 3 credit unit course (Article 18.5).

Service outside your unit

All faculty members are expected to serve on collegial committees at the university level. By *service outside your unit*, we refer to certain special arrangements that might be made with other academic or administrative units.

One example is Joint Appointments in more than one unit. The Collective Agreement deals in considerable detail with such appointments, and specifies how units are to share decisions about workload, about how performance is evaluated. Members with Joint Appointments should look at these clauses carefully.

However, the Collective Agreement says little about secondments, whether formal or informal, full-time or part-time. If you or a colleague have been seconded to work in some other unit, the parties should follow the principles discussed in the articles on Joint Appointments. In general, the secondee and the affected unit should be aware of the following:

1. How does the secondment affect the rest of the unit? Will other members have to perform the secondee's usual workload, will certain activities or programs have to be dropped, or will the unit receive fall-in resources?
2. The secondee should always keep in mind the long and the short game. A secondment may benefit you and/or your unit in the short term, but remember that you must still meet the standards for promotion and tenure in all categories.
3. The unit should clearly understand the secondee's new duties and how to evaluate them.

Questions about the Assignment of Duties?

Please contact the USFA office:
usfa@usaskfaculty.ca
Or 966.5609

The Collective Agreement is available at:

www.usaskfaculty.ca
www.usask.ca/hrd/employment_agreements.php