

Department of Physics and Astronomy Teaching-Load Policy (2016 Revision)

*By the Planning and Development Committee
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I. Introduction

Over the period 2001-2007, we operated under a Teaching-Load Policy (TLP) that sought to link faculty teaching loads to the two major goals specified in the departmental long-range plan at that time; namely increasing the level of external funding and expanding the size of the doctoral program. In particular, teaching loads were tied to two important contributors to achieving these goals: external funding and support for graduate students. A revised policy was approved by the faculty on Feb. 7, 2007 and has been in use since that time.

That policy made more explicit the criteria that determine a faculty member's teaching load. It also redefined how the teaching load is incorporated into the Raise Allocation Policy (RAP). Here we provide revisions to the Feb. 7, 2007 policy, but with the aim of keeping to the principles of the previous policies and their goals.

A few provisos are worth mentioning beforehand:

- (1) Every aspect of this proposed policy is subject to the 'sum rule' of every class needing an instructor. Qualifying for course releases under this policy does not automatically guarantee a faculty member will receive those course releases. See Section V.
- (2) To account for the fact that no single policy suits all circumstances all the time, the Head is explicitly authorized, and encouraged, to make adjustments to the implementation of the TLP on a case-by-case basis, as the circumstances warrant, provided it is done in as fair a manner as possible and as close to the spirit of this policy as possible.
- (3) No faculty member will have a course load less than 1 semester course in any year, even if the number of releases from this policy plus additional releases (*e.g.*, for chaired professorships, etc.) would result in a course load less than 1. An exception is if a faculty member uses 'course banking' to arrange for a year of no teaching.
- (4) If a faculty member 'buys out' a course with funds from grants, contracts, or other sources, then he or she will get credit within this policy for having taught that course.
- (5) Throughout this TLP, a baseline course load of 3 per year is assumed. If this baseline changes in the future, then this policy would need to be adjusted accordingly.
- (6) Each faculty member is required to provide the necessary statistics to the Head for computing their teaching load.

(7) Finally, the faculty of the Department of Physics and Astronomy recognizes that the goal of maintaining and increasing external funding for different research programs is critically impacted by the effective teaching load of the individual faculty members. Since external funds are usually awarded as a result of a competitive process, it also must be recognized that the effective teaching load in comparison to the one at aspirational institutions is also of critical importance.

II. Definitions

Course: Throughout this document, the word ‘course’ is construed to mean a ‘standard 1-semester course of 3-4 credit hours’. Courses worth fewer credit hours will be counted proportionally as the appropriate fraction of a standard course. However, freshman seminars, including First Year Odyssey courses, will not count towards the teaching load.

Adjustment: This policy deals with course releases and overloads. The generic term ‘adjustment’ refers to both types.

Earned Adjustments: An ‘earned adjustment’ is one determined by specific criteria pertaining to level of research activity, as specified in Section III. The parameter ea_i stands for the earned adjustment awarded to the i th faculty member. Negative values stand for releases and positive values for overloads.

Requested Adjustments: A ‘requested adjustment’ is an additional release or overload requested by a faculty member, as specified in Section IV. The parameters rr_i and ro_i stand for the requested course release and course overload, respectively, for the i th faculty member. Both parameters are nonnegative, and only one may be nonzero at a time.

Year: For the purposes of this policy, a ‘year’ refers to the period beginning on September 1 and ending on August 31, except where specifically noted otherwise.

External Funds: For a given faculty member, ‘external funds’ refers to the sum of his/her single-PI grants or contracts and all portions of multi-PI grants or contracts credited to him/her, excluding all internal funding. Only the funds spent during the periods specified in Table 1 will be counted. A faculty member will get credit within this policy for funds generated by a subordinate (*e.g.*, research scientist, postdoc) if the acquisition of those funds resulted from the guidance and mentorship of the faculty member.

Graduate Student Support: For a given faculty member, ‘graduate student support’ refers to the amount of full-year graduate research assistantship (GRA) support provided by him/her from single-PI grants or contracts and portions of multi-PI grants or contracts credited to him/her, including both external and internal funding sources. For the purposes of determining GRA support for a given year, the year will be defined as the academic year plus following summer, and thus will run from mid-August to mid-August and not from September 1 to August 31. In calculating total GRA support, fall and spring semesters will count as 4.5 months each, and summer will count as 3 months. The unit ‘1 ninth’ refers to 11.111% support. Special university, regents, external-agency graduate assistantships received by a student working under a given faculty member’s supervi-

sion are counted as equivalent to grant- or contract-based support provided by that faculty member.

Peer Reviewed Publications: In this document the term ‘peer reviewed publications’ refers to publications in scholarly, peer-reviewed journals with publication dates in the period specified in Table 1. Publications designated as ‘in press’ by the end of the specified period will not be included in the count. Other scholarly publications (*e.g.*, book chapters, monographs, etc.) with publication dates during the specified period may be included in the count at the Head’s discretion.

III. Earned Releases or Overloads

Table 1: Criteria for i th faculty member to qualify for a given value of ea_i .

ea_i	Criteria
-1	Faculty member must have $F_i + G_i + P_i \geq 3.5$, where: F_i = External funding level in preceding year, in units of \$50,000. G_i = Graduate student support in preceding year, in units of 4 ninths.† P_i = Number of peer-reviewed publications in preceding two years combined, in units of 4 papers.
0	Faculty member must have $F_i + G_i + P_i \geq 2$, where: F_i = External funding level in either year of preceding two, in units of \$50,000. G_i = Graduate student support in either year of preceding two, in units of 4 ninths.† P_i = Number of peer-reviewed publications in preceding two years combined, in units of 4 papers. (Note: Definitions of F_i and G_i in this category account for short-term loss of external funding by allowing either of preceding two years to be used.)
+1	(i) Faculty member does not qualify for any other ea_i values.

† After full support of one student, full support of postdocs and researchers of higher ranks may count for 4 ninths each.

Provisional values of ea_i , for i running over all faculty members, are determined according to the guidelines given in Table 1. Final values of ea_i , rr_i , and ro_i (see Section IV) will be determined by the Head according to the procedure described in Section V.

IV. Requested Releases or Overloads

Faculty members will be permitted to request additional teaching-load adjustments beyond the earned adjustments described in Section III. Requested adjustments will be awarded at lower priority than earned adjustments and other teaching-load demands.

Requested overloads: Any faculty member may request to teach additional courses ($ro_i > 0$). If a requested overload is awarded, then the additional course(s) will be added to that faculty member’s total course count with concurrent merit-point credit as detailed in the RAP.

Requested releases: Any faculty member may request an additional course release ($rr_i = 1$). If this request is awarded, the faculty member will pay for the privilege of this additional course release by losing merit points equivalent to a standard semester course. Only one of ro_i and rr_i may be nonzero.

V. Procedure for Determining Course Loads

The Head will compute a provisional course load for each faculty member based on preliminary data provided by each faculty member. Let $q_i \geq 0$ be the number of course releases awarded to the i th faculty member for situations unrelated to this policy (*e.g.*, for administrative duties, chaired professorships, editorships, dual-departmental appointments, unusual FTE distributions, etc.). A provisional course load for the i th faculty member, L_i , for the academic year in question is computed as follows:

- If the faculty member is the Head, then L_i is set by prior arrangement with the Dean.
- If the faculty member is an entry-level tenure-track assistant professor with a substantial research FTE, then $L_i = [\max(1, 1 - q_i) + ro_i]$ in each of the first 2 years of service and $L_i = [\max(1, 2 - q_i) + ro_i]$ in the third year of service. After the third year and until the award of tenure, $L_i = [\max(1, 3 - q_i) + ro_i]$.
- If the faculty member is an entry-level tenure-track assistant professor with primarily a teaching FTE, then $L_i = [\max(1, 4 - q_i) + ro_i]$ in each of the first 3 years of service.
- Otherwise $L_i = [\max(1, 3 + ea_i - rr_i - q_i) + ro_i]$.

Let C be the total number of courses to be taught by tenured and/or tenure-track faculty members in the academic year in question (*i.e.*, subtracting out those to be taught by visitors, temporary faculty, etc., but retaining those associated with course buy-outs). There are three cases to consider:

- (1) $\sum_i L_i = C$: In this case there are no sum-rule violations. Final course loads are equal to provisional course loads for each faculty member.
- (2) $\sum_i L_i > C$: In this case the sum rule is exceeded. All earned and requested releases are awarded. Requested overloads ($ro_i > 0$) will be declined, starting with faculty with an earned release (*i.e.*, $ea_i = -1$), until the sum rule is satisfied. If the sum rule is still exceeded after declining all requested overloads, then earned overloads will be reduced until the sum rule is satisfied. If multiple faculty have the same ea_i , then they will be put in random order, unless circumstances warrant a different ordering, as determined by the Head.
- (3) $\sum_i L_i < C$: In this case the sum rule has a shortfall. All earned and requested overloads are awarded. Requested releases ($rr_i > 0$) will be declined, starting with faculty with an earned overload (*i.e.*, $ea_i = 1$) until the sum rule is satisfied. If the sum rule still has a shortfall after declining all requested releases, then earned releases will be reduced until the sum rule is satisfied, starting with the faculty member with the lowest value of $F_i + G_i + P_i$ (see Table 1), unless circumstances warrant a different ordering, as determined by the Head.

VI. Appeals

Faculty members who had been sufficiently research active in the period previous to that being considered, and who plan to be research active in the subsequent period, but who may not have met the criteria for a baseline course load in the upcoming period, may develop a plan, in consultation with the Head, for regaining research activity at or above the level needed for a baseline course load. With such a plan, the faculty member may then appeal to the Head for a baseline course load in the upcoming period.

VII. Policy Review

This policy must be reviewed by a departmental committee periodically in order to assess its effectiveness and make recommendations for improvement.