

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
COURSE RELEASE POLICY
Effective Feb 2019

As a premiere public institution, one of our major responsibilities is teaching. As active scholars, however, research, service, and other duties can sometimes come into tension with our commitment to being responsive, attentive, and impactful educators. This can be a productive tension, as it lifts up our priorities of scholarship, teaching, and service. But it is still a tension. This policy is meant to act as a guide for those considering requests for course releases.

In some cases, faculty teaching loads may be adjusted to account for unusual effort in areas other than teaching, although all faculty are expected to teach at least one course per year.¹ A faculty member seeking a course release should first contact the department chair for preliminary approval and to jointly devise a plan for how the teaching responsibilities will be covered by other instructors. The request would ideally be made three months before the start of the course. Department Chairs will then submit the written request and plan for approval by the Dean's Office. There are three categories of course releases:

- Buying out with external funding. Faculty who obtain external funding may wish to build course buyouts into their grant budgets. Buying out of a 3-credit course costs 20% of an 8-month contract salary. Permission to buy out can depend on the timing of required courses as well as the availability of an alternative instructor.
- Administrative Release. Faculty who serve in substantial administrative roles may be granted course releases by the Dean's Office. Examples of substantial administrative roles include Associate Dean, Center Director, Department Chair, Associate Chair, and/or coordinator of large training programs/initiatives. However, as all faculty are expected to engage in departmental service as part of their academic year appointments, most training program coordination duties would not correspond with a course release.
- Other Circumstances. From time to time, it may be appropriate for faculty to receive a course release to free up time for work that is essential to the mission/vision of the School of Education. This might involve, for example, new faculty needing additional time to orient and get their research programs up and running.

Additional Notes on Teaching Load: The typical teaching load for tenure-stream faculty with an 8-month appointment is 12 credits per year, which is the equivalent of four 3-credit courses per year. For professors of practice (formerly referred to as non-tenure-stream faculty), the typical teaching load is 18 credits per year, which is the equivalent of six three-credit courses per year for an eight-month appointment, or 27 credits, which is the equivalent of nine 3-credit courses for a twelve-month appointment. Some faculty may have different yearly loads depending on their appointments and/or the percentage of their salary that is paid by Pitt Education.

The yearly teaching load can be met by teaching in the fall, spring, or, if needed, the summer semesters. For faculty on academic year contracts, teaching a summer course that counts towards yearly teaching load does not involve additional salary or summer funding.

If a course is offered, but does not run because it fails to meet minimal enrollment (currently 8 for grad courses, 15 for undergraduate courses), then it will not count towards load. In this case, the faculty member is still responsible for the annual teaching load and will need to teach an additional course or, with the permission of the Department Chair and Dean's Office, assume other administrative duties to advance the mission/vision of the School of Education.

¹ An exception to the one-course rule might be made when a faculty member receives an externally-funded fellowship or other faculty development grant where the conditions of funding specify greater levels of course release.