



EAST TENNESSEE STATE
UNIVERSITY

Faculty Workload Policy

Policy Name: Faculty Workload

Policy Purpose

This policy specifies the university's faculty workload expectations.

Applicability

This policy is applicable to ETSU Tenure-Track Probationary, Tenured, and Renewable Term Faculty, department chairs, and deans. This policy does not apply to other types of Faculty designations or to faculty teaching exclusively at University School.

Responsible Official, Office, and Interpretation

The Office of the Provost is responsible for the review and revision of this policy. For questions about this policy, please contact the Office of the Provost. The Provost, in conjunction with the Office of University Counsel has the final authority to interpret this policy.

Defined Terms

A defined term has a specific meaning within the context of this policy.

Academic Unit

A department, center, library, school, or program within Academic Affairs that reports to the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academics.

Administrative Activities

Faculty work that supports an Academic Unit, college, or the university. Leadership roles such as department chair, associate/assistant dean, and center director are Administrative Activities that must be confirmed each academic year in the FAP. Leadership roles such as program director/coordinator or assistant/vice chair that are performed in lieu of course release or additional compensation are considered Service and are included in Normative Workload Expectations as outlined in the Faculty Activity Plan

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Banking

A system that allows faculty to earn workload credit for teaching unpaid courses or performing duties beyond their Standard Workload Expectations. Banked credit may be applied in future semesters to balance workloads and provide flexibility while ensuring equitable recognition of additional effort.

Clinical Activity

Professional activities related to patient care or PreK–12 practice, with or without learners present. This includes delivering care, participating in interprofessional teams, advancing clinical practice, contributing to outcomes, and supervising learners. Refer to ETSU's [Tenure Policy](#) and [Faculty Ranks and Promotion Policy](#) for additional guidance.

Differentiated Workloads

A deviation of more than one workload unit in a semester from the Standard Workload Expectation, assigning varying levels of Teaching, Research, Scholarship, Creative Activities, Clinical Activity, or Service based on factors such as course size, course level, discipline, or other relevant considerations.

Faculty Activity

Teaching, Librarianship, Research, Scholarship, Creative Activities, Service, Clinical Activity, or Administrative Assignments.

Faculty Activity Evaluation (FAE)

The annual assessment of a faculty member's performance on the Faculty Activities outlined in the Faculty Activity Plan (FAP) and reported in the Faculty Activity Report (FAR).

Faculty Activity Plan (FAP)

An annual plan outlining a faculty member's intended Faculty Activities. The Faculty Supervisor and dean (or designee) provide final approval, except in cases subject to workload review procedures.

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Faculty Activity Report (FAR)

An annual report describing the faculty member's completed Faculty Activities.

Overload Assignments

Work that exceeds Standard Workload Expectations. Participation in an Overload Assignment is voluntary and a faculty member's decision to decline an Overload Assignment shall not be considered in Faculty Activity Evaluations or any personnel decision. Overload Assignments are governed by the [Outside Employment and Extra Compensation Policy](#).

Service

Professional contributions to the Academic Unit, college, university, profession, or community. Service may include advising, governance participation, program coordination, professional leadership, or community engagement. Leadership roles designated as Administrative Activities may not be counted in more than one category in the same reporting period. Refer to ETSU's [Tenure Policy](#) and [Faculty Ranks and Promotion Policy](#).

Standard Workload Expectations

Standard baseline workload requirements. Standard does not mean inflexible; documented and justified variations are permitted when appropriate.

Workload Unit

A measurement used to calculate Faculty Activities.

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Policy

1. General Statements

- 1.1. This policy establishes faculty workload guidelines aligned with East Tennessee State University (ETSU's) mission and consistent with the Tenure and Faculty Ranks and Promotion and the Definition of Faculty and Types of Faculty Appointments. It sets university-level standards while allowing colleges and Academic Units flexibility to implement discipline-specific workload models.

Several core principles from the American Council of Education (ACE's) workload guidance informed this policy, including:

- 1.1.1. Accountability – Faculty fulfill assigned responsibilities within their FTE so the university's mission is met.
- 1.1.2. Appropriateness – Assignments reflect role, rank, designation, competencies, and career stage.
- 1.1.3. Clarity – Expectations and workload calculations are clearly defined.
- 1.1.4. Equity – Assignments are fair and balanced.
- 1.1.5. Flexibility – Policies allow for disciplinary, accreditation, and operational differences.
- 1.1.6. Transparency – Policies are developed through shared governance, documented in writing, and accessible to faculty.
- 1.1.7. Workloads must be distributed equitably and transparently, in accordance with faculty appointment type, and must comply with applicable university policies and faculty governance procedures.
- 1.1.8. Faculty responsibilities shall align with assigned full-time equivalent (FTE). Faculty contribute to the university's mission through engagement in Faculty Activities. Workload is allocated among Faculty Activities based on appointment type. Each faculty member will develop an annual Faculty Activity Plan (FAP), subject to review and approval
- 1.2. Full-time Workload – A full-time workload (1.0 FTE) equals five (5) Workload Units per semester or approved equivalencies. Faculty appointed to an academic year appointment complete ten (10) Workload Units across the Academic Year. Faculty appointed to a fiscal year appointment complete fifteen (15) Workload Units across the fiscal year. Teaching 3–4 credit hours equals one workload unit,

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subject to differentiated workload (see Section 7) and the [Definition of Credit Policy](#)

- 1.3. Overload – Overload Assignments require approval of the faculty supervisor and dean and do not reduce Standard Workload Expectations in off-set semesters. Faculty refusal of an Overload Assignment shall not be mentioned in evaluation narratives. Faculty supervisors will provide the dean or designee an annual report on overload distribution.
- 1.4. Standard Workload – Outside employment or consulting is not considered in workload determinations and should not be part of the FAP/FAR/FAE process. Outside activity must be reported and approved in compliance with the Outside Employment and Extra Compensation Policy.
- 1.5. To ensure that primary responsibilities of Faculty Activities are met, Faculty must consult with their Faculty Supervisor before accepting any external paid activities. Such activities are also subject to ETSU’s [Outside Employment and Extra Compensation](#) and [Conflicts of Interests or Commitments Policy](#).
- 1.6. This policy does not guarantee specific workload assignments or summer/winter employment.

2. General Work Requirements for Faculty

Faculty responsibilities are defined by the terms of appointment in the offer letter, FTE, and the FAP. Faculty are expected to fulfill duties during their contract period. Those with Administrative or Clinical responsibilities may have obligations during holidays or University closures.

3. Academic Responsibilities During Off-Contract Periods

Faculty on a nine (9) month contract may occasionally need to complete brief academic and student support obligations arising from work performed during the contract (e.g., grade submission, resolving incompletes, grade appeals, academic misconduct matters). Such obligations should be minimal under normal circumstances.

4. Faculty Workload Requirements

Each Academic Unit must establish and publish workload policies that define workload units or equivalencies and measurement standards consistent with this policy.

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5. Tenure-Track Probationary and Tenured Faculty

Tenure-Track Probationary Faculty and Tenured Faculty must maintain workloads that demonstrate engagement in teaching, Research Scholarship and Creative Activities (RSCA), and service are fundamental aspects of their academic role.

- 5.1. Within the first three years of employment, Tenure-Track Probationary Faculty may receive reduced responsibilities in one area to support development in another area, subject to dean (or designee) and Provost (or designee) written approval. No Faculty Activity area may fall below 0.5 workload units without written approval from the dean. Overload assignments during the first three years of employment may be permitted subject to dean (or designee) and Provost (or designee) approval.
- 5.2. Tenured faculty may receive temporary workload adjustments not to exceed a maximum of two consecutive semesters to emphasize specific activities, subject to written approval from the dean (or designee). No Faculty Activity area may fall below 0.5 workload units without written approval from the dean.
- 5.3. Renewable Term Faculty – Workload equals five (5) workload units or approved equivalencies per semester. Differentiated Workload must be recommended by the Faculty Supervisor with written approval from the dean (or designee). Renewable Term Faculty are eligible for Overload Assignment. Any Adjustment to the workload assignment or Differentiated Workload must be recommended by the Faculty Supervisor and approved by the dean or designee.
- 5.4. Faculty Working in Multiple Units or In Another Unit – Faculty serving in more than one unit must have a written agreement approved by the Faculty member, Faculty Supervisor, dean (or designee), and the Provost (or designee) specifying responsibilities, evaluation methods, and the evaluating supervisor.

6. Course Banking

Subject to the requirements of this section, course banking may be used in circumstances to permit eligible faculty to assume instructional workload equivalencies above their Standard Workload Expectations in one academic term and, with prior approval, redeem those equivalencies for a reduced instructional assignment in a future term.

- 6.1. Faculty must submit a written request to their supervisor in advance of the course start date to request to bank or to redeem Banking workload equivalencies. The faculty supervisor and the dean (or designee) must approve the request in writing. The faculty supervisor and dean (or designee) shall base their decision on

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documented programmatic needs and equitable workload distribution within the Academic Unit. Decisions shall be communicated in writing and documented in the FAP/AR/FAE.

- 6.2. Course Banking does not automatically reduce responsibilities in other Faculty Activities. When banked units are redeemed and a reduced instructional assignment is approved, corresponding adjustments, if any, shall be reflected in the FAP/FAR/FAE.
- 6.3. A faculty member may bank no more than two (2) workload equivalency units per year. Banked units are intended solely for future workload adjustment and do not carry monetary value.
- 6.4. Banking units may be held for no more than three (3) consecutive academic semesters following the semester in which they were granted.
- 6.5. If a faculty supervisor declines a faculty's request to redeem banked units, a written decision with documented programmatic needs must be provided to the faculty member.
- 6.6. If a request to redeem banked units is denied, the faculty supervisor may extend the expiration period by one additional semester.
- 6.7. Upon resignation, retirement, termination, or reassignment to a position without instructional responsibilities, unused banked units are forfeited.
- 6.8. Faculty accrual and use of banked hours will be documented, reviewed, and justified annually by the Faculty Supervisor, dean, and Provost.

7. Workload Equivalencies

Colleges and Academic Units may adopt and publish workload equivalencies (e.g., percentage effort models), provided total effort translates to five (5) workload units per semester for a 1.0 FTE appointment. The dean (or designee) must approve any Mid-term changes to the published workload equivalencies. The dean (or designee) and the Provost (or designee) will review and approve workload equivalencies for cross-college consistency and equity.

8. To support transparency and cross-college comparability, each college/Academic Unit workload policy that uses equivalencies must include a clear crosswalk that translates the unit's equivalencies into workload units (or an equivalent standard) for reporting purposes. The college dean or designee will review and approve the crosswalk. The Office of the Provost will establish a common reporting template to support consistent documentation across colleges.

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9. Differentiated Workloads

Colleges and Academic Units may establish Differentiated Workloads based on discipline-specific factors. Variations must be applied consistently and equitably within the Academic Unit, providing a clear rationale in writing and documented in the FAP, reported in the FAR, and evaluated in the FAE. The dean or designee will review, approve, and report differentiated workload patterns annually. The following factors can be considered in Differentiated Workloads:

- 9.1. Teaching – Enrollment size, course level, supervision load, delivery method, contact hours, thesis/dissertation chairing.
- 9.2. RSCA – Major publications, grants, sustained externally funded research, significant creative activity, innovative entrepreneurship, and significant engaged scholarship.
- 9.3. Service – Substantial governance roles, coordination responsibilities, community engagement aligned with mission.
- 9.4. Clinical Activity – Patient, learner, or supervisory workload measures.

10. Requirements for College or Academic Unit Workload Policies

Colleges and Academic Units will develop policies as designated by this policy. Until such unit level policies are adopted, units will use the university workload policy as the default. College and Academic Unit policies must comport with the university policy, but provide flexibility, as described here, to address Academic Unit and/or College needs. College or Academic Unit policies must:

- 10.1. Be written and published to be available for review by faculty, dean, and Provost;
- 10.2. Align with this policy;
- 10.3. Define Standard Workload Expectations;
- 10.4. Define Workload Units or Equivalencies.
- 10.5. Establish minimum office hour expectations during an academic term;
- 10.6. Define Banking parameters, if allowed;
- 10.7. Specify Differentiated Workload criteria;
- 10.8. Clarify how courses and supervision contribute to workload;
- 10.9. Define workload allocations for Administrative Activities and Clinical Activities;
- 10.10. Define summer expectations for Fiscal Year Faculty;
- 10.11. Establish a Workload Resolution Committee; and

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10.12. Require a policy review at least every five (5) years.

10.13. Be approved by the dean and Provost.

11. Department Workload Guidelines

Departments must establish discipline-specific workload guidelines consistent with college and university policies.

12. Annual Workload Review

All faculty must submit an annual FAP by the deadline set by the Office of the Provost. The Provost's Office will publish annual review deadlines on the Office of the Provost website. The Faculty Activity Evaluation (FAE) assesses performance based on the FAP and the Faculty Activity Report (FAR). In the FAE, faculty supervisors and deans (or designees) must provide written approval or written revisions with rationale.

13. Workload Resolution

Each college will establish a Workload Resolution Committee representative of units, ranks, and appointments. If a faculty member disagrees with workload assignment the faculty member may request a review of the college committee pursuant to the procedures of this policy which requires a final written decision by the dean (or designee). If the faculty member disagrees with the decision of the dean, the faculty member may file one (1) written appeal with the Provost or designee pursuant the procedures of this policy. The decision of the Provost (or designee) is final. For Clinical Faculty, the Provost will consult with the Vice President of Clinical Affairs before issuing a final determination. The decision of the Provost (or designee) is final.

14. Workload Adjustment

In consultation with the dean (or designee), workload adjustments may occur due to evaluation outcomes, enrollment changes, financial constraints, institutional priorities, or professional opportunities. Adjustments must align with the expectations of the appointment and must be applied consistently with college and Academic Unit workload policies. Workload Adjustments must be documented and reported in the FAP/FAR/FAE.

15. Accommodations

The Provost (or designee) may grant an accommodation to the requirements of this policy under exceptional circumstances. An accommodation to this policy will be documented in writing.

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16. University School Faculty

Workload for University School Faculty will be determined according to University School policy and is not subject to this policy.

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Procedures

1. Process for Developing College/Academic Unit Workload Policies.

Each dean (or Academic Unit director) will appoint a representative task force of Faculty and Faculty Supervisors. Each unit's workload policy must be developed within six months (excluding summer) of publishing the university Faculty Workload policy or at a date set by the Provost. Drafts must be shared for review and comment by all faculty within the college/Academic Unit. Revisions will be made as necessary; additional review may occur if substantive changes are made. The final draft of the unit's workload policy will go through the respective college or unit's bylaws process for approval. Final policies must include an effective date and be posted for Faculty access.

2. Process for Developing Academic Unity Workload Guidelines.

If departments develop workload policies, they will follow the process that follows:

- 2.1. Each department will ensure that a representative group of faculty are involved in developing the policy: the group will also include the faculty supervisor (or designee).
- 2.2. Department policies will be developed within six (6) months (excluding summer) of the group's formation.
- 2.3. Department guidelines will be shared with department faculty and given time for review and comment. Department operating papers will determine whether or not a vote is required.
- 2.4. The dean (or designee) and Provost will review and approve the policies, although revisions may be required prior to each level of approval.
- 2.5. Once approved, the guidelines must be dated with an effective date and posted (e.g., to ShareDrive, Digital Commons, etc.) for faculty access).

3. Process for Workload Resolution Committee

- 3.1. If a faculty member disagrees with workload assignment for a given semester, they will submit a formal appeal no later than 5 days prior to the start of a semester to the chair of the college Workload Resolution Committee.
- 3.2. Within 5 days of receiving the appeal, the chair of the college committee will convene the Workload Resolution Committee to review the appeal and the chair will issue a written recommendation to the dean.

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- 3.3. The dean (or designee) will issue a written determination within 5 days of receiving the written recommendation from the chair of the college Workload Resolution Committee.
- 3.4. Within 5 days of receiving the written recommendation from the chair of the Workload Resolution Committee, if disagreement remains, the faculty member may submit a written request for review by the Provost (or designee).
- 3.5. For Clinical Faculty, within 5 days of receiving the written recommendation from the chair of the Workload Resolution Committee, the faculty member may submit a written request for review by the Provost (or designee). The Provost will consult with the Vice President of Clinical Affairs regarding Clinical Faculty.
- 3.6. The Provost will review the recommendation of the dean, the college Workload Resolution Committee, and the Vice President of Clinical Affairs, if applicable, to provide a written decision within five (5) days of receiving the written request from the faculty member. The Provost's decision is final.

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Applicable Forms and Websites

N/A

Authority and Revisions

Authority: TCA § 49-8-203, et seq.

Previous Policy: Definitions of Faculty and Types of Appointments

The ETSU Board of Trustees is charged with policy making pursuant to TCA § 49-8-203, et seq. On March 24, 2017, the Board delegated its authority to ETSU's President to establish certain policies and procedures for educational programs and other operations of the University, including this policy. The delegation of authority and required process for revision to this policy can be found on the [Policy Development and Rule Making Policy webpage](#).

To suggest a revision to this policy, please contact the responsible official indicated in this policy. Before a substantive change to the policy section may take effect, the requested changes must be: (1) approved by the responsible office; (2) reviewed by the Office of University Counsel for legal sufficiency; (3) posted for public comment; (4) approved by either Academic Council or University Council; and (5) approved by ETSU's President.