Discussion Paper: Faculty Workloads in Science

DRAFT: 12 September 2016

Introduction

One of two overarching emphases in the University of Regina 2015-2020 Strategic Plan is Sustainability: a “commitment to sustainability is critical to ensure institutional and societal longevity into the future.” While it is true that faculty members are appointed on the basis of the potential they demonstrate for research and teaching, developed and sustained over a 30- or 40-year period, it is also true that as academic staff progress through their careers, their talents, professional skills, and interests evolve in a variety of ways. Further, with the rapidly changing academic work environment, which in recent years includes the teaching of larger numbers of undergraduate and graduate students, increased competition for declining pools of research funding, and the expectation of increased contributions to institutional and community service, it is neither realistic nor practical to assume that every person will perform his or her duties as an academic in a uniformly excellent manner, year after year. Inevitably, some individuals gravitate to certain aspects of an academic’s work, while perhaps contributing less to other aspects.

The purpose of this document is to acknowledge the reality of the present-day university climate, and to initiate a discussion of how to achieve a workload balance for individual faculty members that achieves two goals simultaneously:

1. permits academic units to effectively fulfill, over the long term, their mission and obligations with respect to teaching, research, and service; and
2. permits all academic staff members to continue to be productive and valued contributors to their university community.

The workloads of Instructors and Laboratory Instructors are relatively stable and uniform in comparison to the workloads of Lecturers, Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, and Professors. For this reason, the present document is meant to apply to the faculty ranks only.

To frame the discussion, the present document draws from the URFA Collective Agreement 2014-2017 and the Faculty of Science Criteria Documents (2014).

Article 16.1 of the Collective Agreement 2014-2017 asserts that the duties of a faculty member shall normally include:

- teaching and related duties
- scholarship, research, and creative or equivalent professional activities
- service
In the Faculty of Science, teaching (and related duties) and service are requirements of all faculty ranks. Research, scholarship, or equivalent professional activities are requirements for the professorial ranks.

The expectations of faculty members in teaching, research, and service are to be found in the Science Criteria Document for Faculty Members. In particular, Article 4.2 of the Science Criteria Document for Faculty Members, a “prolonged absence (3 years or more) of peer-reviewed publications will be interpreted to indicate research inactivity and assigned duties will be adjusted to reflect the absence of research activity.”

General Principles in Assigning Workload

Article 16.3 of the Collective Agreement 2014-2017 addresses the assignment of duties, with intention of creating transparency that will
- allow faculty members to determine whether their share of the obligations is equitable in light of the contributions they make relative to other members
- allow the duties of members to vary over time in such a manner that other members understand the rationale for differences in the array and mix of duties
- ensure that the numerous factors involved, as listed in 16.1, are considered in the array and mix of duties for members

The Faculty of Science will adopt the following principles in assigning workload:
- that there be an equitable distribution of the work of an academic unit among academic staff members in the unit
- that decisions on workload allocation be transparent
- that decisions on workload allocation be free of bias (gender, racial, discipline-related)
- that a redistribution of duties would come about as a response to a long-term trend in a faculty member’s work profile, or in response to a request of the faculty member
- that all aspects of the academic work (teaching, research, service) be recognised and valued
- that annual performance evaluation will be based on assigned duties, so that a faculty member, regardless of his or her workload, will be evaluated fairly and would have equal opportunity for career growth
- that the work allocated to a faculty member be enriching and rewarding
- that the workload allocation among academic staff reflects the overall mission of the academic unit and the University

Although the Collective Agreement 2014-2017 allows for the redistribution of duties on a case by case basis, the overriding reasons for the present document are:
  (a) to make the assignment of workload transparent, equitable, and consistent;
  (b) to come to an understanding of workload profiles through a collegial process; and
  (b) to clarify the expectations of faculty members in carrying out their responsibilities.

Therefore, the objective of the present document is to provide clarity and direction for the assignment of duties of faculty members.
Workload Profiles

In each of the workload profiles below, it is understood that all three of teaching, research (or equivalent scholars activities), and service are expectations of those faculty members in the professorial ranks. With this understanding, the teaching-focused workload is not a teaching-only workload, nor is the research-focused workload a research-only workload, for those faculty members in the professorial ranks.

Balanced Workload
A faculty member has a balanced workload if he or she:

• is active in research (in the manner defined by Article 4.2 of the Criteria Document),
• has attracted external research funding during the last three years, and
• has supervised to completion, as the primary supervisor or co-supervisor, at least one thesis-based University of Regina graduate student within the last five years

The balanced workload consists of:

• a normal load, relative to the normal teaching loads in the Department
• the supervision of thesis-based graduate students
• the supervision of undergraduate research students, if applicable
• the supervision of postdoctoral researchers, if applicable
• the supervision of laboratory personnel, if applicable
• institutional service contributions, as per Department expectations and needs
• community or professional service

Teaching-Focused Workload
A faculty member has a teaching-focused workload if he or she:

• is at the rank of Lecturer, or
• has not supervised to completion, as the primary supervisor or co-supervisor, at least one thesis-based University of Regina graduate student within the last five years

The teaching-focused workload consists of:

• an augmented teaching load (by one or more courses), relative to the normal teaching loads in the Department
• supervision of thesis-based graduate students, if applicable
• supervision of undergraduate research students, if applicable
• institutional service contributions, as per Department expectations and needs
• community or professional service
Research-Focused Workload

A faculty member has a research-focused workload if he or she:

- holds a research chair (e.g., Canada Research Chair, NSERC Industrial Chair), or
- holds a major research award (Killam Fellowship, Fulbright Scholar, NSERC Steacie Award)

The research-focused workload consists of:

- the supervision of thesis-based graduate students
- the supervision of undergraduate research students, if applicable
- the supervision of postdoctoral researchers, if applicable
- the supervision of laboratory personnel, if applicable
- a reduced teaching load (by one or more courses), relative to the normal teaching loads in the Department
- institutional service contributions, as per Department expectations and needs
- professional service

New-Faculty Workload

A faculty member has a new-faculty workload if he or she:

- holds a tenure-track appointment, but has not yet been awarded tenure

The new-faculty workload consists of:

- a normal teaching load, which is reduced by one or more courses in the first year of the appointment
- the establishment of an independent research program
- supervision of thesis-based graduate students, if applicable
- supervision of undergraduate research students, if applicable
- service contributions

Normal Teaching Loads by Department

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>normal 1-year course load</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry &amp; Biochemistry</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics &amp; Statistics</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tbody>
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The table above reports on the normal course load in terms of lecture-based courses or courses accepted as equivalent in workload by the Department Head and Dean. Although graduate-student supervision is an important form of teaching, as it involves significant scientific mentorship, this form of teaching is accounted for separately.
Assigning Workloads

Article 82 of the University of Regina Act indicates that the authority in assigning workload to faculty members rests with the dean of the faculty, whereas Article 83 states that the details of the individual assignments (courses, committees, etc) is the responsibility of department heads.

Workload Assignment Principles
• It is understood that the workload of a faculty member evolves and changes naturally over time
• It is understood that parental leaves, medical leaves, and so forth, may delay the completion and/or publication of research, and that certain research work may require more than three years to complete
• The Dean, in consultation with the Department Heads, assigns the initial workload designations to individual faculty members, and over time these designations are likely to change as the careers and career-interests of faculty members evolve
• Individual faculty members may request a change in their workload designation by submitting a formal written request to the Dean, copied to the Department Head
• No specific workload designation is superior to another; workload designations merely take advantages of particular strengths and interests in certain aspects of an academic’s work life

The exact nature of the designated workloads of an individual faculty member shall be the responsibility of the Department Head of the faculty member’s academic unit.

Deciding on workload allocation is not intended to be an annual task; rather, workload allocations should be addressed as the need arises, or at the instigation of the faculty member, a department head, or the Dean.

Decisions or recommendations on workload will not be the purview of the Faculty Review Committee.

Performance Review and Career Growth

Performance reviews and career-growth decisions will take into account the particular workload allocation of individual faculty members so that performance evaluation is fair and equitable.

Factors to Consider in Assigning Workload

Teaching
• expertise of faculty member
• number of students in a class, and the numbers of students taught over a two-year period
• TA/marking support for a class
• teaching technology supports/requirements
• course management supports/requirements
• out-of-class contact hours (office hours, laboratory, tutorials)
• newness of a course to the faculty member
• development of new courses and materials
• course coordination responsibilities for multi-sectioned courses
• frequency of teaching particular class
• contributions to directed readings, seminar supervision
• graduate supervision

Research
• level of graduate-student supervision
• level of postdoctoral supervision
• level of external professional service
• special time-sensitive research activities

Service
• equitability in distribution of institutional service among academic staff
• level of external professional service

Consultation History
18 August 2016: Dean’s Executive Committee
23 August 2016: Dean’s Executive Committee & Science Strategic Planning Group
19 September 2016: Faculty of Science Council

Next Steps
• Consider the impacts on the Faculty Review process and the Faculty of Science Criteria Document, if the proposed workload allocation profiles were adopted
• Continue to analyse to human-resource needs of the six Science departments with respect to research and (undergraduate and graduate) education