

9 May 2006

# UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

## Office of Academic Affairs

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## GUIDELINES FOR JOB DESCRIPTIONS TENURE-STREAM FACULTY

The following guidelines evolved through discussions between college deans and the Office of Academic Affairs, with input from department heads and others, during Spring Semester 2006. The guidelines are in response to Action Item 94 of the 2004 Academic Plan:

**Action Item 94 (standardize the metrics for faculty job descriptions).** *The Office of Academic Affairs will assure standard job-description metrics for teaching, research, advising, service, extension, and administration. Fundamental to this effort will be three premises. First, each three-credit course taught represents 25 percent of a full-time workload for the semester. Second, to encourage interdisciplinary instruction, we must recognize and provide incentives for faculty who participate in creative and non-traditional course delivery, such as team teaching, small groups, and independent study. Third, systems for gauging faculty performance should allow for reasonable flexibility and should avoid false precision and over-reliance on attempts to quantify inherently complex and multidimensional professional commitments.*

The premises listed below incorporate those called for in the action item and provide guidance on flexible and judicious application of the table that follows.

Faculty positions are among the most important resources at the university, in part because of the extraordinary talent, expertise, and professional commitment required to be a successful faculty member. Deans and department heads have a responsibility to assign faculty duties in a fashion that best matches this talent, expertise, and commitment to the needs and mission of the institution.

### Premises

1. **Common metric.** A job description of 100 percent teaching is equivalent to a teaching load of 12 credits/semester for a faculty member on an academic-year appointment. In practice, all tenure- or extended-term-track employees have duties other than teaching, so the utility of this assertion is mainly to establish a common metric for job descriptions. Teaching employees on fiscal-year appointments typically have specific responsibilities — such as administration or extension — during the summer months. The college dean is responsible for assigning these summer responsibilities, which may include teaching beyond that associated with the academic year assignment.
2. **Performance evaluation.** The job description per se does not indicate the quality of a faculty member's work, which requires separate evaluation. Instead, the job description indicates the appropriate weighting for various types of work. There is no expectation that all units will adopt highly precise or numerical ratings of performance. However, all methods of performance evaluation should, at least, clearly distinguish between performance that meets or exceeds expectations and performance that falls below expectations.
3. **Changes in job descriptions.** Job descriptions may change during the course of a faculty member's career, with approval from the department head and dean. One justification for a change may be to capitalize on a faculty member's strengths, by changing the relative weights assigned to different types of work. There are at least three caveats here. First, department heads and deans have the

9 May 2006

authority and responsibility to ensure that job descriptions are consistent with institutional needs. Second, it is poor judgment to assign heavily lopsided job descriptions to pre-tenure faculty members, who need opportunities to demonstrate, in a few short years, proficiency in all dimensions of the department's mission. Third, it is inappropriate to hide poor teaching or scholarship using the job description. *The university expects all faculty members to be capable and accomplished in teaching, scholarship, and service.*

4. **Administrative assignments.** Running a large academic department is on average a half-time job. This metric should temper any allowances assigned to faculty members who do other types of administrative work. Excessive administrative assignments bear tangible costs: they effectively increase the fraction of the university's budget absorbed by administration, thereby reducing the budgets for teaching and scholarship.
5. **Averaging.** Owing to the variable pace of research, scholarship, student advising (including mentoring of student organizations), service, and other responsibilities, job descriptions are best expressed in terms of averages over, say, a two-year period. For example, a faculty member whose responsibilities include teaching six credits/semester need not teach six credits every semester; a teaching assignment involving seven credits in three successive semesters followed by one three-credit semester would suffice.
6. **Undue precision.** Credits are an imperfect measure of the work required to teach a course. For example, for a three-credit course, a faculty member's actual workload may depend on (a) how many times he or she has taught the course before, (b) the number of students in the course, (c) the nature of the exercises that must be graded, (d) the level of the course, (e) whether the material is directly in the instructor's area of expertise, (f) method of course delivery, (g) significant involvement with laboratory and similar experiences, and other factors. (Teaching through Outreach is not a separate category of endeavor: it should be integrated into the faculty member's contributions to teaching.) It is not realistic to quantify all of these factors precisely. Instead, managing the associated workload discrepancies requires versatility and adaptivity on the part of faculty members.
7. **Versatility.** The university attaches strong value to faculty members' intellectual versatility. Developing and teaching new courses are neither signs of pathology to be discouraged by colleagues nor unusual burdens that require extra compensation. They are natural parts of a vibrant academic career. However, new faculty members face special challenges in this respect. Faculty members inevitably face several new course preparations in their pre-tenure years, so their department heads should guard against overstressing versatility at the expense of other expectations.
8. **New faculty members.** College deans have the flexibility to offer temporarily reduced teaching assignments to faculty members early in their tenure-track careers. Deans may delegate these decisions to department heads (or their equivalents) but retain responsibility for college-level oversight. Judicious implementation is critical here: lengthy delays in assigning full teaching responsibilities may handicap a tenure candidate with a sparse and unconvincing teaching record, at the same time proving to college- and university-level administrators that the department has teaching resources to spare. Consistency in application is equally important: entering faculty members with similar backgrounds facing similar expectations in a department should receive similar treatment.
9. **Graduate education.** Involvement in graduate-student supervision — especially in research-oriented graduate supervision outside of formal courses — places substantial demands on faculty members, in addition to those associated with teaching for credit. The university values this type of education, whether or not it generates credits. Supervision of students in research doctoral projects is especially work-intensive, to a degree that simple analyses of student-credit-hour production often fail to capture. To accommodate the demands associated with this type of education, department heads and deans may reduce the formal classroom teaching expected of faculty members who regularly supervise research graduate degree projects. However, the mere fact that a faculty member belongs to a Ph.D.-granting department is not sufficient reason to reduce the formal classroom teaching responsibilities.

9 May 2006

10. **Released time.** Faculty members may secure external funding that enables them temporarily to replace some of their normal teaching responsibilities and to absorb more research responsibilities. An appropriate replacement rate is 1/8 of the academic-year salary per three-credit course. Department heads typically use some or all of these funds to pay for replacement teaching. However, no tenured or tenure-track faculty member should expect to replace all teaching responsibilities. Doing so effectively isolate faculty members' research and creative activities from the institution's teaching mission.
11. **Service.** All faculty members have some obligation to the university's service mission. This mission includes many of the activities associated with governance: hiring, tenure and promotion, Faculty Senate, and other work. It also includes work with student organizations and other activities that enhance students' engagement. And there are many other types of service. However, service responsibilities should constitute no more than five or 10 percent of faculty job descriptions. Many activities commonly regarded as service — such as curricular committees, oversight of research infrastructure, scholarly refereeing, teaching evaluation, the management of large research grants, contributions to professional societies, and other activities — are better characterized as elements of a complete portfolio of contributions to teaching or research. For this reason, as important as classroom instruction and refereed publication may be, faculty members who limit their teaching and scholarship to these activities should not expect to receive the highest performance evaluations.
12. **Other dimensions.** For many faculty members, the most important balance in the job description will be between teaching and research. For this reason, the table below indexes teaching responsibilities against expected contributions to research and creative activity. In some cases, a faculty member may have other responsibilities — such as significant administrative duties, cooperative extension,, field-experience supervision, or clinical duties — that bear consideration. In such a case, the department head, with the approval of the college dean, may account for these other responsibilities in developing the faculty member's overall job description. In this arena good judgment is essential: faculty members rarely have administrative duties comparable to those of a department head, and the assignment of extension percentages to faculty members in Agriculture should, in aggregate, reflect the average percentage of faculty salaries paid through the federal portion of the budget and its state-funded matching amount — about 22 percent at this writing.
13. **Consulting and work for supplementary pay.** Consulting and work for supplementary pay (such as summer school teaching for extra salary) are not substitutes for the work associated with the job description. They are activities undertaken in addition to a faculty member's normal responsibilities. There is no intent here to diminish the positive effects that these activities can have on a faculty member's professional life and expertise.

9 May 2006

**Guidelines for teaching responsibilities\***

<b>Profile</b>	<b>Classroom teaching responsibility</b>	<b>Other teaching-related responsibilities</b>
Research and creative activity sustain currency in discipline and innovation in teaching	16-18 credits/AY	Teaching duties also encompass usual undergrad advising and curriculum development activities, for example
More vigorous research and creative activity in addition to contributions to baccalaureate education, but little significant involvement in graduate education	14-15 credits/AY	Teaching duties also encompass usual undergraduate advising and curriculum development, including development of new courses and curricula, for example
Consistently vigorous research and creative activity, contributions to baccalaureate education, plus significant involvement in graduate education and supervision	12-13 credits/AY	Teaching duties also encompass advising, with substantive emphasis on both undergraduate and graduate student advising, undergraduate and graduate curriculum development, and supervision of theses and dissertations, for example
Consistently vigorous research and creative activity, with significant involvement and accomplishments in graduate education, especially doctoral education, plus substantial additional responsibilities	9-10 credits/AY	Teaching duties also encompass advising, with more emphasis on graduate student advising, graduate and undergraduate curriculum development, and thesis supervision with an emphasis on Ph.D. production, for example
Consistently vigorous research and creative activity; significant involvement and accomplishments in graduate education, especially doctoral education. Research expectations require obtaining and managing large amounts of external funding to support technical staff, post docs, and others.	6-7 credits/AY	Teaching duties also encompass advising, with more emphasis on grad student advising, grad and undergrad curriculum development, and thesis supervision with an emphasis on Ph.D. production, and mentorship of lab and other technical assistants, for example

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\* This table is a set of guidelines, not a strict formula. In applying these guidelines to specific faculty members' job descriptions, it is important to recognize that (1) all job descriptions are subject to the constraints imposed by institutional needs and (2) the premises listed above take precedence over any formulaic interpretation of the table.