

School of Health and Human Sciences Course Release Policy

The purpose of this document is to clarify the conditions under which faculty in the School of Health and Human Sciences (HHS) may be granted course releases during the academic year to engage in responsibilities related to research, service and directed professional activity. **In all cases, course releases must be approved by the Department Chair and Dean or designee.**

COURSE RELEASE ELIGIBILITY

Faculty eligibility

All HHS full-time faculty are eligible for possible course releases. That is, the nature/intensity/timing of the work, and the availability of resources to cover instructional needs, not the nature of the faculty appointment dictates whether a release may be granted.

Eligible roles

The following are a list of roles/situations in which faculty may be eligible for course releases:

- Releases built in to start up packages for new faculty to initiate research programs and/or prepare for P & T review; these are negotiated at the time of hire, thus much of the below content does not apply to these.
- Grant/contract-supported release time. Typically, 10% to 15% of faculty time must be funded by the grant to request a course release. Effective July 1, 2024, 10% is the norm for a 3 credit hour course and 13% to 14% is the norm for a 4 credit hour course. This request is typically made at the time of grant submission and must be approved by the Department Chair and Associate Dean for Research. Additional details about grant-funded course releases are available [here HHS Guidelines for Determining Faculty Effort on Externally Funded Projects.](#)
- Research Assignments awarded by the Provost's Office (availability is dependent on unit level resources)
- Formal administrative appointments made by the Dean including Department Chair, Center, Institute or Clinic Director, Graduate Program Directors, Directors of Undergraduate Studies, or other administrative posts that further the mission of HHS **may** include course release(s). The intensity of the role dictates whether course release(s) will be granted. These details will be provided in writing and agreed upon by all parties at the time a role is undertaken. In rare instances, this may be renegotiated if the role changes in intensity or scope or if department/school resources are reduced and a course release cannot be supported financially.
- University-level administrative appointments awarded by the Provost, Chancellor or other central administration offices; examples may include Research Network Directors, Faculty Senate Chair, IRB Chair, Faculty Fellows, etc.

Typically ineligible roles

- Service to professional organizations or journals (e.g., leadership positions, editorships) unless the organization provides appropriate financial support that covers the faculty member's salary and effort. In such cases, the Dean or Dean's designee should be involved in the negotiations with the outside entity and the principles that guide course releases for externally funded research should be followed such that paid effort should align with true effort and the timing of that effort.
- Service to a department, community, local board, or organization. In such cases, faculty will need to request an exception (see below). They must justify how these types of commitments contribute to community engaged scholarship, research, or teaching at UNCG and how coverage will be substituted.

PROCESS TO SEEK APPROVAL

Meeting instructional needs is at the heart of the mission of the university. Altering course offerings and/or identifying alternate instructors for courses to support course releases requires advance planning. To protect all involved the following procedures should be followed:

- Final approval for any of the below is provided by the Dean or Dean's designee.
- When course releases are tied to positions or funding that require applications (i.e., grants/contracts, Faculty Fellow positions, journal editorships), faculty must initiate a conversation and seek approval from their Department Chair at the time of application. For grant/contract submissions, this is a standard part of the internal routing system via Cayuse SP and approvals from the Department Chair and Dean/designee are captured in that system. **For other applications, the faculty member bears the responsibility of seeking support from the Department Chair who would then seek approval from the Dean.** All parties should document the request and the response in writing; emails are sufficient for this purpose. Faculty should also alert the Department Chair as they receive news about the likelihood of being selected for the grant/position (e.g., grant score in the fundable range; selected for a short list) to facilitate advance planning.
- When faculty funded effort from separate grants/contracts accumulates to 10.0% or higher, faculty may request a course release from their chair. Ideally, such requests will be made 2 months prior to the onset of the semester in which the release will be requested to increase the likelihood that department chairs can identify appropriate alternate instructors and be in a position to grant the request.
- If faculty are offered positions/roles that require a course release with little advance notice, they must alert their Department Chair immediately. **Faculty may not accept the position/role and affiliated course release without the approval of their Department Chair and Dean to ensure the instructional mission of the department will not be compromised.**
- Faculty may be asked to assist the Department Chair in identifying possible alternate instructors based on their content knowledge and community connections, particularly if there is a short time frame.
- If a faculty member is denied a course release for an eligible role and believes a strong case may be made to justify the release, they may bring it to the attention of the Dean for final resolution.

PETITION FOR EXCEPTIONS

All faculty are expected to engage in service activities as part of their standard workload. In certain cases, the workload of a faculty member may contain a level of service to the institution that clearly and substantially exceeds this norm. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Serving as associate department chair if duties are substantial (funds for course coverage must come from the department)
- Taking on primary role of preparing for program/accreditation reviews if not part of workload

Petitions may be made in advance by Department Chairs for specific roles they intend to fill in the department or by faculty members. Petitions should typically be filed prior to April 1 to facilitate workload planning for the coming academic year. The petition must include the following:

1. Detailed justification for the course release(s)
2. The expected term of the course release is 1 year.
3. A summary of how the department will offset the instructional needs during the course release period which may include reassigning courses to other instructors, paying part-time instructors, paying doctoral students to teach for a stipend, etc. Care must be taken to demonstrate the instructional mission of the department and generation of credit hours will not be undermined.

FUNDING FOR COURSE RELEASES

All course releases must have a documented funding source (e.g., grant/contract, Provost's Office, Dean's Office, Department). Course releases granted through the petition process outlined in section C shall have a funding source noted in the petition. The amount of funding needed for course releases varies depending on the role and the nature of the courses requiring alternate instructors.

Internal roles

When faculty course releases are tied to internal roles funded by the University, there must be sufficient funds to cover the cost of instructional needs (e.g., to pay an adjunct or graduate instructor). Depending on the source of funds, fringe may also be required; this can be clarified by the HHS Assistant Dean for Academic Administration. If the role that necessitated a course release extends into summer and summer salary is involved, particularly if it crosses fiscal years, payment details should be confirmed with the HHS Assistant Dean for Academic Administration to ensure needed payments are processed correctly and to ensure that maximum summer salary has not been breached.

External roles/sources of funding

When faculty course releases are tied to external roles/sources of funding, there must be sufficient funds to cover the faculty member's actual time commitment including salary and fringe benefits. Typically, 10.0% to 15% of faculty effort plus fringe must be funded by the external entity to justify a course release. The HHS Office of Research verifies funding/payments tied to external grants/contracts. Payment arrangements via any other external source should be vetted by the HHS Assistant Dean for Academic Administration to ensure needed payments are processed correctly.