



## Course Release/Buyout Policy

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**First Adopted: March 2014**

**Revision History: December 2020**

### Definitions

- **Course Release:** A “release” from a portion of the teaching load that is expected as part of an individual’s position and contracted expectations. The cost of a release is covered by the department or program.
- **Course Buyout:** A “buyout” from a portion of the teaching load that is expected as part of an individual’s position and contracted expectations. The cost of a buyout is covered by other funds (e.g., grant, other university unit) that support a specific scope of work other than teaching.

### Eligibility

Faculty (including tenured/tenure-track, P&A, and contract faculty) may request to reduce their teaching loads in ways consistent with their job descriptions (e.g., for research or personnel preparation grant work).

### Guiding Principles and Expectations

Requests to reduce teaching loads will not necessarily be approved. Because offering coherent and robust educational programs is very important and is central to the mission of the college and university, course buyouts require first the approval of the appropriate program coordinator and then approval by the department chair. There needs to be a balance between interests of individual faculty and interests of programs; course buyouts may not be allowed if they prevent the educational program from offering the range of coursework that students need. In such instances, alternative arrangements will need to be made; for example, using the release time money to provide a teaching assistant or research assistant to support the faculty member, or even a co-instructor. The means of fitting the additional work into the program will be negotiated with the chair and program coordinator.

For activities and duties that are viewed as benefitting the unit, college, and/or university and that are seen as part of the work of faculty in a research university, such as research or training grants, administrative duties, and significant external disciplinary service, course release should be seen as consistent with our mission and goals, and typically the approval process will be simple. For other duties (e.g., teaching outside the department or shifting effort elsewhere within the university or outside the university); however, approval should not be expected, and an extraordinary case will need to be made in order to be released from a course.

For regular faculty who are teaching in the department and do not have substantial reallocation of effort such as major administrative duties (e.g., central administrator, any level of dean, chair, college-wide center director) or division of effort across units (e.g., split appointments across departments or with centers), the minimum course expectation is one course of three or more credits each semester. [This is not a rule, but an expectation, and should not limit chairs from making exceptions where warranted.]

Effort that is associated with a sponsored project (i.e., grant) often requires effort beyond what is budgeted in the project (e.g., proposal preparation, reporting to the sponsor, dissemination). This effort is usually seen as part of the work of faculty at a research university. Effort that is included within the sponsored project represents an allocation of the faculty member’s institutional base salary and cannot exceed 100% of their available time within a year. Therefore, consistent with federal policy (uniform guidance) and tax codes, sponsored funding is not “extra pay” for effort above and beyond the faculty member’s contracted 100% effort. That said, for faculty members who are not on 12-month contracted appointments, sponsored funding may be used to pay for effort outside of their contracted appointment (e.g., summer). Every effort should be made to structure the budget for the sponsored project to reflect when effort/work is actually taking place in alignment with project activities (e.g., 10% effort during the academic year and 15% effort during the summer). Effort on a sponsored project during the academic year may be used to request a course buyout based on the requirements below.



## Course release/buyout requirements

- First buyout (middle column of the table below) is determined by the number of credits of the course the faculty member wishes to buyout from teaching (e.g., 3-credit course release/buyout each academic year = 10% of the faculty member’s salary/fringe)
- Each subsequent buyout (right column of the table below) is also determined by the number of credits of the course the faculty member wishes to buyout from teaching (e.g., 3-credit course release/buyout requires = 15% of the faculty member’s salary/fringe)
- Exceptions: For Assistant Professors, only 10% will be needed for subsequent course buyouts. For personnel preparation/leadership training grants, the buyout rate may be negotiated with the chair.
- For faculty whose salary is 100% guaranteed and funded by departmental O&M funds, if there is additional effort paid by a sponsored project that exceeds what is needed to meet the policies above (10%/15% time for course buyout, other support where courses are not released), the funds associated with that additional effort that would have been paid by departmental O&M funds as part of the faculty member’s contracted time will be divided among the faculty member (50%), program area (25%), and EPSY (25%) into a “release account” to be used at their respective discretion.

Buyouts for courses will be prorated as follows:

Number of credits	First buyout	Subsequent buyouts
1	3.33%	5.00%
2	6.67%	10.00%
3	10.00%	15.00%
4	13.33%	20.00%
5	16.67%	25.00%
6	20.00%	30.00%

Each year, faculty who seek to reduce their teaching loads need to request approval from the program coordinator and chair. Please see the form titled Request for Reduction to Teaching Load found on the Ed Psych Intranet site: <https://sites.google.com/umn.edu/edpsych/research-and-grants/course-release-buyouts>. This form should be completed by March 1st to inform instructional planning for the next academic year and then as soon as possible thereafter as new awards are received. Note that whether requests are approved after March 1st will be highly dependent on whether alternative course coverage arrangements can be made. In addition, if the request is approved, the faculty member must work with the program coordinator and chair to determine which course(s) they buyout of teaching to ensure programmatic instructional needs can still be met.