

FAQ on Teaching Positions at IU

What does it mean to be teaching faculty at a research university?

At Indiana University, we recognize that the perfect balance between teaching and research is difficult to find in individual faculty. As a result, we hire and cultivate both research faculty and teaching faculty. Both types of faculty are expected to participate in both activities, but our goal is to value and reward excellence for faculty who choose to specialize in **either** teaching or research. We recognize, however, that not all of our peer institutions value teaching as much as they do research, and so feel it is important to communicate to potential teaching faculty hires the many ways in which our teaching positions are unique — and, we believe, uniquely compelling.

First, a few important things that our teaching faculty positions are **not**:

- They are not temporary positions. As will be described in more detail below, teaching faculty are full faculty. They have a well-developed career path. Many of our teaching faculty spend their entire careers at Indiana University, by choice and quite happily.
- They are not limited **only** to teaching. Many of our teaching faculty continue to work on their research, or embark on new avenues of research related to their pedagogy. All of them participate in departmental leadership and faculty governance. Their activities and careers are as diverse and varied as those of our research faculty.
- These are not stepping stones to tenure-track research positions. Our teaching faculty are respected for their decision to invest in different skills from our research faculty, and are rewarded for different types of accomplishments. And since we do not consider teaching positions to be “lesser” than research positions, we do not treat teaching positions as anything other than a fully-recognized faculty position.
- These are not tenured positions. But while teaching faculty do not have tenure (and therefore do not have to submit themselves to the vagaries of the tenure process), they do have other forms of job security.

How are teaching faculty positions structured?

At Indiana University, there are three ranks of teaching faculty: lecturers, senior lecturers, and teaching professors. Teaching faculty are part of a larger group of non-tenure track faculty that includes as well professors of practice, clinical faculty, and academic specialists. All told, at Indiana University, non-tenured faculty make up about one-quarter of the overall faculty.

The defining characteristic of teaching faculty is their focus on pedagogy. Whereas research faculty are expected to spend 40% of their time on teaching, for teaching faculty this expectation is 70%.¹ In practice, this translates into a 3-3 course load. For many faculty, this course load will include multiple sections of the same course, which means that a 3 course/semester load does not always involve three separate course preparations. The majority of our teaching faculty focus on undergraduate education, but some teach in our masters and professional programs, and those with

¹ The other expectations are service (20%) and research (10%). Research in this context often means pedagogical research, and does not necessarily involve publication. Conferences and other forms of professional development often form a key part of our teaching faculty's research portfolio.

PhDs do teach doctoral students.

The vast majority of our teaching faculty are hired at the rank of lecturer. The initial appointment is a three-year probationary period (which is also true for research faculty), with the expectation that after six years they will come up for promotion to senior lecturer. The promotion process for teaching faculty is handled by the departments, and is an open and transparent process that includes the protections and university-level oversight available to all IU faculty.

For some faculty, the promotion to senior lecturer will be the final step in their professional development (at least in terms of their job title). However, Indiana University now offers the rank of “teaching professor,” which includes its [own set of responsibilities and benefits](#).

What does success look like for teaching faculty?

Whether or not you decide to pursue the rank of “teaching professor,” by the time you achieve the rank of senior lecturer, you will have achieved a stable and well-paying career. At Indiana University, teaching faculty are hired on three year rolling contracts, which means that, even if there is a problem (or a perceived problem), instructors have three years to work with their departments and chairs to resolve the issue before it would result in termination. Teaching faculty are protected not only by the structure of their contracts (and, at the moment, the IU faculty council is considering extending these to five-year rolling contracts) as well as by the series of university grievance and appeals processes that are available to all faculty. Yes, it is true that this is not quite the same as tenure, but as we have seen, at most universities tenure is not the protection that it once was. In the department of Informatics, there has never been a teaching faculty member who has left for reasons other than personal choice — and teaching faculty currently comprise almost 30% of the Informatics faculty, and have done for many years. And while there are multiple research faculty who have not received tenure, there are no teaching faculty who have failed to achieve promotion.

As with all faculty, teaching faculty are reviewed each year, according to the expectations of their unique faculty role. They receive raises using the same processes and scale as research faculty. They can take on additional responsibilities for additional compensation. Many of our teaching faculty teach overload courses, either in the traditional semesters or over the summer. They can receive summer salary via grants. They receive an annual stipend for research equipment, travel, and/or professional development. They can negotiate for teaching release for course development, research, or in exchange for additional service responsibilities.

What are the unique benefits and opportunities associated with teaching faculty positions?

There are many academics who find teaching to be the most rewarding outlet for their scholarship and creative energy. For those people, a teaching faculty position can be the ideal way to focus on what they are most interested in and passionate about. What it comes down to most is how you want to spend your time. If you enjoy teaching, developing curriculum, or building up programs, a teaching faculty position will provide you the opportunity not only to pursue these interests, but to have your career success evaluated on the basis of these accomplishments (and not, as is too often the case for research faculty, despite them). For many research faculty, spending time on teaching is a professional risk; for teaching faculty, it is their primary responsibility.

What kinds of courses do teaching faculty teach?

For the most part, our teaching faculty focus on our undergraduate and professional programs. In particular, they specialize in our core curriculum, which includes a series of eight courses that all majors are required to take. That being said, there are plentiful opportunities for teaching faculty to offer upper-level courses, including courses that they develop around their own research and pedagogical interests. We have teaching faculty who teach courses in every aspect of our program, as well as special offerings such as study abroad courses. For example, the past few years we taught specialized courses that included week-long study abroad components in India, Ghana, and Disney World, all developed and run by teaching faculty.

If you are interested in learning more about our core curriculum, sample syllabi and schedules for all of these courses can be found in our [shared syllabi folder](#). If you are interested in the full range of Informatics offerings, the searchable registrar database can be found [here](#). For even more information, visit the [home page for the Informatics undergraduate program](#).