

## Course Release Guidance

**Objective:** The purpose of this policy is to provide clarity and equity around (a) how course releases are financially calculated at Hope College and (b) the number of course releases permitted from various sources.

Three main categories of allowable course releases are listed below:

1. Administrative assignment releases: Administrative assignment releases are granted to faculty for their service to the College in an administrative capacity. For example, Department Chairs and Program Directors are provided with course releases to reallocate their time to administrative duties. Other times, releases are provided for College-wide (e.g., Directing Senior Seminar) or external disciplinary service (e.g., professional organizational service).
2. Grant-funded research releases (course buy-out): Grant-funded research releases funded by external grants earned by faculty to reallocate their time to focus on research. For example, faculty PIs might include the cost of a course release in their grant proposal to allow them time to complete their funded research project.
3. Endowed chair or professor positions: Some endowed chair or professor positions receive course reductions in lieu of stipends.

### Cost of releases:

All course releases are calculated at the same rate. Based on a standard tenured/tenure-track faculty load of 24 workload hours, the following rates will be used:

|                  |   |                              |
|------------------|---|------------------------------|
| 1 workload hour  | = | 4.17% of salary, plus fringe |
| 2 workload hours | = | 8.33% of salary, plus fringe |
| 3 workload hours | = | 12.5% of salary, plus fringe |
| 4 workload hours | = | 16.67% of salary plus fringe |

Fringe: Calculated based on the faculty member's actual fringe benefit elections. Minimum rate would be 18.15%. Please consult OSRP for your current fringe benefit rate.

### Departmental funding:

1. Administrative assignment releases or endowed chair releases are either (a) absorbed by the faculty department, or (b) covered through the cost of hiring an adjunct faculty or paying another faculty member an Over and Above.
2. Externally-funded research releases (e.g., external grants) reassign time for scholarly activity. These releases pay the department the cost to cover the faculty member's

teaching. OSRP will handle these updates and communicate with HR and other relevant offices.

### **Release capacity:**

In a given academic year, faculty members may buy down to 50% of their teaching load credit from externally funded research releases. Administrative assignment or endowed chair releases may add on to these releases to permit additional reductions in teaching assignments. Deans will be responsible for tracking total reduction loads.

1. In order to preserve the time dedicated toward research and administrative duties, faculty who receive a course release cannot receive an over-and-above for work performed (e.g., to teach an additional course during that semester), with the exception of department chairs and program directors that are not on external funding. Exemptions to the receipt of over-and-above payment (which are not counted toward effort reporting) that would be allowable under this policy include (a) over-and-above payment for recognition (rather than additional work performed; e.g., recognition for being on a committee, award recognition, token of gratitude for being a speaker), (b) ProDev deposits (c) bonuses, and (d) endowed professorship payments.
2. Any combination of releases that exceed 50% of a faculty member's teaching load must receive Chair and Dean's approval, and are limited to 3 consecutive years, except in the case where one of these releases is an administrative release (e.g., Department Chair, Program Director), in which case a teaching reduction greater than a third would be limited to 1 year. Exceptions to this must be approved by the Dean and Provost.
3. For each year below 50% teaching load, one year of 50% or more teaching is expected (e.g., two years of 33% teaching is followed by two years of no greater than 50% teaching reductions).
4. Exceptions to these limits are subject to Provost's approval, at the recommendation of the Dean.

### **Examples:**

1. Consider a tenured/tenure-track faculty member who has a standard load of 24 workload hours and earned a grant that funded 3 workload hours of release time each year for two years. In addition, the faculty member is the Director of General Education, which comes with a 3 workload hour administrative assignment release per year. This faculty member would teach 12 workload hours per year during the course of the grant, receive 3 credits for sponsored research, 3 credits for General Education service, and 6 credits towards other research.

2. Consider a tenured/tenure-track faculty member who has a standard load of 24 workload hours and earned a large grant that funded 9 workload hours of release time each year for two years. In addition, the faculty member is a Department Chair, which comes with a 6 workload hours administrative assignment release per year. This faculty member would teach 3 workload hours per year during the course of the grant, with 9 devoted to grant activities, 6 to administrative duties, and the remaining 6 to other research activities. This would require Chair, Provost, and Dean approval, and it would be limited to 3 consecutive years. After these three years, when the grant is complete, the faculty member would need to return to a 50% or greater teaching load for at least three additional years.
3. Consider that an endowed professor making \$90,000 receives \$10,000 for her endowed professorship. She wishes to use the endowed money to pay for a course release. The endowed professor would need *at least* \$13,291 to pay for a release of 3 workload hours ( $12.5\% \text{ of } \$90,000 = \$11,250 \times 1.1815^* = \$13,291$ ). This faculty member could take a release during her second (and third) year(s) in the chairship, after having banked enough additional endowment funds.

*\*Minimum amount of fringe benefits required for a course release. Actual amount may vary; please consult OSRP for your current fringe benefit rate. Fringe benefits are assessed based on actuals at the time of the course release.*

## Appendix

### Definitions

**Student credit hour:** The amount of work necessary for a student to be awarded 1 unit of academic credit. Over the course of a semester or term, each credit hour consists of 45 hours of student work in some combination of direct and indirect instruction. Please see the updated Credit Hour policy approved by the [Academic Affairs Board](https://catalog.hope.edu/content.php?catoid=2&navoid=36) (<https://catalog.hope.edu/content.php?catoid=2&navoid=36>).

**Student contact hour:** The amount of time (in 50 minutes) that an instructor is providing synchronous (in person or on-line) direct instruction to a class of students.

**Workload credit:** The total amount of work a faculty member does in an academic year (Fall and Spring terms). The total amount expected of tenure/tenure track faculty is 24 workload hours in some combination of teaching load credit (TLC), research load credit (RLC), and administrative load credit (ALC). The total amount expected of non-tenure track faculty is 24 workload hours in some combination of TLC/RLC/ALC. The 24 workload hours does not include other contractual expectations such as service (as described in the Faculty Handbook).

**Teaching load credit (TLC):** The amount of work necessary for a faculty member to deliver student credit hours.

**Research load credit (RLC):** The amount of credit a faculty member performs, during academic semesters, as research, scholarship, or creative activity.

**Administrative load credit (ALC):** The amount of credit awarded for special administrative work performed by a faculty member, during academic semesters, above usual contractual expectations. Department chair work is the most common type of work assigned as ALC.

**Effective Date:** July 1, 2023