

Faculty Course Release and Course Buy-out

College of Built Environments
Dean's Office

Effective July 1, 2024

Purpose

To clarify the definition of course release and course buy-out, to describe the UW and CBE policy for course release and course buy-out, and to provide a procedure to coordinate approvals for faculty course release and course buy-out with research administration processes such as grant and contract proposal processes.

Definitions

Course buy-out: Releases from instruction granted to individual faculty members **in exchange for funding**, which the faculty member provides from non-state funded sources (such as grants, contracts, gifts, and service agreements), and which is used to pay for course instruction and administrative costs.

Course / instructional release: Any release from instruction for an individual faculty.

UW Policy

Policy for course release or course buy-out is usually handled at the unit level. There are several related UW policies related to instructional responsibility. Regarding grant-funded FTE, to comply with the expectations of funders and auditing standards, FTE allocated to any external grant must be based on the assessment of time needed to accomplish the scope of work and the distribution of that time across the year.

The [GIM 38 Faculty Reduced Responsibility Status Involving External Funding](#) policy discusses situations where faculty receive a portion of their salary support for their appointment through external funds, including grant funding.

Per the Instructional Responsibility Policy, departments, colleges, schools, and campuses may not adopt policies that relieve faculty of instructional responsibilities in quarters when they are supported by instructional funds. To meet the University's other responsibilities, it may be appropriate in exceptional situations for a faculty member to have no formal teaching assignment in a particular quarter and to have the load distributed across the remainder of the year. However, it is still expected that the faculty member would be available for student and other trainee mentorship and advising and for regular service-related activities. Each such exceptional

arrangement must be requested in advance by the department chair, director, or campus dean and approved by the dean or chancellor.

CBE Policy

This college policy applies across all of the departments within the College of Built Environments. Individual departments may have more detailed policies in addition to these stated here.

Course release will be based on several factors, and **may or may not involve reimbursement for course instruction and administrative costs**. A course release occurs when faculty are released from teaching responsibilities due to administrative work, appointment agreements (e.g., endowed chair), or grant awards that are specifically designed to free faculty time, as approved by the department chair.

Course buy-out is based on the availability of non-state funds to offset the instructional costs and state funding that supports the instructional time of the full-time faculty member.

Eligibility

- State-funded full-time faculty are eligible to negotiate course buy-outs with external non-state funding. Typical titles include tenure-track and teaching-track professors.

Timing

- Anticipated proposed course release and course buy-out should be discussed with the department chair or program director in the annual review process.
- For course buy-outs,
 - The proposed course buy-out should be discussed with the program director and department chair before developing the proposal, so the applicant can budget accordingly.
 - When external funding intended for course buy-out is received, the PI shall discuss the course buy-out with the chair to plan the timing of the buy-out.

Cost and allocation

- The calculation of course buy-out is based on annual FTE and the fully loaded rate salary. The calculation will be:

$$(\text{Salary}) * \% \text{ Teaching FTE} * \frac{\# \text{ of buy-out course credits}}{\text{Total course credits being taught by that faculty member}}$$

- The distribution of funds should align with the faculty's work on the project.

Procedure

Course Release

Plans for course release are most typically made during the faculty member's annual review and discussions of teaching loads for the upcoming year. Otherwise, course releases are discussed when the need and opportunity arise, and these course releases are made at the department chairs' or program directors' discretion.

Course Buy-out

Part I: Proposal process

It is recommended to have an informal discussion about course buy-out with the department chair or program director before proceeding with the formal process. Plans for proposed course buy-out should be discussed with the Chair or Program Director **before** developing the proposal budget for such awards.

- The PI and TRA review the funders' documentation to verify that course buy-out is an allowable expense for the project.
- The faculty member requesting the buy-out is expected to complete and submit a written request to include the following information:
 - Year, quarter, course name, reasons, capacity and source of funds, proposed auxiliary faculty (if any)
 - Proposed Budget Calculation (note: The PI and Team for Research Administration will work with the department chair and administration to determine the appropriate budget allocation of the proposed course buy-out. The calculation is shown above.)
 - History of other instructional releases or course buy-outs in the past 2-3 years
- The department chair or program director will review requests on a case-by-case basis and decide whether to approve.
- The department chair or program director sends written approval of the budget and course buy-out proposal to the PI and the TRA.
- The TRA incorporates this buy-out into the proposal budget.

Post-award Process

- When funding is received, the PI and the TRA should notify the department of the funding and the plan to proceed with the course buy-out as proposed.
- If the PI decides to make changes to the proposed course buy-out, they should use the same method to propose a change:
 - The faculty member who is requesting the course buy-out is expected to complete and submit a written request to include the following information:
 - Year, quarter, course name, reasons, capacity and source of funds, proposed auxiliary faculty (if any)
 - Proposed Budget calculation
 - History of other instructional releases or course buy-outs in the past 2-3 years
- Upon receiving the notice of award, the department chair or program director is responsible (with input from the department administrator) for the appointment of auxiliary faculty and negotiating salaries with them as applicable.

- The department administrator is responsible for overseeing the distribution process (per the above-stated policy).
- The department administrator is responsible for processing the appointment.
- The CBE dean's office may provide some oversight, as applicable about the hiring and/or cost of auxiliary faculty and may make recommendations concerning hires or salaries that tend to exceed the high range for our department, (considering the salary differences between departments, and between types of replacements such as grad students, PhDs, etc.)

Course Buy-out Request Form

Chairs+ Review Date: April 11 & 24, 2024

Councils Review Date: April 29 - May 17, 2024

Last Review Date: April 24, 2024

Updated: March 3, 2026

Dean's Office Contact:

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Discussion and Rationale

Synthesis of CBE comments

“The calculation of course buy-out is based on annual FTE and the fully loaded rate salary plus benefits.” [Calculation equation]

Comment: “Are we thinking of total credits for the whole year or for the quarter the faculty wants to buy out? And same for how long salary should be covered, whole year or just semester buyout is for. Below is an example with \$10k salary and a 3 credit buy out

Whole Year:

$\$10,000 \times 40\% \times (3 \text{ credits}/12 \text{ total credits for the year})$

\$1,000/month: \$9,000 for the year, less than 1 month FTE total

Per quarter:

$\$10,000 \times 40\% \times (3 \text{ credits}/3 \text{ credits})$

\$4,000/month: \$12,000 for the semester of buy out, more than 1 month FTE”

Response: We are thinking about it as an annual calculation.