

Due to concerns about COVID-19, the AAUP office has [transitioned to telework](#). Please contact staff by [email](#).

[LOGOUT](#)[JOIN](#)

Statement on Faculty Workload with Interpretive Comments

This statement was approved by the Association's Committee on Teaching, Research, and Publication in April 1968. It was adopted by the Association's Council in October 1969 and endorsed by the Fifty-sixth Annual Meeting.

Introduction

No single formula for an equitable faculty workload can be devised for all of American higher education. What is fair and works well in the community college may be inappropriate for the university, and the arrangement thought necessary in the technical institute may be irrelevant in the liberal arts college.

This is not to say, however, that excessive or inequitably distributed workloads cannot be recognized as such. In response to the many appeals received in recent years, therefore, this Association wishes to set forth such guidelines as can be applied generally, regardless of the special circumstances of the institution concerned:

1. A definition of maximum teaching loads for effective instruction at the undergraduate and graduate levels.
2. A description of the procedures that should be followed in establishing, administering, and revising workload policies.
3. An identification of the most common sources of inequity in the distribution of workloads.

Maximum Teaching Loads

In the American system of higher education, faculty "workloads" are usually described in hours per week of formal class meetings. As a measurement, this leaves much to be desired. It fails to consider other time-consuming institutional duties of the faculty member, and, even in terms of teaching, it misrepresents the true situation. The teacher normally spends far less time in the classroom than in preparation, conferences, grading of papers and examinations, and supervision of remedial or advanced student work. Preparation, in particular, is of critical importance, and is probably the most unremitting of these demands; not only preparation for specific classes or conferences, but that more general preparation in the discipline, by keeping up with recent developments and strengthening one's grasp on older materials, without which the faculty member will soon dwindle into ineffectiveness as scholar and teacher. Moreover, traditional workload formulations are at odds with significant current developments in education emphasizing independent study, the use of new materials and media, extracurricular and off-campus educational experiences, and interdisciplinary approaches to problems in contemporary society. Policies on workload at institutions practicing such approaches suggest the need for a more sophisticated discrimination and weighting of educational activities.

This Association has been in a position over the years to observe workload policies and faculty performance in a great variety of American colleges and universities, and in its considered judgment the following maximum workload limits are necessary for any institution of higher education seriously intending to achieve and sustain an adequately high level of faculty effectiveness in teaching and scholarship:

For undergraduate instruction, a teaching load of twelve hours per week, with no more than six separate course preparations during the academic year.

For instruction partly or entirely at the graduate level, a teaching load of nine hours per week.

This statement of *maximum* workload presumes a traditional academic year of not more than thirty weeks of classes. Moreover, it

presumes no unusual additional expectations in terms of research, administration, counseling, or other institutional responsibilities. Finally, it presumes also that means can be devised within each institution for determining fair equivalents in workload for those faculty members whose activities do not fit the conventional classroom lecture or discussion pattern: for example, those who supervise laboratories or studios, offer tutorials, or assist beginning teachers.

Preferred Teaching Loads

Even with the reservations just enunciated, however, it would be misleading to offer this statement of maximum loads without providing some guidelines for a preferable pattern. This Association has observed in recent years a steady reduction of teaching loads in American colleges and universities noted for the effectiveness of their faculties in teaching and scholarship to norms that can be stated as follows:

For undergraduate instruction, a teaching load of nine hours per week.

For instruction partly or entirely at the graduate level, a teaching load of six hours per week.

The Association has observed also that in the majority of these institutions further reductions have become quite usual for individuals assuming heavier-than-normal duties in counseling, program development, administration, research, and many other activities. In a smaller number, moreover, even lower teaching loads have been established generally, for all faculty members.

It must be recognized that achievement of nine- or six-hour teaching loads may not be possible at present for many institutions. The Association believes, nevertheless, that the nine or six-hour loads achieved by our leading colleges and universities, in some instances many years ago, provide as reliable a guide as may be found for teaching loads in any institution intending to achieve and maintain excellence in faculty performance.

Procedures

The faculty should participate fully in the determination of workload policy, both initially and in all subsequent reappraisals. Reappraisal at regular intervals is essential, in order that older patterns of faculty responsibility may be adjusted to changes in the institution's size, structure, academic programs, and facilities. Current policy and practices should be made known clearly to all faculty members, including those new to the institution each year.

The individual may have several quite different duties, some of which may be highly specialized, and the weight of these duties may vary strikingly at different times during the year. It is important, therefore, that individual workloads be determined by, or in consultation with, the department or other academic unit most familiar with the demands involved. Those responsible should be allowed a measure of latitude in making individual assignments, and care should be taken that all of the individual's services to the institution are considered.

Common Sources of Inequity in the Distribution of Workloads

1. *Difficulty of Courses.* No two courses are exactly alike, and some differences among individual loads are therefore to be expected within a common twelve-hour, nine-hour, or six-hour policy. Serious inequity should be avoided, however, and the most frequent sources of difficulty are easily identified.

- a. The number of different course preparations should be considered, not only the total class hours per week.
- b. Special adjustments may be appropriate for the faculty member introducing a new course or substantially revising an older course. This is a matter of institutional self-interest as well as of equity; if the new course has been approved as likely to strengthen the institution's program, all appropriate measures should be taken to ensure its success.
- c. Extreme differences in scope and difficulty among courses should not be overlooked merely because contention might be provoked on other less obvious imbalances. The difference in difficulty among some courses is so pronounced that no faculty member concerned would deny the existence of the discrepancy. Such imbalances may occur among courses in different disciplines as well as those within the same discipline. In some subjects the advanced course is the more demanding; in others, the introductory course. One course may entail constant student consultation; another may entail a heavy burden of paperwork. At least the more obvious discrepancies should be corrected.
- d. The size of the classes taught should also be considered. The larger class is not always more demanding than the smaller class; but it does not follow that the question of class size can safely be ignored. In a given institution there will be many generally

comparable courses, and for these the difficulty will probably be directly proportionate to the number of students involved. In some institutions aware of this problem, faculty workload is now measured in terms of student instruction load, or “contact hours,” as well as in the conventional classroom or credit hours.

Regardless of the institution’s particular circumstances, it should be possible by formal or informal means to avoid serious inequities on these four major points.

2. *Research.* Increasingly each year undergraduate as well as graduate institutions specify “research” as a major responsibility of the faculty. Lack of clarity or candor about what constitutes such “research” can lead to excessive demands on the faculty generally or on part of the faculty. If the expectation is only of that “general preparation” already described, no additional reduction in faculty workload is indicated. Usually, however, something beyond that general preparation is meant: original, exploratory work in some special field of interest within the discipline. It should be recognized that if this is the expectation, such research, *whether or not it leads to publication*, will require additional time. It is very doubtful that a continuing effort in original inquiry can be maintained by a faculty member carrying a teaching load of more than nine hours; and it is worth noting that a number of leading universities desiring to emphasize research have already moved or are now moving to a six-hour policy. If it is original work that is expected, but the institution fails to state candidly whether in practice scholarly publication will be regarded as the only valid evidence of such study, the effect may well be to press one part of the faculty into “publishing research” at the expense of a “teaching research” remainder. Neither faculty group will teach as well as before.

In short, if research is to be considered a *general* faculty responsibility, the only equitable way to achieve it would seem to be a *general* reduction in faculty workload. If the expectation is that some but not all of the faculty will be publishing scholars, then that policy should be candidly stated and faculty workloads adjusted equitably in accordance with that expectation.

3. *Responsibilities Other Than Teaching and Research.* Although faculty members expect as a matter of course to serve in student counseling, on committees, with professional societies, and in certain administrative capacities, a heavy commitment in any of these areas, or service in too many of these areas at once, will of course impair the effectiveness of the faculty member as teacher and scholar. A reduction in workload is manifestly in order when an institution wishes to draw heavily on the services of an individual in these ways, or when with its approval the individual is engaged in community or government service. No universally applicable rule can be advanced here, but, as suggested earlier, the faculty unit responsible for individual assignments should take all such additional service into full consideration. Often, the determination of an appropriate reduction in workload depends on nothing more complex than an estimate of the hours that these additional duties will require.

2000 Interpretive Comments

The interpretive comments that follow were approved by the Association’s Committee on Teaching, Research, and Publication in March 2000. They were adopted by the Association’s Council in June 2000 and endorsed by the Eighty-sixth Annual Meeting.

The world of higher education has changed significantly since the Association issued its *Statement on Faculty Workload* in 1969. While the number of faculty members in the profession has increased considerably, the proportion who hold positions that are with tenure or probationary for tenure has decreased significantly. Colleges and universities are meeting their instructional needs by increasing their reliance on part-time, adjunct, or fulltime non-tenure-track faculty members and on new technologies. The increased reliance on various types of non-tenure-track faculty has added to the workload of tenured and tenure-track faculty, who must assume additional administrative and governance responsibilities. In reviewing the 1969 *Statement*, we have looked at how these changes affect the work of faculty in what was already a complex and diversified academic workplace.

The Association’s recommendations regarding workload were developed, according to the 1969 *Statement*, in order to ensure and sustain an “adequately high level of faculty effectiveness in teaching and scholarship.” That statement recommended *maximum* and *preferred* teaching loads, and offered differing workload recommendations based on whether or not the instruction was offered at the undergraduate or the graduate level. We reaffirm the need to distinguish between *maximum* and *preferred* loads, but we believe that differences in workload should reflect the differing research and instructional expectations for faculty members at different kinds of academic institutions. We believe that institutional expectations concerning the amount of research a faculty member is required to conduct are a more useful determinant than whether instruction is offered at the undergraduate or the graduate level.

The 1969 *Statement* noted that no single formula for an equitable faculty workload could be devised for all of American higher education. Still, we note that the various segments of higher education have all recently undergone similar changes in the pattern of faculty appointments and in the nature of technological innovations.

This committee has also examined the application of the 1969 *Statement* in the context of the rapidly growing community college segment of American higher education.

Maximum Teaching Loads

1. *Community Colleges.* Community college teaching loads have typically exceeded the maximum of twelve hours per week that the 1969 *Statement* recommended for undergraduate instruction. We believe that the recommended maximum load should remain the twelve hours recommended in the original statement. The academic and instructional responsibilities and obligations involved in educating the diverse range of students who attend community colleges are no less demanding than those at other institutions of higher education. Although the expectations for research and service in the two-year sector may differ in particulars from those in other sectors of higher education, the professional demands are equivalent.

2. *Part-time Faculty.* Many institutions have converted fulltime faculty appointments to positions held by part-time faculty or graduate assistants. We observe with concern that recent institutional practice has led to a multitier system of appointments that provide part-time faculty members little opportunity to conduct research or to participate in professional development.

We recommend that part-time faculty appointments not be based, as they commonly are, solely on course or teaching hours. Activities that extend well beyond classroom time—including maintaining office hours, participating in collegial curricular discussions, preparing courses, and grading examinations and essays—should be recognized. These faculty duties should be defined, and the part-time faculty members who engage in these activities should be compensated and supported professionally based on pro-rata or proportional performance of an equivalent fulltime position.¹

3. *Graduate Teaching Assistants.* The teaching loads of graduate assistants should permit those who hold these positions to meet their own educational responsibilities as well as to meet the needs of their students. We therefore see merit in an institution's setting a limit on the amount of work it assigns to graduate assistants, generally recommended not to exceed twenty hours per week, so that they are not hindered in completing their own degree requirements.²

Distance Education

No examination of teaching loads today would be complete without consideration of how distance education has affected the work of faculty members who engage in it. Since faculty members have primary responsibility for instruction, the curricular changes needed to implement new technologies—including course design, implementation, review, and revision—require substantial faculty participation. Institutions should provide training as well as support for those faculty members expected to implement new instructional technologies. Consideration should also be given to the matter of increases in contact hours in the real or asynchronous time required to achieve interactive learning and student accessibility.³ The increased time in course preparation and the demands of interactive electronic communication with individual students call for a reduction in the maximum classroom hour assignment.

Notes

1. See “The Status of Non-tenure-track Faculty,” *Academe* 79 (July–August 1993): 39–46. [Back to text](#)

2. See “Statement on Graduate Students,” AAUP, *Policy Documents and Reports*, 11th ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015), 387–88 [Back to text](#)

3. For a detailed examination of these issues, see “Statement on Distance Education,” *ibid.*, 254–56. [Back to text](#)

Report Category: [Standing Committee and Subcommittee Reports](#) [Research and Teaching](#)

Tags: [Committee on Teaching Research and Publication](#)