

Workload Adjustment Guidelines for Acute Family Care

Dwight Look College of Engineering, Texas A&M University
Texas Engineering Experiment Station

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide Department Heads, faculty and staff of the College of Engineering and Texas Engineering Experiment Station (TEES) with guidelines for the appropriate use of temporary workload adjustments in meeting acute family care needs. The document describes the range of situations for which workload adjustments are a suitable mechanism, the process by which workload adjustments are requested and approved, and several typical scenarios that illustrate appropriate use of workload adjustments.

Motivation

Temporary workload adjustments for acute family care (AFC) situations promote a family-friendly work environment that will enhance the recruitment, retention and long-term productivity of full-time faculty and staff within the Dwight Look College of Engineering at Texas A&M University and the Texas Engineering Experiment Station. Currently, there are no uniform guidelines for faculty, staff and administrators as to appropriate and fair workload modification measures to support AFC situations, such as pregnancy, childbirth, adoption, or the illness of a child, parent, partner, or close relative. Workload adjustment guidelines for the College of Engineering and TEES will facilitate consistency among the various departments that currently handle such situations on a case-by-case basis.

Guiding Principles

- The goal of workload adjustment within the College of Engineering and TEES is to provide temporary workload modification for faculty and staff for the purpose of supporting temporary family care demands such as recovery from childbirth or illness, care and bonding with a newborn or newly-adopted child, and/or temporary care of a close relative who is disabled, elderly or seriously ill.
- These guidelines are intended to cover AFC situations that would require at least a one-semester and no more than a one-year change in duties. Shorter or longer term needs are better dealt with in other ways.
- A faculty or staff member who has AFC responsibilities may request a period of active service-modified duties (ASMD). ASMD replaces time rigid responsibilities such as classroom teaching with equivalent, but more flexible duties for a temporary period of time.
- Faculty or staff members on ASMD status remain with a full-time load without a reduction in pay. They will be expected to fulfill other professional responsibilities during the ASMD period, including those responsibilities for

which they are uniquely qualified, such as performing research, curriculum development, executing editorial duties, or advising doctoral candidates. If no equivalent other duties can be identified, then other arrangements outside the scope of these guidelines are indicated.

- The ASMD should be designed to provide maximum flexibility in the faculty and staff member's schedule while being consistent with relevant System regulations and University and TEES rules and standard administrative procedures.
- Each faculty or staff member faced with AFC responsibilities may request for ASMD. Faculty and staff who make ASMD requests and who have ASMD status for a temporary period of time shall not be negatively impacted in employment status or opportunities.
- Workload issues should be proactively managed so that excess work demands are not placed on other faculty and staff.
- Dissemination of these guidelines should be widespread, so that all eligible faculty, staff and administrators are aware of these guidelines.

Eligibility

Eligible individuals are full-time faculty and staff within the College of Engineering and TEES who have AFC responsibilities. Faculty refers to all men and women whose title is so defined by the Faculty Senate.

Request Process

- A faculty or staff member makes a written request for ASMD to the Department Head of their main academic unit at the earliest possible time. The Department Head will make a decision regarding the request. If required by System Regulations or University/TEES Rules, the Dean will provide final approval.
- The written request requires the faculty or staff member: (1) to document the reason for the ASMD request, (2) to provide dates for the intended ASMD (which may have to coincide with the dates of nearest academic semesters depending on the nature of the modified duties); (3) to outline the modifications he/she is requesting (for faculty) in terms of teaching, research and service, and (staff) in terms of time- and presence-critical responsibilities; (4) to explain how they will address duties for which they are uniquely qualified.
- The ASMD will be designed in conjunction with each individual faculty or staff member and his or her Department Head to meet the needs of both the faculty or staff member and the department. A range of possibilities should be available.

Use

- Eligible faculty and staff members may be approved for ASMD for each AFC event.
- Except in exceptional circumstances, the adjustment should occur within the first 12 months of the AFC event. In some instances, some part of the adjustment may occur before the event (e.g., in the case of the birth of a child toward the beginning of an academic semester), but generally the bulk of modified duties should be scheduled for after the AFC event.

Exclusions and Clarifications

- The guidelines outlined in this document do not encompass tenure clock issues for faculty. However, a tenure-track faculty member may separately request a tenure clock extension due to issues related to acute family care. More information can be found on the Dean of Faculties & Associate Provost Office web site at: <http://dof.tamu.edu/faculty/policies/worklife.php>
- These guidelines are independent of and complementary to sick leave or vacation, which is taken in situations where no duties are conducted. Thus, a faculty or staff member will in general take either ASMD or sick leave during the same period of time but not both. In situations such as childbirth or illness recovery, a faculty or staff member might take sick leave first and then subsequently begin ASMD. However, in certain cases, where the faculty or staff member may be able to work at home for some portion of the day, a combination of ASMD and sick leave or vacation may be an appropriate option.
- Faculty or staff that are dissatisfied with the outcome of their request may follow the normal complaint and appeal processes as they exist.

Possible Scenarios

It is the intent of these guidelines to provide flexibility for a range of ASMD solutions that are tailored to individual faculty, staff and Departmental needs. Some possible implementations are outlined below:

- A tenure-track or tenured faculty who is a primary caregiver of a newborn and who normally teaches during the fall and spring academic semesters may, for example, be granted workload adjustment consisting of one non-summer semester without teaching and a second non-summer semester with only one course of teaching. In lieu of his or her normal teaching duties a number of more flexible duties would be assigned, such as: the faculty member could develop a new course, spearhead a large research proposal, lead curriculum development, design new departmental programs such as an honors or industrial affiliates program, be

involved in departmental recruitment or be responsible for a departmental web-based system.

- A tenure-track or tenured faculty member who has a seriously ill partner and who normally teaches during the fall and spring academic semesters may, for example, chair the graduate admissions committee, prepare and submit nominations for graduate student candidates for college- and university-level fellowships, and generally coordinate graduate recruitment activities for their department in lieu of his or her normal spring semester teaching obligations.
- A staff member who is not presence-critical for a significant part of his or her day (e.g., some accounting staff) and who has eldercare duties may be allowed to work from home for half a day for a period of one semester as long as this does not affect performance.
- A lecturer with a seriously ill child who needs to provide AFC may be granted a summer semester of no teaching. With approval, the ASMD could be extended beyond the original request to include reduced teaching duties for a non-summer semester. In lieu of his or her normal teaching obligation, the lecturer may be given other duties to assist the department such as curriculum development, writing an equipment proposal for teaching labs or an NSF proposal for an REU site, preparing ABET materials, or chairing a scholarship committee.

About these Guidelines

These guidelines were drafted by a subcommittee of the 2009-2010 Engineering Faculty Advisory Committee (EFAC) and were revised based on feedback from the EFAC, the Department Heads, and the Dean of the Dwight Look College of Engineering. The 2010-2011 EFAC approved these guidelines on November 5, 2010.