



HOBART AND WILLIAM SMITH COLLEGES

Policy on Externally Funded Course Release

The expectations for tenured and tenure-track faculty are that they will teach a full load of courses, typically 3-2, while continuing to conduct scholarly work and service. A course release occurs when a faculty member is permitted to have a reduced teaching load under their normal academic year appointment. In other words, the person is “released” from part of their teaching obligation while still being paid their regular full-time salary. Course release should not be confused with professional leave, which occurs when a faculty member is released from all teaching and service obligations in order to pursue a scholarly activity or to take a fellowship. The Colleges recognize there may be circumstances where an exceptionally large piece of scholarly or administrative work necessitates a reduction in workload to accomplish the activity. Course releases may therefore be either externally funded or institutionally funded.

Requesting an externally funded course release for research or scholarly activity:

Faculty members may request a course release in order to concentrate their efforts on grant or contract-supported scholarly activity. The request should be made in writing via email to the department chair/program director and Provost at the time of proposal development. The detailed request should include: 1) the size and scope of work to be conducted and rationale as to why a course release is necessary to complete the scope of work; 2) the sponsor which will provide funding, 3) the anticipated semester(s) in which a course release is requested and; 4) an estimate of the maximum number of course credits from which the faculty member would be released.

After conferring with the department chair/program director, approval for course release is made at the sole discretion of the Provost. The approval is made on condition that the release will be granted if an award is made, and the course release time has been budgeted according to the course buy-out policies below. The faculty member works with the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) to include a course “buy out” in the proposal budget that will be submitted to an external sponsor, and written confirmation of Provost approval of the course release is included in the proposal materials uploaded to OPRA for general institutional approval.

Limitations:

- Under normal circumstances, the maximum number of courses a faculty member may request release from teaching for the purpose of conducting sponsored scholarly work is one course per academic year. More than one course per year may be considered in extraordinary circumstances at the discretion of the Provost. In no case may a faculty member be released from more than two courses per academic year (one per academic semester) for the purpose of grant-related scholarship.
- Faculty who receive course release under this policy are generally expected to teach at least one standard course in the semester in which they are given a course release.
- A faculty member who receives a course release may not receive concomitant overload pay.

When a course replacement is deemed necessary in consultation with the Provost, departments/programs may be authorized to hire replacement adjuncts through the normal hiring process if deemed necessary.

Course Buy-Out Procedures

A “buy-out” means that a course release is being allowed so the faculty member can dedicate a portion of effort to an externally funded sponsored project. The corresponding percentage of the person’s appointment is charged directly to the grant account during the term of the buy-out. In effect, the grant “buys” the faculty member’s released time by paying for that portion of the faculty member’s salary so that the equivalent amount of effort can be spent working on the sponsored project. Funds collected from the grant for course buy-out salary and fringe shall be allocated to OAFA salary line to fund replacement costs. Funds collected from the grant for indirect costs shall be allocated 50% to the Colleges and 50% to OAFA. Standard practice for determining the cost of a course release, and a method consonant with federal grants, is to calculate the cost based on a percentage of the faculty member’s salary (the individual for whom the course is bought out) rather than the replacement cost for the course.

An exception to the cost calculations can be made only if a grant or contract requires the use of a different rate, and the required rate is specified in the funding agency's documentation. Additionally, Provost agreement to the revised buy-out rate (as described above) is a prerequisite.

For the purpose of calculating course buy-out, the following assumptions are used:

- 70% of a faculty member’s time is dedicated teaching
- 30% of a faculty member’s time is dedicated to scholarship and service
- Based on the standard load of teaching 5 courses per academic year, one course equals 14% of a faculty member’s time.

Calculation Example:

For a course buy-out funded by an external grant or contract, the buyout is calculated as 14 percent of the base academic year institutional base salary (IBS) plus fringe benefits on the 14% at the current fringe rate. Additionally, indirect costs at the current rate are budgeted on the buy-out salary being charged to the grant.

For example, a faculty member with a base salary of \$65,000 would budget as follows:

$14\% * \$65,000 = \9100 ;

Add fringe benefits at $33\% * \$9100 = \3003 ; Add indirect costs at $67\% * \$9100 = \6097

Total Cost for One Course Buy-out = $9100 + 3003 + 6097 = \$18,200$

Post Award Procedures:

When course release has been approved and if course buy out is budgeted and approved by the external sponsor, the external grant will be charged for the budgeted percentage of the faculty member’s effort, associated fringe benefits, and indirect costs.

Faculty must certify through the Colleges’ time and effort reporting procedures that time charged is an accurate and a reasonable estimation of time devoted to the sponsored activity.