

GUIDELINES FOR TEACHING ASSIGNMENTS AND TEACHING LOADS IN ENGINEERING UNITS

Faculty of Engineering, MCGILL UNIVERSITY

Assigning courses and teaching loads to professors is a complex process as there are many constraints and factors that need to be considered. In particular, the Department Chair, who is responsible for teaching assignments and teaching loads, must take into account, among others, the following:

- (1) Junior faculty members should have the opportunity to teach various courses to develop their teaching portfolio for reappointment and tenure;
- (2) Professors may be on sabbatical leave or leave of absence;
- (3) Professors should have an opportunity to teach a graduate course in their area of specialization;
- (4) Professors should have the opportunity to satisfy their academic duties and meet the expectations and performance levels of the Faculty (see Annex A); and
- (5) The undergraduate programs must conform to the requirements of the Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board (CEAB), especially in terms of the number of qualified academic units in engineering science and engineering design.

These constraints must be met while ensuring the highest quality of education to the students.

To help facilitate the teaching assignment and teaching load process, a series of guidelines have been implemented in the Faculty with respect to teaching loads, assignments, and buyouts as described below.

Guidelines on Teaching Loads

Guideline 1: The nominal teaching load of full-time tenure-track or tenured faculty members is four (4) courses per year. In this context, a course refers to a standard single-instructor course.

Guideline 2: A full-time faculty member who is active in research will have a teaching load of three (3) courses. The Department Chair will be in charge of assessing a faculty member's level of research activity. The indicators used to determine an active research program include, but are not limited to, the following: (1) current holding of a tri-council standard operating grant, e.g., NSERC Discovery Grant, SSHRC Standard Research Grant, or CIHR Open Operating Grant, and (2) current primary supervision and financial support of thesis-based graduate students, especially PhD students.

Faculty members that also hold a senior research Chair that provides significant funding for salary from an external source may be entitled to a further course reduction.

Rationale: Faculty members who maintain an externally funded research program will benefit from a course reduction. A teaching load of three courses allows sufficient time for research activities.

Guideline 3: Each tenure-track or tenured faculty member teaches a maximum of two courses per semester.

Rationale: A three-course load in a single semester increases the stress on the faculty member and can affect adversely the quality of teaching.

Guideline 4: Each faculty member teaches one graduate course (500- or 600-level) per year.

Rationale: This allows the faculty member to be exposed to graduate students and, if possible, teach material that is in his/her general research area.

Guideline 5: Each new tenure-track faculty member (at the Assistant and untenured Associate Professor levels) will be assigned a reduced teaching load consisting of a maximum of six (6) courses during their first three years. The distribution of the courses can be negotiated between the faculty member and the Department Chair; the suggested distribution is one course in the first year, two courses in the second year, and three courses in the third year.

Rationale: A ramp-up in teaching load over several years allows new faculty members to devote time to establishing their research program.

Guideline 6: A full-time tenured faculty member who is active in research but is not a licensed professional engineer in Canada (or does not have an application to a Canadian professional engineering association in process) may be asked to carry a four-course load instead of a three-course load, or may have their course assignments vary from year to year.

Rationale: The teaching assignments must be made to ensure that the programs satisfy the requirements of the CEAB, especially in terms of the qualified accreditation units for engineering science and engineering design.

Recommendations on Teaching Assignments and Implementation

Guideline 7: For every core course (undergraduate and graduate), there should be at least two faculty members ready to teach it on short notice.

Rationale: These courses need to be taught at least once every year, and more frequently if needed, and plans must be in place to deal with situations when faculty members go on sabbatical leave or on a leave of absence.

Guideline 8: The assignments of 400-, 500-, and 600-level complementary or elective courses can be composed at the research group level and proposed to the Department Chair.

Rationale: Research groups are generally responsible for blocks of senior undergraduate and graduate courses that represent specializations. Planning of teaching assignments can be made over a two to three year period to ensure continuity.

Guideline 9: Complementary or elective courses with very low enrolment, i.e., fewer than ten (10) registered students for 400- and 500-level courses or fewer than five (5) registered students for 600-level courses, can be offered but will not count toward the teaching load of a faculty member. Courses with low enrolment (but higher than the above thresholds) should only be offered in alternate years.

Rationale: It is not financially viable for the University to offer courses with very low enrolment. Moreover, offering courses in alternate years may improve enrolment numbers and minimize the number of courses with low enrolment.

Guideline 10: Courses are assigned in priority to full-time faculty members. The assignment of courses to adjunct professors or sessional instructors may be done after all faculty members are assigned their normal teaching load. The use of adjunct professors or sessional instructors for teaching core courses should be minimized.

Rationale: The budget for teaching support is very limited and thus to the fullest extent possible, courses should be assigned to full-time faculty members rather than adjunct professor or sessional instructors.

Guideline 11: Unless the department offers programs that normally run core courses in the summer, summer courses are assigned on a voluntary basis as much as possible.

Rationale: Some faculty members may have to travel to attend conferences in the summer and are unavailable to teach during the summer session.

Guideline 12: Departments should consider the use of graders as well as Teaching Assistants (TAs).

Rationale: Grading constitutes a major portion of the teaching support duties associated with a course. In cases where answer keys/solutions are available and there is a weaker link between a tutorial activity and the work being graded (e.g., a take-home assignment), a qualified student should be capable of grading the work as effectively as a TA but at a lower rate of pay.

Guideline 13: For complementary or elective courses (at the 400-, 500-, and 600-levels) with low enrolment, e.g., less than twenty (20), any teaching support provided should comprise largely grading activities, i.e., the instructor should be responsible for running tutorials and projects (if applicable).

Rationale: For low enrolment courses, students may benefit from the expertise and additional contact time (e.g., in the tutorial) with the instructor. The increased contact time also compensates for the lower enrolment (i.e., compared to a core course with significantly higher enrolment).

Teaching Buyout

Full-time faculty members may submit a request to their Chair for a temporary teaching buyout subject to the following:

- (1) The faculty member must maintain a two-course load at a minimum, one of which will generally be a core course.
- (2) The cost of buying out a course is currently set at \$20,000 and is subject to change on a yearly basis. The amount is to be paid to the Department using unrestricted external research funds, i.e., from research contracts. A professor cannot issue a personal cheque or similar form of payment for a buyout.
- (3) The professor must notify the Department of his/her intention to request a course buyout at least 4 months before the start of the semester that the course will be offered.
- (4) The professor must help the Department identify a suitable replacement. This is especially important if the course must be taught by a licensed professional engineer for accreditation purposes.
- (5) A course buyout agreement form (Annex B) must be completed and submitted.

The Chair shall decide on the merits of teaching buyout requests on a case-by-case basis.

Please note that a teaching buyout, similar to a request for teaching release, requires justification where, for a limited period of time, the professor has increased activities in research or service that reasonably justify the needs for a reduction in teaching.

Teaching buyouts are intended to be issued on a case-by-case basis and not over the long term. As such, the granting of a buyout request in any given semester or academic year should not be construed as setting a new expectation for the teaching load of a professor on an on-going basis. Requests for teaching buyouts must be made each year and are not typically renewable.

Annex A

Extracts from the *Regulations Relating to the Employment of Tenure-Track and Tenured Academic Staff* (<http://www.mcgill.ca/secretariat/policies/academic/>)

Academic Duties

- 4.1 “Academic duties” include:
- (i) teaching (such as graduate and undergraduate courses, supervision of individual students and assessment of student work);
 - (ii) research and other original scholarly activities, and professional activities; and
 - (iii) other contributions to the University and scholarly communities.
- 4.2 A staff member shall be engaged throughout the Academic Year primarily in the staff member’s Academic Duties. Staff members shall be available for such duties at the University at such times as teaching, research, administrative or other Academic Duties, including student assessment, counseling and registration, may require. As a minimum, staff members shall be available from the first day of September to the day following the spring convocation
- 4.3 The allocation of Academic Duties is the responsibility of the Departmental Chair, who shall consult with the Dean to take into account the pattern of such allocation within the department, faculty, and University.

Reappointment and Tenure

- 6.12 Recommendations relating to reappointment shall be based on the staff member’s performance of Academic Duties as defined in Section 4.1 and on whether the staff member’s dossier discloses satisfactory progress and promise of meeting the tenure criteria set out in Section 7.
- 6.12.1 Each department shall establish written criteria for the reappointment of Assistant Professors and Associate Professors. These criteria shall provide staff members with guidance in anticipation of meeting the requirements for reappointment and tenure.
- 6.12.2 The criteria for reappointment shall be approved by the Dean of the faculty who shall consult with an appropriate committee of the faculty prior to their approval.
- 6.12.3 The criteria for reappointment shall be communicated in writing to the staff member by the Departmental Chair within 2 months of the staff member’s initial appointment.
- 7.10 Each department shall establish written criteria which provide staff members with guidance in anticipation of meeting the requirements for tenure.
- 7.10.1 The criteria for tenure shall be approved by the Dean of the faculty who shall consult with an appropriate committee of the faculty prior to their approval.
- 7.10.2 The criteria for tenure shall be communicated in writing to the staff member by the Departmental Chair within 2 months of the staff member’s initial appointment.
- 7.10.3 The Departmental Tenure Committee (hereafter “DTC”) and the University Tenure Committee (hereafter “UTC”) and the Principal or delegate shall base their recommendations on the candidate’s performance of Academic Duties.
- 7.10.4 The minimum requirement for the granting of tenure shall be:

- (i) superior performance in two categories of Academic Duties set out in Section 4.1;
and
- (ii) reasonable performance in the remaining category of Academic Duties set out in Section 4.1.

Rights and Obligations of Tenured Staff

- 7.36 A member of the academic staff who is granted tenure shall maintain the high standards for which tenure is granted.

Annex B

Course Buyout Agreement Form (2019-2020)

Name of Professor	
Academic Year	
Course Number	
Replacement Instructor	
Amount	\$20,000
FOPAL for Payment	

Rationale for Buyout Request

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The above-mentioned professor agrees to pay the Department/Faculty of Engineering of McGill University the amount listed above, from unrestricted external research funds, in return for being released from teaching the above-mentioned course for the indicated academic year.

Agreement Signatures

Professor (Applicant)	Date
Chair	Date