

Workload and Effort Guidelines
VCU School of Public Health
Effective July 1, 2026

INTRODUCTION

The VCU School of Public Health (School) relies on the excellence and engagement of its faculty across teaching, research, service, and administrative responsibilities. To support this mission, it is essential to have a transparent, equitable, and flexible framework for defining and managing faculty workloads.

Faculty workload is designed to support multiple pathways to impact, allowing faculty to emphasize research, teaching, or a balanced portfolio over time. Workload allocations are reviewed annually and aligned with individual goals, performance, and school priorities. Moreover, faculty may move between different workload emphases over time based on career stage, performance, and School needs.

This guideline outlines the principles and expectations that govern faculty workload assignments across all academic ranks and appointment types. It is intended to provide clarity around how teaching, research, service, and other professional activities are balanced, while recognizing the diversity of faculty roles and contributions.

The goals of this School Workload Policy are to:

1. Enable the School to fulfill its mission regarding the provision of superb educational experiences for all students;
2. Facilitate achievement of the School's goals to become a powerhouse in public health research;
3. Responsibly steward the investment made in the School by our students and the Commonwealth of Virginia;
4. Equitably distribute teaching across the School.
5. Establish clear principles for allocating budgets to the departments based on faculty contributions.

This document is re-evaluated periodically to maintain the School's excellence in meeting both short- and long-term goals.

TEACHING MISSION AND FACULTY COMMITMENT

Teaching is central to the mission of the School. Our faculty play a vital role in preparing the next generation of public health professionals, scientists, and leaders. High-quality, engaging, and evidence-based instruction is essential to our identity as a School, and it is a meaningful component of faculty contributions across appointment types.

The School is committed to supporting excellence in teaching through faculty development, mentoring, instructional innovation, and recognition of outstanding pedagogical achievements.

Faculty are encouraged to bring the full breadth of their scholarly expertise into the classroom and to create engaging learning experiences that reflect the School's values of equity, community engagement, and real-world impact.

While faculty with research-intensive portfolios may have varying levels of teaching effort, **all faculty contribute to the School's instructional mission**, and teaching is recognized as critical to the success and reputation of the School.

POLICY APPLICATION

This policy applies to full-time faculty in all School departments, including term, tenured, and tenure-track faculty. Part-time faculty will generally have their workload reduced in proportion to their percentage of full-time effort.

The table below provides example workload distributions for planning purposes. The 40% teaching, 50% research, and 10% service distribution serves as a baseline planning model for research-active faculty, but it is not the only possible distribution. Faculty workload may vary based on externally funded research effort, appointment type, teaching needs, administrative responsibilities, service expectations, career stage, departmental context, and School priorities. Faculty with higher levels of externally funded research effort may have higher research allocations and lower teaching expectations, while faculty with lower levels of externally funded research effort may have higher teaching expectations. Actual workload distributions will be established through annual workload planning between faculty members and department chairs.

Table 1: Example of Workload Distribution Options by Academic Appointment and Funded Research Effort

Academic Appointment	Teaching			Research	Service and Mentoring
	Effort	Courses	Credits		
Term Teaching	90%	7-9 courses	21-32	0%	10%
Term Teaching & Research, Tenure-Eligible & Tenured ¹	40%	4 courses	12-16	50%	10%
	30%	3 courses	9-12	60%	10%
	20%	2 courses	6-8	70%	10%
	10%	1 course	3-4	80%	10%
Term Research	0%	0 courses	0	95%	5%

¹Determined effort is based on funded research effort

TABLE NOTES

These distributions are examples for planning purposes and reflect different faculty roles and levels of funded research effort. Workload allocations may be adjusted through the annual planning process based on externally funded research effort, faculty role, productivity, department needs, and School priorities.

- For planning purposes, 10% effort is generally assigned to one typical 3- or 4-credit course. Course-specific circumstances, including enrollment, instructional complexity, modality, TA support, and new course preparation, may be considered through department-level workload planning, subject to available resources and School priorities. Department chairs may take into consideration additional effort, which may be recognized within workload planning, subject to available resources.
- Course equivalents can be proposed by the faculty member and department chairperson but must be approved by the dean, if there is a budget request. Such course equivalents may include developing a new course through VCU online, instruction in continuing education programs, advising 4 or more PhD students or service-learning opportunities.
- Teaching effort does not include dissertation committee service, directed research, independent study direction, nor mentoring students in research. These activities are core faculty responsibilities and may be recognized within service or research contributions as appropriate.
- Teaching workload credit for courses taught by more than 1 faculty member are divided proportionately (e.g., two faculty who co-teach a single course and split the work 60% - 40%, should receive 6% and 4% Teaching Effort, respectively).
- With approval of the department chairperson, faculty may teach their required courses over any period or term (fall, spring, summer) within a single academic year that meets the needs of the program and the students.
- Newly-hired faculty may have “teaching forgiveness” periods outlined in their hiring contract. Specific provisions in that contract will supersede this policy.
- Some research faculty may be 100% research (with 0% service) if they do not participate in department or university services. Such faculty may be individuals hired to work exclusively on a specific research project or those without terminal degrees.

RESEARCH FUNDING

EXPECTATIONS (Term – Teaching & Research, Tenure-Eligible & Tenured Faculty)

To support the School's goal of becoming a leading public health research institution, faculty with designated research effort are expected to engage actively in externally funded research and related scholarly activities.

Effort Recovery Expectations

The School will provide 10% to support ongoing research development and scholarly activity to all tenured and tenure-track and term research faculty (except those who were hired to work exclusively on a specific research project or those without terminal degrees). For faculty who are highly funded and are able to buy out of courses, the 10% effort is a budget allocation to the department.

When externally funded research effort falls below expected levels over a sustained period (e.g., a rolling two-year average), workload adjustments may be considered as part of the annual planning process. These adjustments will be determined collaboratively between the faculty member and department chair and may include changes in teaching, research, and/or service responsibilities, taking into account grant pipelines, resubmissions, and overall contributions to the School.

External funding includes federal, state, foundation, and industry-sponsored awards. Internal funds from units outside of SOPH (e.g., MCCC, CCTR, OVPRI, etc) may count toward salary coverage. Internal SOPH funds, including endowments, do not count toward external funding expectations.

Grant Submission Expectations

- Faculty with designated research effort are expected to maintain an active program of research and pursue external funding sufficient to support their assigned research effort, taking into account career stage, discipline, funding portfolio, current awards, pending proposals, resubmissions, and grant pipeline.
- Faculty who are meeting or exceeding research funding expectations, and whose active funding extends beyond 12 months, may have reduced proposal submission expectations during that period.
- Newly hired faculty, faculty assuming new leadership roles, or recently retained faculty may have modified expectations as outlined in their appointment or retention agreements. In such cases, those agreements will take precedence over this policy.

SERVICE ACTIVITIES

Below are general descriptions of responsibilities covered under the service or administrative category.

Table 2: Description of Example Service Activities

University and School Service	Department Service	Teaching Service	Research/Professional Service
• Chair, P&T committee • Faculty Senate • Chair, Search committee • University Graduate Council	• Admission Committee • Curriculum Committee • MPH committee	• Chair or member, PhD dissertation committee • Mentor, MPH Capstone • Faculty mentoring • Student engagement (school events)	• Federal study section member/primary grant reviewer • Editor or associate editor of major journal • Board of Director of academic association • Journal reviewer

WORKLOAD MODIFICATIONS AND OPERATIONALIZATION PLAN

Transition to Increased Teaching Load

When externally funded research effort falls below expectations (as defined above), workload adjustments may be made as part of the annual planning process. These adjustments may include increased teaching or other responsibilities, determined collaboratively and with consideration of grant activity, resubmissions, and overall faculty contributions.

Administrative Responsibilities

Faculty with administrative appointments (i.e., chairperson, program director, associate dean) typically teach at least one course per year, with flexibility based on the scope of responsibilities. Administrative responsibilities can be attributable to the faculty member's service workload, or can come with a reduction in teaching and/or research efforts. Due to high variability across the School in terms of program sizes and the scope of administrative tasks, the corresponding department chair will work with faculty to establish an appropriate effort distribution, including course release as appropriate. All administrative responsibilities and effort re-allocations, as well as any potential course buyouts resulting from that reallocation, are subject to dean approval if budget is requested.

Exceptions

Some faculty may have sufficient cause to expend teaching efforts through non-traditional means, such as through a course equivalent or other exception. Faculty must obtain approval from both their department chairperson and from the dean for those activities to be attributable toward teaching efforts. Exceptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis and aligned with faculty contributions, program needs, and School priorities.

Class Sizes

The department chairperson has the discretion to consider course enrollment as an additional decision point for course load assignments. This could result in lower course loads for faculty who instruct courses with consistently large enrollments. Consideration of class size and instructional complexity should be applied consistently and transparently across faculty.

ANNUAL REVIEW OF WORKLOAD EXPECTATIONS

Each year, during the evaluation period, the Department chairperson will undertake a review of each faculty's workload expectations in accordance with the parameters set out in this policy. The review will include a system of accounting for work done during the academic year. The annual review has two components: a) review of work done consistent with the previous year's expectations established in the previous review, and b) review the current expectations and establish revised expectations for the next review cycle. The faculty member's interests and focus can change over time, which may be reflected in flexibility in the distribution of workload between teaching, research, and service.

This policy is intended to support faculty success, advance the School's mission, and provide a transparent and adaptable framework for workload planning.