

Guidelines Governing Course Assignments
Department of Psychology
November 2002

Rationale

As members of the Academic Senate of the University of California, the faculty members of the Department of Psychology have rights and responsibilities in the areas of research, teaching, and service. Principles of academic freedom justify considerable latitude with regard to research (e.g., research problems pursued), teaching (e.g., course content), and service (e.g., public service, university service). Accompanying these rights are responsibilities to pursue research, teach acceptable courses, and provide service in some form.

Within the larger university community, the Department of Psychology and its faculty have responsibilities to the university and its students with regard to course offerings. During the past decade, the University has pushed undergraduate students to finish their degrees as quickly as possible (e.g., using “4 year challenge” programs) so that the University can accommodate the Tidal Wave II of undergraduate students expected to matriculate during the next few years.

The following guidelines were formulated to provide a basis for standard procedures within the department, leading to expectations for fair and equitable treatment across faculty members with regard to their course requests and assignments.

Guidelines

1. Distribution of courses across the academic year

In general, offering a similar number of courses across the three quarters of the academic year (F, W, & S) is preferred over offering significantly varying numbers of courses across quarters. Approximately equal distribution of courses across the academic year enables provision of balanced curricular offerings, in turn helping ensure that students can make timely, consistent progress toward completing their degrees.

- A. Faculty teaching 4 courses: Expected to teach one course during each quarter of an academic year (F, W, & S) plus one additional course during one of the three quarters (F, W, or S).
- B. Faculty teaching 3 courses: Expected to teach either (a) one course during each quarter of an academic year (F, W, & S), or (b) two courses during one quarter and one course during a second quarter, leaving one quarter with no teaching responsibility.
- C. Faculty teaching 2 courses: Expected to teach one course during each of two quarters of an academic year (F, W, and/or S), leaving one quarter with no teaching responsibility.
- D. Exceptions to the above policies: Any exceptions to the above rules on distribution of course assignments across the academic year must be negotiated with the Chair and/or Vice Chair. Any exception to these rules should be understood as applying to the single academic year in which it was granted; exceptions in subsequent academic years must be negotiated anew.

2. **Distribution of courses across the curriculum**

The Department of Psychology has a set of core and general education (GE) courses at the undergraduate level and a set of required courses at the graduate level. The designation of these course as core or required courses signals the importance of the courses to the curriculum. Core courses are those required to meet area requirements in our departmental undergraduate curriculum, GE courses meet requirements within the broader university curriculum, and required courses are classes that graduate students need to fulfill particular requirements of their graduate degrees.

Given the importance of core, GE, and required courses, faculty members are encouraged to offer to include as many of these courses as possible and desirable within their annual teaching requests. However, a crucial feature of any graduate program is the seminar course, which enables a more detailed, in-depth study of an area of current research interest. As a result, faculty should balance their teaching of core, GE, and required courses with seminar courses that contribute to a well-rounded and vibrant graduate curriculum.

- A. Faculty teaching 4 courses: Should ensure that (a) at most two courses are graduate courses, (b) at least two courses are core, GE, or required courses, and (c) at most one course is an undergraduate or graduate seminar.
- B. Faculty teaching 3 courses: Should ensure that (a) at most two courses are graduate courses, (b) at least two courses are core, GE, or required courses, and (c) at most one course is an undergraduate or graduate seminar.
- C. Faculty teaching 2 courses: Should ensure that courses taught consist of either (a) two undergraduate courses, with at least one of these being a core or GE course, or (b) two core, GE, or required courses. No seminar courses allowed.
- D. Faculty teaching 1 course: Should ensure that the course taught is a core, GE, or required course. No seminar course allowed.
- E. Exceptions to the above policies: Any exceptions to the above rules on distribution of courses across the curriculum must be negotiated with the Chair and/or Vice Chair. Any exception to these rules should be understood as applying to the single academic year in which it was granted; exceptions in subsequent academic years must be negotiated anew.

3. **Releases from teaching: Sabbatical leaves and course buyouts**

A sabbatical leave is a well-deserved release from teaching and other duties to pursue research unfettered from normal departmental and university obligations. Another form of release from teaching is the course buyout, funded by a research grant, which allows the faculty member to devote needed time to research under the auspices of the grant.

- A. Both sabbatical leave and course buyout requests are priorities of the highest order for faculty in the Department of Psychology
- B. Consistent with standing rules of the department, each course buyout will cost the faculty member 1/9th of her/his 9-month salary, and each faculty member can buy out of at most 2 courses in an academic year. This will ensure that each faculty member will teach at least 2 courses each academic year and that the department and Division will be compensated adequately for buyouts so that replacement

teachers can be obtained.

- C. The department will do everything in its power to grant all sabbatical leave requests for the requested periods of leave; occasionally, some sabbatical leave requests may not be granted. For example, in the unlikely event that all or most members of a given area request sabbatical leave during a single academic year, some negotiation may be necessary to delay some sabbatical leaves to ensure that needed core and required courses within the area are taught. Sabbatical leaves are not accompanied by any reimbursement by the Division or the University to pay the salaries of replacement teachers to cover courses typically taught by the faculty on sabbatical leave. As a result, departmental need may, in unusual circumstances, trump the rights of individual faculty members in the granting of sabbatical leave requests.
- D. The department will also do everything in its power to grant all course buyout requests. Because course buyout requests are accompanied by monies to pay replacement teachers to cover the “bought out” courses, course buyout requests have fewer impediments to their granting than do sabbatical leave requests.

4. Releases from teaching: Administrative duties

Certain service assignments within the Department of Psychology carry with them heavy administrative duties. These assignments therefore are accompanied by releases from teaching to ensure that faculty members will accept these assignments. At present, the following department assignments garner teaching release:

- A. Chair: 3 course releases each year
- B. Vice Chair: 1 course release each year
- C. Area head: 1 course release every 2nd academic year

5. Concerns regarding availability of TAs

- A. Courses in each area of the department should be spread across the academic year to ensure a sufficient number of TAs for courses in the area
- B. If an area is allowed to offer, or negotiates to offer, an extremely uneven number of courses across quarters of the academic year, then assignments of appropriate TAs to courses in that area may not be possible. In such situations, one or more courses in the affected area may be assigned no TAs or may have to be structured to accommodate a TA without full, requisite experience for the course.