

Principles relating to teaching in MEAS  
Adopted by the MEAS faculty on January 28, 2013

General principles

*Teaching is an integral part of an academic faculty position.* A high quality and sufficient quantity of classroom teaching is necessary to maintain the academic environment that sustains research. A thriving department requires undergraduate and graduate curricula that are excellent in their scope, in the articulation and sequencing of their component courses, and in the quality of instruction within each course.

*MEAS faculty share responsibility for curricula.* Meeting this responsibility requires communication, coordination, and planning among the faculty within each discipline and within the department as a whole. From a Campus perspective, the department head is responsible for instruction in the curricula, but, since decisions by the head cannot substitute for collegial coordination among colleagues, it is desirable and expected that the head is rarely called upon to make teaching assignments.

*Scholarly reassignments (sabbaticals) offer faculty important opportunities:* to develop new research directions and collaborations, to acquire new research tools, and to make progress on time-intensive projects, such as writing a textbook or major review article, participating in extended field projects, or developing a new model. Research and instruction in MEAS benefit when faculty avail themselves of these opportunities. The expectation that faculty are significantly engaged in instruction in each academic term they are not on sabbatical makes the availability of sabbaticals all the more important.

Practical considerations

1. *Course load:* In order for new and untenured tenure-track faculty to develop their research programs and develop new courses or revise existing ones, new faculty should commence teaching in their second semester and untenured tenure-track faculty should subsequently teach two courses per year. “A course” means full or nearly full instructional responsibility for a three- or four-unit course during the academic year. Tenured faculty should generally expect a teaching load equivalent to *up to* three courses per year, as determined by the needs of the undergraduate and graduate curricula to which they contribute. Seminar courses (typically one unit) and shared instruction of courses contribute to this total according to their course units and the portion of instruction provided in a shared course, as does academic-year preparation for summer field courses. At current student and faculty numbers, the necessary typical course load for tenured faculty is the equivalent of roughly five courses over two years (i.e. 1-1, 1-2), but this will vary among the disciplines and over time.
2. *Scholarly reassignment (“sabbatical”):* Faculty should be able to take a one-semester scholarly reassignment, consistent with NCSU regulations (REG05.20.24), approximately every seven years. Faculty should coordinate with their colleagues to insure their reassignment does not disrupt curricula (for example, by insuring that two faculty in the same sub-discipline do not plan to be absent in the same term), and, with this in mind, should inform their disciplinary colleagues and the head of their plans, however tentative, a year or more in advance. Scholarly reassignments are typically for one semester; longer sabbaticals necessarily involve a “buy-out” (see 3).

3. *“Buy-outs”*: Faculty may buy-out some of their teaching when they have assignments to other Campus units or other compelling responsibilities supported by funds external to MEAS. Faculty should not routinely buy out of teaching with research funds. Buy-outs should be coordinated with disciplinary colleagues and the head. It is expected that funds provided to MEAS by buy-outs are used to provide instruction in courses usually taught by the faculty buying out and that faculty buying out contribute to identifying qualified instructors for these courses.
4. *Planning*: Disciplinary groups should meet each fall with the directors of undergraduate and graduate programs and the head to set course offerings and teaching assignments for the next academic year, as well as tentative offerings and assignments for one or more subsequent years. Planning should take account of the courses needed by the present and projected populations of students and should allow for the distribution of elective offerings over semesters, so that each elective course can attract a reasonable enrollment. Planning should be informed by the faculty effort required to teach each course, based on contact hours, likely enrollment, and the extent to which a course will be developed or updated.