
Policy on Faculty Workload Adjustment for Acute Family Care

The College of Geosciences is committed to providing an inclusive and family-friendly workplace environment for faculty, and recognizes that there are many different types of family and domestic responsibilities. For this reason the College offers a policy of temporary workload adjustments for acute family care situations. A college level policy ensures consistency in how such situations are handled across departments and units in the College, and that all faculty members have equal access to assistance with acute family care situations.

Acute family care situations include pregnancy, childbirth, adoption, and serious or prolonged illness of the faculty member or of a child, parent, partner or close relative. This policy is intended as a complement to employee rights under the Federal Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). These rights and situations under which FMLA is applicable are explained in detail at <http://employees.tamu.edu/benefits/leave/fmla/>.

Guiding Principles

- The goal of the policy is to provide temporary workload adjustment for a faculty member for the purpose of supporting temporary family care demands such as recovery from childbirth or illness, care and bonding with a newborn or newly-adopted child, or care of a spouse, domestic partner, or close relative who is disabled, elderly, or seriously ill. As a guiding philosophy, this policy extends the general term of “family member” to all those individuals who live in a substantially interdependent manner with the faculty member requesting workload adjustment in order to deliver care. This definition may often extend to individuals beyond those typically defined as family for benefits purposes.
- A faculty member with acute family care responsibilities may request a period of active service workload adjustment. This adjustment replaces time-rigid duties, such as classroom teaching, with equivalent but more flexible duties for a temporary period of time.
- Employees with a workload adjustment remain with a full-time load without a reduction in pay. Expanded effort on research cannot substitute for a reduced effort in teaching. In lieu of teaching, faculty members are expected to work on projects for the department for which there is a deliverable product. Deliverables might include designing new courses, working on major curriculum revisions, or other similar tasks. The faculty member is expected to deliver the product even if the project extends beyond the period for which a workload adjustment was granted. If no deliverables can be identified, then arrangements other than a workload adjustment must be made.
- The active service workload adjustment should be designed to provide maximum flexibility in the faculty member’s schedule while being consistent with relevant System regulations and University rules and standard administrative procedures.
- Each faculty member faced with acute family care responsibilities may request an active service workload adjustment. Faculty members who are granted such requests shall not be negatively impacted in employment status or opportunities.

- Workload issues must be proactively managed so that excessive work demands are not placed on other faculty or staff members.

Eligibility

Eligible individuals are full-time faculty members within the College of Geosciences who have acute family care responsibilities. Faculty refers to all individuals whose title is so defined by the [Faculty Senate](#).

Request Process

- Employee should speak with their Department Head or Director at the earliest possible time about the need for active service modified duties and discuss the nature of the modified duties being proposed. This discussion must be followed by a written request for active service modified duties that:
 - documents the reason for the request;
 - provides dates for the intended period of active service modified duties (which may have to coincide with the dates of the nearest academic semester depending on the nature of the modified duties);
 - outlines the modifications being proposed in terms of teaching, research, and service (for faculty); and
 - identifies a tangible product that will be delivered as a result of the modified duties.
- The Department Head will make a recommendation about the request that must then be approved by the Dean of Geosciences.
- The active service modified duties will be designed in conjunction with each individual faculty member and Department Head to meet the needs of both the employee requesting the modification and the department.
- If a Department Head and faculty member are unable to come to agreement on active service modified duties the situation should be referred to the College Dean for resolution.
- Upon final approval by the College Dean, the individual's annual appointment letter shall be revised to include information related to the modified duties and for the period of time covered. Revised annual appointment letter will be placed in the faculty member's personnel file.

Use

- Faculty members may be approved for active service modified duties for each acute care family event.
- Normally, no more than one faculty member may be assigned a workload adjustment related to the same event at the same time. Exceptions may be made in urgent and unusual circumstances and should be discussed with the office of the Dean in advance.
- This policy does not rule out the use of sick leave in relation to an acute family care event when legitimate and appropriate. FMLA-related use of sick leave may also be appropriate.

Clarifications and Exclusions

The guidelines outlined in this document do not address tenure clock issues for faculty. A tenure-track faculty member may request separately a tenure clock extension owing to the issues raised by an acute family care situation.

- These guidelines are independent of and complementary to sick leave or vacation, which must be taken in situations where no duties are conducted. Thus, a faculty member will generally take **either** active service modified duties **or** sick leave during the same period of time but not both. In situations such as childbirth, or recovery from an illness, a faculty member might take sick leave for a period of time and then subsequently begin active service with modified duties. However, if a faculty member is able to work at home for some portion of a day, a combination of active service modified duties and sick leave or vacation leave (if applicable), may be appropriate.
- Faculty members who have been assigned modified duties should not be penalized in annual reviews. These faculty members should be evaluated on the performance of the duty assigned rather than on the duty for which it was substituted (i.e., if a special service task is substituted for teaching then the faculty member is evaluated on the special task rather than teaching, with “normal” service rated separately according to departmental criteria).

Scenarios

1. A faculty member requests modified duties to allow a more flexible schedule to care for a newborn. The department head reduces her teaching load by one course and assigns her the task of developing syllabi to certify a number of existing courses as writing intensive, and shepherd those courses through the approval process.
2. A faculty member has a parent who needs weekly treatment at a medical facility in Houston. The faculty member must accompany the parent to the treatments, which sometimes have complications resulting in overnight hospital stays. For this reason the faculty member requests time-flexible alternative duties to replace his regularly scheduled courses. The department head assigns the faculty member responsibility for coordinating the department’s self-study for an upcoming Academic Program Review, including identifying and analyzing all needed data, coordinating with faculty members in the department to be sure all voices are heard in the self-assessment, and writing the final text of the study.
3. A faculty member’s partner has two broken limbs as a result of a car accident. He is expected to make a full recovery, but needs someone in the home for most of every day to help with basic needs. The faculty member requests modified duties in lieu of teaching so that he may work from home, with brief periods on campus to attend faculty and committee meetings. The department head assigns the faculty member responsibility for a full revision of the departmental by-laws, developing promotion criteria for non-tenure track faculty members, codifying the department’s process for peer-review of tenured faculty, and shepherding all documents through the approval process in the department,

the college, and the Dean of Faculties' office, even if this takes longer than the period for which no teaching is requested.

Credit: Policy borrowed in part from College of Liberal Arts, TAMU