

EQUITABLE WORKLOAD POLICY

Games and Interactive Media
Nicholson School of Communication and Media
College of Arts and Humanities
University of Central Florida

Defining an Equitable Workload and Course Types

The Department of Games and Interactive Media is an interdisciplinary unit offering a diverse range of courses and modalities reflecting the diverse skill sets required for the development, design, and evaluation of digital media. Courses in the department are offered by two primary categories of faculty, tenure-earning and instructor/lecturers/research associates. As the teaching This document establishes policies for creating equitable workload assignment in all of these faculty categories and will define a “course” for the purposes of course assignments across the unit. It also governs the priority assignment of graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) and undergraduate graders based on the categorization and scale of a course.

For the purposes of department assignment and modalities, there are four categories of courses: Graduate Courses, Development-Intensive Courses, Development Hybrid Courses, and Foundational/Theoretical Courses. As this policy will go into effect Fall 2019 with the department’s transition to the downtown campus, caps for course types are reflective both of pedagogical needs and the available classrooms equipped to serve the department downtown.

In accordance with peer institutions and pedagogical best practices, the department faculty recognize that all upper level (3000 and 4000) courses should be taught using a Development-Intensive Modality. External review of the program in 2016 noted the significant challenges faced by students in courses that would traditionally be taught at studio scale, but have instead been growing in scale every semester, with a corresponding drop in student outcomes as documented through internal assessment. As additional resources become available, courses at that level currently listed as Development Hybrid or Foundational/Theoretical courses will be reassessed and relocated wherever possible to meet the aspirational goals of the department and university.

Course Assignment Policies

Given the diverse skill sets represented across Games and Interactive Media courses, faculty fit and knowledge will be the primary consideration when making course assignments. Some classes have additional requirements for instructors: graduate courses can only be staffed by those who have met the college’s requirements and been certified as graduate faculty.

However, to ensure as fair as possible a distribution of class sizes, the following policies will be followed while scheduling courses:

- No faculty member will teach more than half their assigned annual course load in foundational/theoretical courses, except if requested by the faculty member or determined by the faculty member's university teaching credential status
- No faculty member will teach more than half their assigned annual course load in graduate courses, except when contractually determined
- No faculty member will be asked to prep more than two new courses a year, except when that is not possible (i.e., for a new faculty member or following the introduction of new curriculum)

GTA Assignment Policy

Given the diverse skill sets represented among the MA and PhD students who serve in this role, student fit and knowledge will be the primary consideration when making course assignments, within university-level assignment requirements. Faculty evaluations and feedback will be used over time to align students with suitable assignments and roles.

Graduate Courses

Courses offered at the graduate level (5xxx or 6xxx) in Games and Interactive Media reflect an intense combination of mentorship and development time. As such, they are capped at 20 and offered in modalities corresponding with their content. Graduate courses are counted as one course assignment (.11) of a faculty assignment. This enrollment cap cannot be exceeded without special dispensation of the instructor, due to the potential impact on the quality of graduate education.

Development-Intensive Courses

Development intensive courses are designated with a "C" and offered in a lecture/lab modality. These courses are at the heart of the Digital Media curriculum, as they occur in the later half of the curriculum and ask students to engage in complex, original projects that combine skills in design, prototyping, development, and project management. Courses may involve focused iterative projects (such as capstone workshop course collaborations) or intensive skills development with critique on coding or art style and design practices occurring regularly. Given the intense production material of these courses, wherever possible these courses should be offered as a lecture/lab taught by the same instructor, with both lecture and lab meeting in a computer lab, and capped at a maximum of 45 students to allow for instructor/student engagement. If the physical lab space capacity does not meet this cap, the course must be capped at the physical lab space capacity. These courses are counted as one course assignment (.11) of a faculty assignment. This may take the form of either one lecture, one lab (4 contact hours) or two labs (4 contact hours).

Courses in this category include:

- DIG 3134C - Server-Side Scripting
- DIG 3174C - Front-End Web Design

- DIG 3728C - Game Testing
- DIG 4715C - Game Production
- DIG 4720C - Casual Game Production
- DIG 3727C - Game Level Design
- DIG 3602C - Physical Computing
- DIG 4324C - Modeling for Realtime Systems II
- DIG 4639C - Mobile Development
- DIG 4778C - Game Design Tools & Plugins
- DIG 4138C - Digital Sculpting
- DIG 4633C - Multi-Modal Design
- DIG 4295C - Game Optimization & Performance
- DIG 4294C - Post-Production Game FX
- DIG 4503C - Rapid Application Web Development
- DIG 4725C - Game Design Workshop I
- DIG 4726C - Game Design Workshop II
- DIG 4104C - Web Design Workshop I
- DIG 4172C - Web Design Workshop II

Development Hybrid Courses

Development hybrid courses typically combine design principles and theory with practice that builds on skills built in development intensive courses. Students in these courses usually work individually or in small teams in intensive assignments, which may include physical prototyping and hands-on exercises best facilitated in a smaller classroom. Content in these courses is typically divided 50/50 between theoretical principles and applied usage. They are typically taught in a mixed mode format and should be capped at a maximum of 80 (which reflects the cap on the GalM priority small classroom) and are counted as one course assignment (.11). If the cap exceeds this number, a GTA or undergraduate grader must be provided at 10 hours of support for every additional 40 students. If no GTA or undergraduate grader is available, faculty must receive additional consideration through either an adjusted course assignment (1.5 courses, or .16, up to a maximum of 120 students). If additional GTA support is available after required courses are staffed pursuant to the policies in this document, hybrid courses receive second priority for support in order of enrollment.

Courses in this category include:

- DIG 3175 - Design for Accessibility and Engagement
- DIG 3480 - Computer as a Medium
- DIG 3525 - Digital Media Production I
- DIG 3811 - User-Centered Design
- DIG 4713 - Game Design
- DIG 4780C - Modeling for Realtime Systems

Foundational / Theoretical Courses

Foundational and theoretical courses typically involve written and foundational design assignments. These courses survey key concepts in digital media, introduce technical skills through the use of software or the foundational practices of scripting, and incorporate virtual lab assignments building towards small, individual projects. They are typically taught in a mixed mode or online format to large numbers of students and should be capped at a maximum of 140 (which reflects the cap on the GalM priority large classroom) and are counted as one course assignment (.11). Due to the intense grading challenge presented by these courses, all foundational and theoretical courses receive priority for GTA assignment and should receive 10 hours of GTA support at a minimum. If the cap exceeds the above number, a GTA or undergraduate grader must be provided at an additional 10 hours of support for every additional 40 students. If no GTA or undergraduate grader is available, faculty must receive additional consideration through either an adjusted course assignment (1.5 courses, or .16, up to a maximum of 180 students, or 2 courses (.22) at 280 students).

Courses in this category include:

- DIG 2000 - Introduction to Digital Media
- DIG 2030 - Digital Video Fundamentals
- DIG 2109 - Digital Imaging Fundamentals
- DIG 2500 - Fundamentals of Interactive Design
- DIG 2783 - Fundamentals of Game Art
- DIG 3024 - Digital Cultures & Narrative
- DIG 3043 - Evolution of Video Games
- DIG 3146 - Social Platforms
- DIG 4630C - Creative Industries
- DIG 4813 - Contemporary Topics in Digital Media

Faculty Workload Assignment

A base faculty workload is determined by category and calculated following the above course definitions.

- Tenure-earning (untenured) faculty: base course assignment of 2/2 (.44 teaching, .44 research / creative activity, .12 service)
- Tenured faculty: base course assignment of 3/3 (.66 teaching, .22 research / creative activity, .12 service)
- Instructor/Lecture: base course assignment of 4/4 (.88 teaching, .12 service)

As some courses may be weighted at 1.5 pursuant to the course scale definitions provided above, any assignment may be amortized across the year in consultation with the faculty member: for example, a faculty member assigned to a 2/2 might teach 2.5 in the fall and 1.5 in the spring.

If increasing the scale of a course would increase a faculty member's load beyond their assignment, one of the following solutions must instead be implemented:

- An adjunct might be hired to allow for an additional course section, splitting the enrollment if possible
- A GTA or undergraduate grader can be provided to allow grading support for the additional enrollment
- However, if no resources are available for one of the above solutions, the cap must be maintained to preserve faculty load

Faculty may receive additional course releases based on administrative duty, corresponding with their role. For internal administrative roles, releases will include:

- Assistant Director / Chair: 2/2 course release
- Vice Chair: 1/1 course release

These releases may be revised as needed based on changes in the administrative structure of the department or school. Releases might be taken in different semesters to allow for coverage of specialized courses as needed (for example, a chair might teach 2 courses in fall and none in spring).

Grant-enabled, funded course releases are not included in these calculations and can provide faculty with additional release; however as a general rule, no faculty member should go below a 1/1 assignment in any academic year without prior approval of the Chair and Director.

Tenured Faculty Research Workload Adjustment

A tenured faculty member who is not receiving an administrative release can be placed into one of three categories:

- **Research-intensive:** A tenured faculty member is eligible for designation as research-intensive faculty based on their previous three years of annual evaluations, and must have received "above satisfactory" on research during that time. Research-intensive faculty will receive a base course assignment of 2/3. If "above satisfactory" or higher on research is not maintained, the faculty member will revert to a balanced course load. If "above satisfactory" is consistently maintained over five years of annual evaluations, the faculty member may request consideration for a 2/2 assignment dependent upon the availability of resources to cover released courses.
- **Balanced:** Any tenured faculty member with demonstrated research productivity consistently at "satisfactory" on research may elect for a balanced course load, with a 3/3 course assignment. This assignment is considered the default for tenured faculty in the unit.

- Teaching-intensive: Any tenured faculty member consistently at “satisfactory” on teaching is eligible for designation as teaching-intensive faculty, and will be assigned a 3/4 or 4/4 in consultation with the chair, and with a corresponding reduction to the research assignment, either through request or in consultation with the chair. If a faculty member whose assignment has emphasized teaching desires to return to a research emphasis, the faculty member may develop a plan for returning to a course load reduction.

A tenured faculty member who is not receiving an administrative release and receives below the “satisfactory” level on both research and teaching for two years in a row will be asked to consult with their chair to determine a suitable workload assignment.

Procedures for Changing and Updating this Document

This document will be revised as needed by convening a subcommittee of the faculty and upon majority vote of the full faculty.