

Guiding Principles for Course Assignment in The Nicholson School of Communication and Media

Underlying Principles

1. **Fair and equitable course assignment is central to faculty job satisfaction.** Therefore, procedures should be standardized and, to some extent, formalized.
2. **Differences between program areas in NSCM make it impossible to develop a one-size-fits all procedure.** Each area has unique course assignment challenges, so each should develop a system that takes these needs into account while still adhering to general guidelines expressed below.
3. **The overarching driver of course assignment is programmatic need.** That is, the needs of students to have certain courses, taught by qualified personnel, at certain hours takes precedence over any individual faculty member's preferences.
4. **Guidelines for prioritization should be consistently applied.**
5. **Research productivity issues as they affect course assignment are not addressed in this document.** Those are addressed in the equitable load policy.

Principles of Transparency and Communication

The following principles should be followed regarding communication with faculty about course assignment:

1. **Communication should take place early.** Schedulers should inquire early regarding specific teaching preferences of faculty members at least once per year. Records of these inquiries should be retained for future reference.
2. **Course assignment should be a transparent process.** Faculty members should be informed how course assignments are determined in their unit.
3. **Faculty members with concerns about assigned courses should contact the scheduler as soon as possible.** If they have remaining concerns, they may contact their Assistant Director, and following that, the Director of NSCM.

Criteria for Determining Course Assignment

A mix of the following criteria should be used to determine course assignment:

1. **Faculty qualification.** Possible evidence of expertise includes having:
 - a. studied the specific subject matter at the doctoral level or master's level;
 - b. published refereed work, or completed a research project that is not yet published, in the subject area;
 - c. demonstrated substantial industry experience in the specific subject area (for undergraduate and master's courses);
 - d. established a history of teaching the course and having developed effective teaching techniques;
 - e. demonstrated research expertise in any research methods courses; and, on occasion
 - f. verifiably committed themselves to expanding their knowledge in an area of specialization.

2. **Development of program teaching resources.** All regular courses should have a bench of at least two qualified teachers.
3. **Equity.** Equity concerns might include size of classes, number of course preparations, time of day, subject area preference, or other concern. Sometimes equity may have to be achieved over more than a single semester. For example, if two faculty members want to teach the same course, they may be placed on a rotation. Equity considerations will vary depending on specific characteristics of each unit. The following are equity considerations that might be considered, but these are intended by way of illustration only.
 - a. If one of the faculty members is teaching several large classes, they might be given priority for the smaller course they want to teach.
 - b. Assistant professors' teaching schedules especially need to be assigned such that they do not have a large number of course preparations over their tenure earning period.
 - c. People who have taken on additional duties for the program may be "compensated" by giving them priority in course assignment.
 - d. Seniority in terms of time at the institution or faculty rank can be a basis on which decisions are made. This can operate either on the principle that seniority should have its rewards, or that with seniority should come the willingness to sacrifice one's own desires for the good of the unit.
 - e. People with one or more new preparations, or with a modality change of a previously taught course, might be given priority for other course assignments in their schedule.
4. **Faculty status.** That is, full-time status versus adjunct or GTA. In general, with all else being equal, full-time faculty should be given priority. It is understood, however, that all else is often not equal.