

# UMass Boston Policy on Faculty Course Buyouts (Revised January 2022)

## I. Policy

Tenured and tenure-track faculty members may, with proper approvals in advance, buy out courses to free up time for advancing their scholarly work and research endeavors. This policy governs all course buyouts, regardless of the source of funds. Course buyouts are generally funded from grants, contracts or other external sources.

### A. Definitions

Course Buyout: A type of course release from instruction granted to an individual faculty member in exchange for external funding, awarded to the faculty member being released. The funding is used to pay for a substitute instructor and any other related personnel costs (i.e., temporary staff, department administrators, hourly students). A course buyout applies when a faculty member pays a portion of their salary from a grant, contract, or other externally funded source.

Percentage of Effort: The amount required for a course buyout is based on a percentage of total effort. This is the equivalent percentage of base 9-month salary plus fringe benefits to be funded by the external source, unless the salary is above a mandated salary cap such as the Federal NIH Salary Cap (12-month salary of \$199,300 for 2021\*). In these instances, the cost for buyout is based on the 9-month equivalent of the salary cap (for NIH, this is equivalent to \$149,475).

*\* the NIH Salary Cap can change on an annually and other funding agencies use this as a basis.*

### B. Chair/Director Review

The department chair or center/institute director has authority to approve or deny course buyout requests based on overall departmental needs, including continuity of course offerings, but must also prioritize the need for the faculty member to fulfill the responsibilities of the grant/research during the duration of the award, as approved at the time of proposal submission.

The chair or director should assess the impact of the proposed course buyout on the department/program's curriculum. A course buyout will only be considered if the department/program's curricular needs can be met for the semester(s) requested.

The following factors should be considered by the unit chair or director:

- a. Department/program needs (curriculum schedule, faculty on leave, administrative or service assignments)
- b. Course enrollment numbers
- c. Other instructional releases
- d. Suitable teaching replacements; and
- e. Number of sabbaticals/leaves/availability of other faculty in the department.

Faculty holding joint appointments will be governed by terms of the appointment for teaching responsibilities and teaching load. Course buyouts of cross listed courses must also have approval of both impacted units.

### C. Service and Administrative Responsibilities

A course buyout does not release a faculty member from their professional obligations to the university, including service and advising responsibilities. A faculty member buying out of a course will be expected to participate fully in service and administrative

duties. The buyout is strictly for teaching and must not be construed as approval for a full-time appointment to research.

**D. Review and Approval Timeline**

A faculty member requesting a course buyout must plan accordingly to provide sufficient notification to the department chair or director. Requests for fall semester buyouts should be submitted to the Provost’s Office by the appropriate Dean’s Office, after approval of the relevant department chair or director, by no later than February 20. Requests for spring semester buyouts should be submitted by no later than October 20.

**E. Course Buyout Calculations**

The percent effort typically associated with instruction is **40%** of faculty academic effort, although this may vary by faculty and department. Calculations for the amount of course buyouts for each semester, for varying teaching loads is shown below, with examples in Table 1.

- a. 1:1 Teaching Load  
20%: With an annual load of 2 courses, the rate for a single course is therefore half of the percent effort associated with instruction, or 20%.
- b. 1:2 Teaching Load  
15%: With an annual load of 3 courses, the rate for a single course is therefore one third of the percent effort associated with instruction, or 15%.
- c. 2:2 Teaching Load (Normal Teaching Load for Research Active Faculty)  
10%: With an annual teaching load of 4 courses, the rate for a single course is therefore a 25% of the percent effort associated with instruction, or 10%.
- d. 2:3 Teaching Load  
8%: With an annual load of 5 courses, the rate for a single course is therefore 20% of the percent effort associated with instruction, or 8%.
- e. 3:3 Teaching Load  
6.7%: With an annual load of 6 courses, the rate for a single course is therefore 16.7% of the percent effort associated with instruction, or 6.7%.

**Table 1: Examples of course buy out costs for varying 9-month salaries**

9 month base salary*	Cost to buyout 1 course based on teaching load*				
	1:1	1:2	2:2	2:3	3:3
	20%	15%	10%	8%	6.7%
\$75,000	\$15,000	\$11,250	\$7,500	\$6,000	\$5,025
\$100,000	\$20,000	\$15,000	\$10,000	\$8,000	\$6,700
> \$149,475**	\$29,895	\$22,421	\$14,948	\$11,958	\$10,015

\* calculation does not include fringe benefits, which need to be funded by the external source; see [UMB ORSP](#) for most recent fringe benefits rates.

\*\* NIH Salary cap as of Jan. 2021 (subject to change and can be restricted by the year awarded)

**F. Funding** –The salary savings generated by course buyouts will be accounted for in the Provost’s Office, but each unit will be allowed access to the savings for the replacement cost and other research-related purposes within each fiscal year. All such requests must be made to the Provost’s Office at least one month prior to the end of the fiscal year during which the funds are being utilized. As the campus moves to Activity-based Budgeting, the process will be reviewed and updated.

**II. Approval Process**

To request a course buyout, a faculty member should complete the [Faculty Course Buyout Request Form](#) and submit to the department chair or director for review and approval.

The department chair or director will review the request. If approved, it should be forwarded to the appropriate dean (or relevant unit-level head) for evaluation of course scheduling needs and be submitted to the Provost's Office by no later than February 20 (for Fall semester buyouts) or no later than October 20 (for Spring semester buyouts). Once approval is received from the unit level, corresponding Electronic Personnel Action Forms (ePAFs) should be completed by the department to both start and end the course buyout.

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### **References**

- 2005 Faculty Buyout Guidelines:  
[https://www.umb.edu/editor\\_uploads/images/research/Faculty\\_Buyout\\_Guidelines\\_-\\_2005.pdf](https://www.umb.edu/editor_uploads/images/research/Faculty_Buyout_Guidelines_-_2005.pdf)
- Faculty Handbook:  
[https://www.umb.edu/editor\\_uploads/images/ofd/UMass\\_Boston\\_Faculty\\_Handbook.pdf](https://www.umb.edu/editor_uploads/images/ofd/UMass_Boston_Faculty_Handbook.pdf)