



Academic Unit Head—Responsibilities, Selection, and Evaluation

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the roles, selection process, and subsequent evaluation of the unit head of an academic department/division/school.

Persons Affected

Chairs, Directors, Deans, faculty, and staff members

Definitions

Academic Unit: An administrative subdivision (department, division, or school) of an academic college which includes teaching staff responsible instruction in a particular set of subject matter areas or field of study disciplines. The academic unit is designated as an official administrative group in the academic degree program inventory recorded with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Unit Head: the chief executive of an academic unit. Some academic departments may refer to this position by another name, such as “department chair,” “department head,” or “director.”

Procedures

A. Responsibilities of the unit head

The primary responsibilities of the unit head are to establish and maintain a climate conducive to the pursuit of knowledge. The decisions of the unit head should be made and implemented in the context of collegiality and regular communication. More specifically, the administrative responsibilities of a unit head include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Provide leadership in the establishment of a visionary direction and the maintenance of standards for the academic unit, consistent with college and university missions;
- Serve as the principal advocate for the unit and as an advocate for the college and university missions;
- Ensure quality through evaluation, modification, and development of academic programs;
- Respond to the needs of students, faculty, administration, the public, and others;
- Develop and manage course schedules for each semester/parts of term;
- Assign and manage faculty workload;
- Manage and allocate fiscal and physical resources of the unit;
- Establish, maintain, and communicate effective personnel management procedures and processes; and
- Promote the academic unit externally.

B. Selection of the Academic Unit Head

A search and screening committee will be used in each search for an academic unit head. The



dean of the college will meet with the faculty of the academic unit prior to the selection of the screening committee and will determine whether a search should be open or closed to outside candidates.

1. The committee will be formed by the dean of the college in consultation with the faculty of the academic unit and with the approval of the provost and executive vice president for academic affairs. The committee will have an odd number of members, with at least five members. The committee may be larger depending on the size and complexity of the unit's programs.
2. Every committee will have representation from outside the academic unit and at least one member with appropriate administrative experience. Outside representatives will be appointed by the dean after considering recommendations by the faculty.
3. Once the size of the committee is established, the faculty will elect its specified number of representatives to the committee. Faculty members eligible to vote will hold faculty rank of instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, professor, or librarian I-IV in the academic unit. When possible, all tenure-track ranks will be represented on the committee. In all cases, the faculty will elect a majority of the committee. Changes to the composition of the search committee may be considered with the approval of the dean and the provost and executive vice president.
4. The dean will convene the committee for its organizational meeting at which time the committee will elect its chair and other officers. Guidelines for the logistics of the search will be provided by the dean, in accordance with any requirements of the Department of Human Resources. The committee chair will inform the faculty of the names of the committee members.
5. Candidates invited to campus for interviews will be provided ample opportunity to meet faculty, students, the dean of the college, the provost and executive vice-president for academic affairs and the committee, as well as other individuals and groups, as appropriate.
6. Following the interviews, the committee will invite comments from all faculty, staff, students, and other individuals and groups, as appropriate, who were involved in the campus visits. The committee will forward strengths and concerns for each finalist and/or a recommendation to the dean along with a summary of comments. The dean, in turn, will forward strengths and concerns and/or a recommendation to the provost and executive vice president for academic affairs that is accompanied by all previous recommendations and summaries.
7. The provost and executive vice president for academic affairs, or designee, will make the appointment for an indeterminate term, subject to approval by the president and the Board of Regents.

C. Academic Unit Head Appointments

Academic unit heads are appointed on the basis of a 12-month contract and for three-year



renewable terms (see UTS 182 Sec. 4.1). Academic unit heads are expected to be on duty each workday. Vacation and sick leave are earned according to the schedule for Texas state employees. Academic unit heads are subject to being called upon to address a task or issue outside the normal workday when it is determined by the dean to be in the best interest of the university.

D. Evaluation of the Academic Unit Head

The evaluation of the academic unit heads is designed to promote academic excellence throughout the university. This process takes two forms: periodic reviews by the academic unit faculty, and annual administrative evaluation by the dean. The annual administrative evaluation provides the basis upon which to award merit to unit heads.

1. The unit head will be evaluated annually by the dean of the college. In making an evaluation, the dean will consider the responsibilities of the unit head as stated above, while any additional criteria will be communicated to the unit heads in advance of the evaluation period.
2. After the completion of the first year and every third year thereafter, only the faculty and staff of the academic unit will evaluate the unit head's performance (see UTS 182 Sec. 6.2). A summation of the faculty's evaluations of the unit head will be included as a component of the final evaluation report. Following the faculty's evaluation, the dean will meet with the unit faculty to discuss the unit head's performance. In the event the dean does not provide feedback in a timely fashion, the unit faculty may request a meeting regarding the matter.
3. The evaluation of a unit head may be initiated at any time by a majority of all full-time faculty or at the call of the unit head, dean, provost and executive vice president of academic affairs, or president. Comments which may have been received relative to the unit head's performance and the advisability of retention should be carefully weighed for both the annual and triennial reviews. Exceptions to the evaluation timeline require approval of the dean in consultation with the provost and executive vice president of academic affairs and would reset the triennial cycle.
4. The dean will review with the unit head the results of each evaluation. A report of the evaluation and any recommendations will be submitted to the provost and executive vice president for academic affairs. Simultaneously, a copy shall be provided to the unit head under review.
5. The unit head will have ten (10) working days from the date of the review to submit to the provost and executive vice president for academic affairs a written response to the dean's report.
6. At the conclusion of the triennial evaluation, the dean and provost and executive vice president for academic affairs may recommend an additional term for the academic unit head.

E. Merit for Academic Unit Heads



Merit pay for unit heads will be based on the annual administrative evaluation conducted by the dean. The dean will submit a recommendation on each unit head in the college to the provost and executive vice president for academic affairs for merit consideration.

F. Teaching Load for Academic Unit Heads

1. The teaching load of academic unit heads, including interim appointments, is determined annually by the college dean in consultation with the academic unit head based on the changing needs and objectives of the unit.
2. Factors such as number of faculty (full-time equivalent [FTE]), number of majors, and complexity of the unit are considered in determining the teaching load of the unit head for the full contract year (September 1 through August 31). However, there should be no more than 6 TLCs (or two classes) assigned to the academic unit head per contract year as identified by the respective college workload policy.
3. In justifiable situations, any workload beyond 6 TLCs (or two classes) by the academic unit head shall qualify the academic unit head for additional compensation. For academic unit heads that are 100% administrative, that is they normally do not teach and carry a 0 TLC load, additional compensation would be warranted for any additional teaching duties.
4. When the TLCs of the academic unit head exceeds the base of 6 assigned TLCs (or two classes), then additional compensation is justified. In such situations, a clear justification (e.g. lack of qualified personnel, accreditation, meeting programmatic and student needs, etc.) for the additional load to meet department and college need and goals should be articulated by the academic unit head and approved by the dean and the provost and vice president for academic affairs. If not approved by the respective dean and provost, then the unit head's TLCs shall not exceed 6 TLCs (or two classes).
5. An academic unit head who accepts an overload assignment will fulfill the responsibility beyond normal contractual workload.

G. Retreat to Faculty Salary for Academic Unit Heads

An academic unit head is a member of the faculty. As such, an academic unit head may also be subject to 9-month faculty contract. If a unit head is not retained or resigns from their position and returns to a 9-month faculty position, then their retreat to faculty (R2F) salary shall follow the guidelines below.

1. If an academic unit head, excluding interim appointments, is in the position for less than, or equal to, six (6) calendar years and the R2F salary was not explicitly determined in their initial unit head appointment contract, then the R2F salary is determined by the dean and the academic unit head in consultation with the provost and executive vice president for academic affairs and consistent with available CUPA-HR data, academic rank, years of service, and comparable salaries within the department and college.



2. If an academic unit head is in the position for more than 6 calendar years, then the minimum R2F salary shall be determined to be the 9-month equivalent of their corresponding 12-month academic unit contract. That is, $R2F = 9 / 12 * (12 \text{ Month Salary})$. Academic unit heads serving more than 10 years should exceed this formula, while those serving less than or equal to 10 years may also exceed this formula.

In both circumstances, any pay increases earned through academic promotion shall be retained at 100%.

Related Statutes or Regulations, Rules, Policies, or Standards

UTS 182- Selection, Appointment, Roles and Responsibilities, Evaluation, and Training of Department Chairs at Academic Institutions

SFA HOP 02-311 Faculty Merit Pay
SFA HOP 02-313 Faculty Workload
SFA HOP 03-505 Sick Leave
SFA HOP 03-406 Overtime and Compensatory Time
SFA HOP 03-507 Vacation Leave
SFA HOP 03-221 Working Hours and Holidays

Responsible Executive

Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Forms

None

Revision History

Sept. 1, 2023 (original)