



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 for 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. All full-time faculty members within the unit will be eligible to vote. 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 for academic affairs.
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 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.
7. The academic unit head will be appointed by the dean with the concurrence of the provost and executive vice president for academic affairs.

C. Academic Unit Head Appointments

Academic unit heads are appointed on the basis of a 12-month appointment (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 may also earn compensatory time in accordance with HOP 03-407. 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.

Vacancies in the position of department chair shall be filled at the earliest possible date. After consultation with faculty, interim chairs may be appointed as interim chair for up to one (1) year



to temporarily fill a vacancy. On an exception basis, interim appointments may be extended by the Dean with concurrence of the Provost and Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs (See UTS 182 Sec 4.3)

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: comprehensive three-year 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. (Annual Evaluation) 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.
 - a. The dean will review the evaluation report that includes a summary, term-length remaining, and return to faculty salary which will be submitted to the provost and executive vice president for academic affairs. Simultaneously, the aforementioned report will be provided in writing to the unit head under review.
 - b. 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.
2. (Comprehensive Evaluation) 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). The dean will meet with the unit faculty and staff to discuss the unit head's performance. The academic unit head will be provided full access to the data used in the comprehensive evaluation, including faculty's evaluations, with identifiers removed. In the event the dean does not provide feedback in a timely fashion, the unit faculty and/or chair may request a meeting with the dean regarding the matter.
 - a. The dean will review a report that documents the results of each comprehensive evaluation with the unit head. The report will include a written evaluation summary and recommendation on appointment renewal, including term-length and return to faculty salary. The report will be submitted to the provost and executive vice president for academic affairs. Simultaneously, the aforementioned report will be provided in writing to the unit head under review.
 - b. The unit head will have 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.
 - c. At the conclusion of the comprehensive evaluation, the dean and provost and executive vice president for academic affairs may recommend an additional term for the academic unit head.
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.

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 faculty equivalent [FTFE]), 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). There should be no more than six TLCs assigned to the academic unit head per contract year.
3. Any workload beyond six TLCs by the academic unit head qualifies 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 zero 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 six assigned TLCs, 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 executive vice president for academic affairs. If not approved by the respective dean and provost and executive vice president for academic affairs, then the unit head's TLCs shall not exceed six TLCs.
5. An academic unit head who accepts an overload assignment will fulfill the responsibility beyond normal contractual workload.

G. Return to Faculty Salary for Academic Unit Heads

An academic unit head is a member of the faculty. If a unit head is not retained or resigns from their position and returns to a 9-month faculty position, then their return to faculty (R2F) salary shall follow the guidelines below.

1. If an academic unit head, excluding interim and rotating appointments, is in the position for less than, or equal to, six calendar years then the R2F salary is the 9-month equivalent



of their 12-month academic unit contract plus additional merit and equity. Fixed salary increases due to promotion or other scenarios should be maintained in full. Interim and rotating academic unit heads will return to their previous faculty salary maintaining all merit and equity raises obtained during their service as an academic unit head.

2. If an academic unit head is in the position for more than six calendar years, then the minimum R2F salary shall be equivalent to between nine and 10-months of their corresponding 12-month academic unit contract, as negotiated with the dean and in consultation with the provost and executive vice president for academic affairs and in consideration of internal and external data comparisons, such as available CUPA-HR data, academic rank, years of service, and comparable salaries within the department and college. A 50% reduction in all academic teaching responsibilities may be provided for the first full academic year as a returning member of the faculty.

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 03-403 Faculty Compensation
SFA HOP 03-404 Faculty Merit Pay
SFA HOP 02-312 Faculty Workload SFA HOP 03-505 Sick Leave
SFA HOP 03-407 Overtime and Compensatory Time
SFA HOP 03-507 Vacation Leave
SFA HOP 03-221 Working Hours and Holidays
SFA HOP 01-201 Administrative Officers

Responsible Executive

Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Forms

None

Revision History

Sept. 1, 2023 (original)
August 8, 2024

Educational Policy