

CLAS Policy on Effort for Externally Funded Projects
Office of Research and Creative Activities, July 1, 2026

Faculty submitting requests for external funding for research, creative activities, and other educational and outreach programs are expected to include funding to cover the effort that they will spend on this work during both the summer and academic year, consistent with the rules and guidelines of the sponsoring organization, CLAS, and CU Denver policies.

Summer effort involves additional pay to faculty members on a nine-month contract. Academic-year funding includes funding for reallocation of time a faculty member would otherwise spend on internally funded research, service, and/or reallocation of effort from teaching to the externally funded activity (often described as course buyout or course release).

Overall Notes about Effort

Unless specifically prohibited by the rules and guidelines of the funding organization, all requests for external funding from Principal Investigators (PIs) within CLAS will explicitly include funding for the expected amount of time required to meet the scope and objectives of the project based on overall workload. The minimum amount of effort committed to a specific sponsored research activity may be no less than 1% of the PI's "University effort." Beyond the minimum effort listed below in Tables 1 and 2, the amount of effort committed to a sponsored project is left to the Principal Investigator, based on a best estimate of the actual effort required to meet the goals and outcomes of the proposed project. In most cases, it is expected that the effort will be substantially larger than the minimum. This should not be driven by the percentage of time that would allow for release from a course/courses or a certain amount of summer pay.¹

Salary amounts are calculated by multiplying the percentage by the faculty member's institutional base salary. Benefits will be estimated at the time of the application by using the University-specific average benefit rate. At the time of award, benefits will be charged at the individual's actual benefits rate.

For all proposals that include academic year effort and require course release time, effort must be included on the project or projects that is equal to or exceeds the required course buyout/release percentage below.

All course buyout requests must be approved in advance by the appropriate department chair². Tenure-track faculty are advised to buy out of no more than half of their normal teaching load, given that they must demonstrate at least meritorious performance in teaching to receive tenure.

Minimum Effort Requirement

At least 1% of a PIs time must be allocated to the project in each semester in which funded activity occurs. Some sponsors may require more effort, or they may limit the amount of effort key personnel may have on a proposal. Please read Requests for Proposals and Sponsor Guidelines carefully. CLAS and CU Denver will accept published and consistently applied rules as superseding this policy. If circumstances other than these arise, other exceptions will be considered. All exceptions to the 1% requirement must be approved in advance by the appropriate department chair and the Associate Dean for Research and Creative Activities.

Footnotes:

1. See the following references about level of effort.

- NIH: <https://grants.nih.gov/faqs#/senior-key-personnel.htm?anchor=question51340>
- OMB Memorandum M-01-06 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/2001-M-01-06-Clarification-of-OMB-A-21-Treatment-of-Voluntary-Uncommitted-Cost-Sharing-and-Tuition-Remission-Costs.pdf>
- Uniform Guidance 2 CFR § 200.430 <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2018-title2-vol1/pdf/CFR-2018-title2-vol1-sec200-430.pdf>

2. See <https://clas.ucdenver.edu/orca/how-submit-your-proposal#routing-11>

For all proposed projects, the budget must include:

1. funding of salary and benefits for any faculty effort to be devoted to the sponsored project during the summer;
2. funding of salary and benefits for any faculty academic-year time reallocated from internally- funded research, teaching, or service to the sponsored project including the minimal 1% effort;
3. where required, details of time devoted to the sponsored project that is not funded by the sponsor. Prior approval of the arrangement must be obtained from the appropriate department chair and the CLAS Associate Dean for Research and Creative Activities prior to the submission of the proposal. If effort not covered constitutes cost-share, sponsor required documentation must be provided.

Course Buyouts to Reallocate Time from both University Funded Teaching and University Funded Research to Externally Funded Research

For a nine-month tenured or tenure-track faculty member with a standard 40% research, 40% teaching, 20% service workload, the academic-year effort levels associated with course buyouts are shown in Tables 1 and 2 based on one of two methods that departments use to count how faculty members meet the 40% teaching load. Throughout, corresponding fringe benefits must also be budgeted. Course buyouts are expected to be used in the academic-year in which they are billed and any deviation from this expectation requires approval from both the department chair and the CLAS Associate Dean for Research and Creative Activities.

Table 1: Departments where teaching requirements are met by counting the number of courses

Course release	Total FTE <i>per course (%)</i>	Teaching FTE <i>per course (%)</i>	Research FTE <i>per course (%)</i>
1	10	10	0
2	15	10	5
3	15	10	5
4	15	10	5
Full buy-out	55	40	15

For departments where teaching requirements are met by counting the number of courses, the first course release funded through a grant reduces only the Teaching FTE associated with teaching a single course (10%) and is not expected to impact the 40% of FTE associated with university funded research activities. Any subsequent course releases are expected to reduce both the Teaching FTE (10% per course) and also the Research FTE associated with university funded research activities by 5% per course release resulting in a cost of 15% per course release. For example, a buy-out of 2 courses requires 25% FTE plus the associated fringe benefits to be budgeted.

Table 2: Departments where the teaching requirements are met by counting the number of credits

Credits released	Total FTE on grant <i>per credit hour (%)</i>	Teaching FTE <i>per credit hour (%)</i>	Research FTE <i>per credit hour (%)</i>
First 3 credits	3.33	3.33	0
Credits 4-12	5	3.33	1.67
Full buy-out	55	40	15

For departments where the teaching requirements are met by counting the number of credits, a buy-out of a single 3-credit course requires $3 \times 3.33 = 10\%$ FTE plus fringe benefits to be budgeted whereas the buy-out of a single 4-credit course requires $3 \times 3.33 + 5 = 15\%$ FTE plus fringe benefits to be budgeted. This serves to align the costs between departments who count teaching requirements by either the number of credits or by the number of courses.

Final notes

Course buyouts for research that use internal funds are expected to follow the same rules as those that use external funds.

Instructional, Research, and Clinical faculty should coordinate with their department chair for effort and teaching buyouts.

Instructional faculty (Instructors and Senior Instructors), with no specified research time, will be afforded a course reduction at a rate of 10% for a 3-credit course or 3.33% for each credit hour reduction in teaching.

Clinical faculty, with a maximum of 20% research time will receive course reductions at the same rate as the tenured and tenure-track faculty for the first two courses (10% for the first and 15% for the second). If any course releases are sought beyond two, please contact the CLAS Associate Dean of Research and Creative Activities.

Research faculty have no regular teaching responsibilities and so there is no formula for course reductions.

Contact the CLAS Associate Dean of Research and Creative Activities for any clarifications, questions, or situations that are not covered above.