

University of Rhode Island

Recommended Guidelines and Practices for Joint Appointments

The University of Rhode Island strongly values both disciplinary and interdisciplinary teaching and research. The Academic Plan 2010-2015: *Charting our Path to the Future: Toward a Renewed Culture of Achievement* highlights the need for expanded support for interdisciplinary efforts. A task force on interdisciplinary activities and the Joint Committee on Academic Planning endorse efforts to grow these activities, remove existing barriers within processes and structures at the University, and promote supportive processes that will advance these important endeavors alongside disciplinary approaches.

This document seeks to address and support efforts to advance interdisciplinary learning and research both at the undergraduate and graduate levels at the University of Rhode Island. It has the support of the Joint Committee on Academic Planning (JCAP).

Faculty members who hold a joint appointment are more likely to thrive and succeed in their academic career if their Colleges, departments, or units observe the guidelines below in carrying out their responsibilities to the faculty member.

These guidelines and practices are recommended for both new faculty hires and current faculty who are already engaged in, or may become engaged in, joint appointments.

Recommended Practices:

1. A faculty member may acquire a joint appointment in a variety of ways, including:

When two or more Colleges, departments, or units create a joint appointment, advertise the position, and jointly hire a faculty candidate;

When a unit that is recruiting a prospective faculty member learns during the recruitment process that the faculty member also wants to hold an appointment in another College, department, or unit; or

When a faculty member who already holds an instructional or clinical instructional appointment in a single College, department, program, or unit and wants to add an appointment in another.

In collaboration, the appointing Colleges, departments, or units should agree on the procedures they will use to appoint, evaluate, promote, resolve disputes, or change employment conditions for jointly appointed faculty.

For new joint appointments, the deans' office, department chairs, (if applicable) or unit heads of the two (or more) Colleges, departments, or units should collaboratively clarify between each other and with the faculty member and agree in writing as to how they will engage in key procedures related to the faculty member's academic career. Refer to the *URI Joint Appointment Checklist* and *URI Suggested Template Tool for a Joint Appointment*.

Faculty who are already in a joint appointment at URI may provide his/her written requests for specific provisions and also request to have in writing any/all relevant factors found in the *URI Joint Appointment Checklist* and *URI Suggested Template Tool for a Joint Appointment*.

*See section below on factors that should be addressed in writing

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2. One of the Colleges, departments, or units should agree to serve as the “administrative home.”

One of the involved Colleges, departments, or units should be designated as the *administrative home*, even though each College, department, or unit must maintain strong links to the jointly appointed faculty member. Often, but not always, the *administrative home* will be the unit with the higher appointment fraction. Everyone involved, including peers/faculty in each College, department, or unit in which the faculty member is jointly appointed, should know which unit is serving as the *administrative home*. During the hiring process for joint appointments, candidates should be invited to choose or indicate their potential desired home department. Respectively, deans and/or faculty of that (home) department should be involved in the search and interview process.

The *administrative home* will take the lead responsibility on: personnel issues including central human resources reporting, appointment, tenure, promotions, coordination of annual performance review, conflict resolution, sabbaticals, and changes in employment. It is expected that the administrative home will work cooperatively with the other Colleges, departments, or units involved in the joint appointment to ensure representation and feedback in all matters pertinent to the faculty member, in particular: mutually agreed upon expectations for teaching, research, service, and criteria relative to interdisciplinary work for tenure and promotion considerations, stipulations for how conflicts or concerns should be addressed by the faculty member (to whom/which department),

Simultaneously, each College, department, or unit in which a faculty member holds a joint academic appointment must share responsibility for communicating effectively and, where necessary, solving problems with the other academic unit(s) in which the faculty member also holds an appointment.

Credit hours follow the sponsoring (payee) unit/department for the faculty member's teaching. In interdisciplinary efforts this applies proportionally to corresponding teaching support from each college, department, unit as well. In research endeavors, the overhead and credits follow the PI's, whether they are shared or not, those credits and overhead funds get distributed accordingly.

3. Whenever possible, the corresponding deans' offices should agree on a single joint process for making promotion and tenure decisions about the jointly appointed faculty member.

A unified process for evaluation for promotion and tenure is the clearest and most expedient way to ensure that all Colleges, departments, or units are represented in the promotion process rather than having duplicate processes, which are both confusing and difficult for faculty members. When it is not possible for the Colleges, departments, or units to agree on a single process, the deans' offices should discuss the timing and key elements of the promotion processes in each academic unit so that the overall process can be streamlined, synchronized, and condensed. It is critical for each of the Colleges, departments, or units involved, and for the candidate or faculty member, to know what each party's responsibilities are. Also, all participants in the process must aim for a high level of clarity about expectations and concerns communicated.

The evaluation procedures of the Colleges, departments, or units should acknowledge the faculty member's multiple academic commitments and value his/her interdisciplinary work in the evaluation equally with discipline related work.

Both/all involved Colleges, departments, or units should make sure the faculty member understands the evaluation criteria that will be applied to his or her work. Evaluation procedures which work well for faculty within a single College or unit may need to be modified for faculty members who have joint appointments. In particular, Colleges, departments, and units often need to make special efforts to evaluate the interdisciplinary work as well as the service related work of faculty members with joint appointments with a different perspective than that of single disciplines.

4. Each College, department, or unit should take deliberate steps to help the jointly appointed faculty member become integrated into the respective unit communities.

Each College, department, or unit should provide the faculty member with opportunities to participate broadly in the life of the academic community. Ideally, the faculty member will have a substantive role in the scholarly activities and organizational responsibilities of each College, department, or unit where he or she has an appointment. It is especially important for the relevant units to make special efforts on this front when the majority of a faculty member's time is in a research institute but he or she holds tenure elsewhere.

5. A jointly appointed faculty member's overall effort and access to resources

should be comparable, in total, to faculty who hold appointments in only one College, department, or unit.

The Colleges, department, or units that share faculty members should work together to ensure that faculty members who hold joint appointments are not excessively burdened (i.e., advising, committee work, and other department service functions) and have access to resources that are comparable to those available to faculty with single appointments. Such resources may include mentoring, space, equipment, funding, and access to graduate students.

7. The faculty member who holds a joint appointment must play an active role in helping the Colleges, departments, or units to collaborate effectively.

The faculty member should make the effort to become familiar with the expectations and procedures of the various Colleges, departments, or units involved. If these procedures conflict, the faculty member should express these conflicts in a timely way. The faculty member often has information that the department chairs or deans' offices do not have; the faculty member should inform the relevant administrators of issues that arise as a result of the joint appointment.

8. When the faculty member encounters problems with the joint appointment, the deans' offices of the relevant Colleges, department, or unit should work together to address them.

*The memorandum of understanding or Joint Appointment memo/letter should be mutually developed between the faculty member and the Dean, department chair, or unit head and include:

- a. Tenure line(s). Specify where the faculty member may hold tenure.
- b. Workload. Discuss expectations with regard to the faculty member's research, teaching, service, etc. The overall demands on the faculty member should be reasonable (including the faculty member's number of advisees, both formal and informal) and appropriately balanced in terms of the fractional appointments. The teaching assignments should be coordinated, and possibilities for cross-listed courses should be discussed. Service expectations should be clearly delineated and coordinated.
- c. Criteria for evaluation. To the extent possible, all Colleges, departments, or units participating in the appointment should define the standards and criteria that each of them will use to assess the quality of the faculty member's scholarship or creative activity and teaching. These standards and criteria should take into account the unique features of interdisciplinary collaborative activity and the differences between or among the units where the faculty member holds appointments.
- d. Access to resources. Discuss and agree on the faculty member's access to resources in

each College, department, or unit (e.g., office space; administrative support; technology; funding, such as research seed money; mentoring; and graduate student support). All of the units in which the faculty member holds an appointment should provide funds to the faculty member in accordance with College, department, or unit practices, in a way that is proportional to the faculty member's percentage of appointment.

e. Allocation of research revenues. The involved Colleges, departments, or units should agree in advance about how they will handle revenues the faculty member generates through his or her research, where applicable. This agreement should be described in the memorandum of understanding.

f. Mentoring. If the appointment is for an untenured faculty member, each College, department, or unit should identify a mentor or advisor for the jointly appointed faculty member who is familiar with his or her interdisciplinary work. At least once a year, the joint mentors or advisors should discuss the performance and progress of the jointly appointed faculty member in order to facilitate this faculty member's self-reflection and self-evaluation, offer feedback and advice about his or her performance and progress, and collaborate on the faculty member's future goals .

g. Designation of the administrative home. For administrative purposes, all parties should agree on one College, department, or unit which has responsibility for coordinating efforts among the academic units--even in the instance of equally divided effort. This decision should be explicitly referenced in the memorandum of understanding. The administrative home will take responsibility for providing notification of reviews to the other Colleges, department, or units and the faculty member, preparing written memoranda of understanding for distribution to all parties, and providing opportunities for review and re-negotiation of agreements and plans. This designation does not alter the responsibility of each unit for good communication with the faculty member or for responsive problem solving.

h. Timing and conduct of reviews. At the time of the appointment and in consultation with the faculty member, the deans' offices should produce a written plan for conducting reviews (annual, tenure, and promotional). The plan should be streamlined as much as possible and include information about timing and any differences between the review procedures of the Colleges, departments, or units involved. If the units decide to conduct separate reviews, the department chairs or other relevant administrators should agree how they will communicate effectively throughout the review process.

In the case of a new assistant professor, the initial memorandum of understanding may defer, until the third year, making a specific plan for coordinating the tenure and promotional review.

*These recommended guidelines were endorsed by the University of Rhode Island Joint Committee on Academic Planning, March 2013

**SEE ALSO: *URI Recommended Principles for Joint Appointments and Checklist for Joint Appointments*