

07/09/24 [AllUnit] Period of Responsibility

Dear colleagues:

We hope you are enjoying the summer! We've received several questions about the meaning of the "period of responsibility" for faculty members on academic-year contracts, so we created this FAQ to clarify MSP's understanding.

Most faculty at UMass are appointed on academic-year (AY) contracts. Those appointments cover a fixed period of time, the academic year. Academic-year contracts are also known as nine-month contracts because our appointments cover almost nine months of the year. (By contrast, almost all librarians and some faculty with administrative/summer responsibilities are hired on calendar-year (CY) contracts that cover all twelve months. If that is you, no need to read the rest of this email!)

The 2024-25 period of responsibility for AY faculty is here:

https://umassmsp.org/site/assets/files/1029/2024_2025_academic_faculty_time_reporting_calendar.pdf. Dates that are shaded green are the only dates within the AY faculty period of responsibility. During the rest of the year, AY faculty are expected to pursue their own research, outreach, creative projects, conference travel, and more – but we cannot be assigned specific work for UMass. Here are some answers to specific questions – if you have other questions, email MSP@umass.edu.

FAQ:

1) If I receive a paycheck all summer, does that mean I'm on a "calendar-year" or 12-month faculty appointment?

No. Most faculty who are hired on academic-year contracts opt to spread their nine-month pay over the entire year, so we still receive paychecks during the summer. That does not change our period of responsibility for UMass work. (If you retire on May 31, for example, you are entitled

to a lump-sum payment of the salary you would have received in June, July and August – because you actually earned that salary during the academic year.)

2) Can my department chair assign work to AY faculty during the summer? What about January?

At UMass, the academic year consists of 160 weekdays – 80 days each semester. Academic-year faculty can be assigned specific time-sensitive tasks only during those times. Such tasks may include (depending on your own job description): preparing and teaching courses, advising students, attending departmental meetings, and participating in faculty governance meetings. We are “responsible” for completing those tasks, which may be date/time specific, during our 9 month contract.

During the rest of the year, AY faculty are not responsible for time-sensitive tasks. We cannot be required to show up for specific events, or to teach an on-load class, or to attend a regular department meeting where decisions will be made, or to hold graduate student comps or exams, for example. The summer, spring break, the last week of December, and the first two weeks of January are all outside of AY faculty responsible time.

3) How did the period of responsibility change when the winter term was extended?

Because of the longer winter session, the AY faculty period of responsibility in January now starts two weeks before spring term classes begin. This coming year, for example, our period of responsibility begins on January 15, 2025, while spring classes begin on January 30, 2025. Some time-sensitive work may need to happen during those two weeks (e.g., DPC work for personnel actions, grad admissions reviews, or faculty hiring meetings). January 15-30 is responsible time during which we can be required to do that work. The dates of the winter session may well change in the future, but the fact that we have 160 days of responsible time cannot change unless the MSP agrees.

4) Is spring break a period of responsibility?

No. If you look at the calendar for the coming year, for example, spring break is shaded orange. The 80 days of reportable time for the spring semester are shaded green – so our responsible

period does not include spring break. You may catch up on your own work or to take a vacation during spring break.

5) What if I want to do some departmental service, faculty governance, or committee work during the summer or winter break? Am I allowed?

Of course, you are allowed. If you are asked to do summer or winter work, the question is how you will be compensated. If your department needs you to work during non-responsible time, you have two options:

1. You can earn additional compensation (ad comp) for work that your department asks you to do outside of the period of responsibility. For example, if you are asked to represent your program at a new student orientation or summer advising session, you must be paid for that work, either at your regular hourly rate or through a stipend if this is a recurring part of your job (see #8 below).
2. If you take on departmental service in the summer, you can arrange to do less service or less teaching during the academic year, to compensate you for the time you spend. (If you make this kind of deal, please get it in writing!)

6) What if I just want to do extra committee work during the summer?

You are always free to volunteer your time for any cause that is dear to your heart, including your department if you choose. However, like all unions, MSP never wants our members to do uncompensated work; it undermines our arguments for full staffing, and it sets a precedent that makes it more difficult for everyone to be fairly compensated for work that is essential to our students, colleagues, and research programs.

7) But my grad students need me over the summer! If I refuse to meet with them, provide feedback on their drafts, or participate in their exams/defenses, I could prevent them from achieving their goals and graduating on time.

Some faculty have grants or other external funding to support research and related activities during the summer period of non-responsibility. If so, you are being compensated to supervise and work with your graduate students during those grant periods.

Others do not have such funding, so we use the summer to pursue our own projects. Many of us encounter situations where we feel moved to spend our personal time helping students with time-sensitive needs, but it is a sacrifice that comes at a cost to faculty. Many departments have written guidelines for graduate students, specifying that comps, defenses, and oral exams (for example) should be scheduled during the faculty period of responsibility. If your department does not have a policy, talk with your department leadership about establishing clear expectations for the graduate students. If your graduate advising load makes it impossible to avoid summer/winter work, you should request additional compensation or releases from other service obligations. As always, such arrangements should be in writing.

8) I'm a non-tenure-track faculty member on an AY contract, but I am a program coordinator or undergraduate advisor and my position requires some summer work every year. Is that allowed?

Many Lecturers, Senior Lecturers, Clinical Faculty and other NTT faculty do essential UMass work outside of the period of responsibility as part of their position. That's why the MSP negotiated this language in Article 21.2: **"NTT faculty members shall receive on-base stipends for recurring work that they are regularly expected to perform during non-responsible periods."** If your position requires work – including administrative work, program coordination, orientations, student advising, or the like – during the summer, winter, or spring break, you have the right to be paid in a stipend for that time. A stipend is usually paid over the course of the year, as regular salary. Unlike ad comp, stipends are included as part of your base pay for annual raises and pension calculations. If you do recurring summer or winter work as part of your position, you have the choice to be paid a stipend that is included in your base pay.