

Academic Readiness for Teaching Assignments

Although this debate has been around for a number of years, the issue of professors' readiness for subject and classroom assignments emerged more prominently during the academic year 2004-2005 in the context of on-going concerns, including fiscal and assignment preferences.

The document **Principles for Resolving Issues re: Academic Workload Assignment** is an important companion reference in this discussion. This statement, accepted in 2001 and updated in October 2004 at AUCC, lists principles for decision-making concerning the assignment of workload.

Positions on the solution of disputes over workload assignment have ranged from the professor being the sole determiner of readiness through to it being exclusively the domain of administration. Some faculty may believe that they are ready or not ready to undertake a course. Administration may have the opposite view. In reality, as we generally operate, the decision appears to be one in which both professors and administration must influence. More basically, it appears there are several factors that guide the decision about readiness for teaching assignments, including but not necessarily limited to:

- 1) The extent of the relationship between the professor's area of expertise and course content.
- 2) Familiarity with the material as a result of the professor's academic studies and/or work experience.
- 3) The degree of change that has occurred for this subject.
- 4) Professional competencies as defined by the workplace, external standards and/or accreditation.

In reviewing this issue, it became abundantly clear that planning leadership was key to limiting the debates (at times contentious) that occur around readiness for teaching assignments. With proper planning for future workloads, mismatches could be identified in advance. Then, a determination would be made whether development activities need to be undertaken in advance of the upcoming semesters. Such activities could include professional development, job shadowing, auditing, co-teaching, coursework, faculty renewal, rotational assignments, etc.

Such an approach in these situations ideally will result in faculty being and feeling prepared with sufficient subject matter expertise to be able to stand in front of students and ensure a quality learning experience. Administration, academic team leaders, and faculty are encouraged to continue to work collaboratively and collegially towards this end.