

San Francisco State University

Research, Scholarly, and Creative Activity (RSCA) Course Release Accountability Process and Annual Timeline

Purpose

San Francisco State University recognizes that sustained research, scholarly, and creative activity (RSCA) is essential to its academic mission. This program provides a structured process through which eligible faculty may account for and maintain up to a 0.2 FTE / one- course release from the standard 4–4 (24 WTU) teaching load in order to support substantial RSCA activity while maintaining meaningful service contributions to the University.

Scope and Eligibility

1. Standard Teaching Load

- The standard CSU contractual load for faculty is 4–4 (24 WTU) per academic year. At SFSU, most faculty receive a one course release per semester for RSCA activity. This accountability process is required in order for faculty to maintain the current release.

2. Accountability Requirements

- Faculty must demonstrate substantial RSCA activity over the prior two-year review period and
- Faculty must show documented service to the campus over the same period.

3. Ineligible Faculty

- Probationary (pre-tenure) faculty will maintain their current probationary course release/s and thus are not eligible for this course release program.
- Faculty in the Faculty Early Retirement Program (FERP) will maintain their current teaching load, and thus are not eligible for this program.
Note: Faculty who enter FERP after Fall '27 will be assigned a teaching load based on 12WTUs base load, per CBA.
- This policy does not supersede or replace other contractual or programmatic release time arrangements, including Chair time base arrangements, and grant-funded course buyouts.

4. Endowed Chairs

- Endowed chairs are required to submit RSCA dossiers under this program to demonstrate accountability to their offer letters/MOUs.
- If an endowed chair is meeting the criteria laid out in their MOU/offer letter, they will be granted a release consistent with the teaching load specified in said document

5. Minimum Teaching Load

- Unless explicitly stipulated otherwise in the appointed documentation for endowed chairs or other special agreements, faculty cannot expect to teach fewer than three courses per semester.

Duration of Release and Review Period

6. Period Under Review

- The review period for RSCA and service is the previous two academic years (or their calendar-year equivalent), immediately preceding the dossier deadline.
- For applicants currently serving as Chair/Director, the period under review is the two years prior to their most current appointment as Chair.

7. Duration of Release

- RSCA course releases awarded under this program are granted for a two-year period (four consecutive semesters, one course or 3WTUs per semester), subject to continued employment and departmental scheduling needs.
- Faculty who receive a RSCA course release do not re-submit a dossier in the first year of their release period, but may submit a new dossier in the second year of their release period for consideration of a subsequent two-year cycle.
- Faculty who are awarded tenure in the spring of each year will automatically receive a two-year RSCA course release for the following two years (e.g., if faculty receive tenure in spring '28, their release would be for AY '28-'29 and AY '29-'30) under this program without submitting an accountability report for the initial two years after receiving tenure.

Accountability Requirements

To maintain RSCA course release, faculty submit dossiers that document their recent RSCA activities. The dossier is considered complete when it includes:

8. Curriculum Vitae (CV)

- A current CV highlighting RSCA and service activities over the two-year review period.

9. One-Page RSCA Narrative

- A concise narrative (maximum one page, single-spaced) that describes the applicant's RSCA activities over the two-year review period, explains the coherence, direction, and impact of their RSCA agenda, and outlines specific goals and outcomes for the two-year release period (e.g., manuscripts to submit, exhibitions/performances planned, grant proposals).

10. Documentation of RSCA Activity

- Links or citations to documentable RSCA activity from the two-year review period, including but not limited to: peer-reviewed journal articles; monographs, books, edited collections; creative productions, performances, or exhibitions; signed contracts or official notifications from peer-reviewed journals or publishers; completed large federal grant application; and peer-reviewed conference presentations on in-progress or forthcoming publications.
- When links are not available, applicants may provide full citations and/or copies or excerpts of work.

11. Documentation of Service

- A summary of documentable service to the campus (department, college, university) over the two-year review period, including committee memberships and leadership roles, program coordination or curriculum development work, advising responsibilities beyond typical expectations (where applicable), and other significant service contributions that are included in the typical contractual service expectations (i.e., not including work that is compensated through stipends or assigned time).
- The summary should specify the title, nature, duration, and impact of each service activity.

12. Endowed Chairs: MOU/Offer Letter Alignment

- Endowed chairs must include a statement describing how their current RSCA and service activities fulfill the expectations of their MOU/offer letter, as well as any additional documentation suggested by the terms of their specific MOU/offer letter.

Evaluation Criteria

Submitted dossiers will be evaluated holistically, with attention to both RSCA and service:

13. RSCA Activity

- Reviewers will consider the quantity and quality of RSCA outputs over the two-year review period according to individual departmental or college criteria, evidence of peer review or equivalent disciplinary validation, the trajectory and coherence of the RSCA agenda, the feasibility and clarity of the work plan for the upcoming two-year release period, and the potential for publications, performances, productions, exhibitions, grant applications, and contributions to student research/creative engagement.

14. Service

- Consistent with the principle “No service, no RSCA release,” faculty must demonstrate active, meaningful service to the campus community beyond service that is already compensated with release time or stipends/additional pay . Reviewers will consider the level of engagement and leadership in service roles, the breadth and depth of contributions (department, college, university), and service activities that support student success.

Review Process

15. Submission

- Faculty submit their complete RSCA course release dossiers to the College (or designated dean’s office portal) by the stated deadline.

16. College RSCA Committee

- A College RSCA Committee (or equivalent body) reviews all dossiers annually. The committee confirms applicant eligibility, and evaluates dossiers using the evaluation criteria.

17. Recommendations and Decisions

- The College RSCA Committee forwards written recommendations (including brief rationales) to the Dean. The Dean, taking into account committee recommendations, forwards their recommendations to the Provost's office via the Office of Faculty Affairs for final approval.

18. Notification

- The Dean (or designee) notifies faculty of decisions in writing (email is acceptable) by early January each year. Decision letters should clearly state whether faculty will continue to be released from teaching at .2/semester or will be expected to teach an additional .2/semester, the effective dates of the release (two- year period), and any conditions attached to the release (e.g., reporting requirements, alignment with MOU for endowed chairs).

19. Appeals

- A limited appeal may be made only in cases of procedural error (e.g., missing materials that were timely submitted, misapplication of eligibility rules). Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Dean within 10 business days of notification. The Dean's decision on appeals is final.

Annual Timeline (for Notification by Early January)

To ensure that faculty receive decisions by early January and can plan their teaching schedules, the following annual cycle will be used. Specific dates may be adjusted for weekends and holidays, but the overall sequence and relative timing should be preserved.

20. June 1–15: Program Announcement

- Dean's office issues a call for submissions for RSCA course releases for the following academic year. The call includes eligibility rules, accountability requirements, submission deadline, and a link to this policy and any college-specific guidelines.

21. Sept 18: Dossier Deadline

- Completed dossier (CV, RSCA narrative, RSCA documentation, service documentation, any endowed-chair-specific documents) are due by 5:00 p.m. on September 18. Dossiers submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

22. Sept 21–Oct 21: Committee Review Period

- College RSCA Committee reviews all timely dossiers. The committee may request clarifications or additional documentation from faculty if necessary, with short turnaround times. By October 22, the committee forwards its recommendations to the Dean.

23. Oct 22–Dec. 3: Dean’s Review and Recommendations
- The Dean reviews committee recommendations and makes preliminary decisions. The Dean consults with department chairs as necessary to ensure curricular integrity and coverage. Recommendations are forwarded to the Office of Faculty Affairs no later than December 3.
24. By First Business Week of January: Formal Notification
- No later than the first Friday in January, the Dean (or designee) sends formal written notifications to each faculty submitting a dossier. Notifications specify approval or denial, the two academic years covered by the release, and the expected minimum teaching load (normally no fewer than three courses per semester, unless otherwise stipulated for endowed chairs).
25. January–February: Scheduling and Planning
- Department chairs incorporate RSCA course releases into course scheduling for the upcoming academic year. Faculty coordinate with chairs to adjust teaching assignments as needed.

Ongoing Responsibilities and Reporting

26. Faculty Responsibilities During Release
- Should faculty choose to apply for RSCA during the second year of their release, they will need to account for their productivity and service during their current release.