AD77 Engaging in Outside Professional Activities (Conflict of Commitment)
College of Arts & Architecture Guidelines

The AD77 policy addresses conflict of commitment in the professional activities of employees. A potential conflict of commitment occurs when external relationships or activities interfere with the employees’ primary professional obligation and commitment to the University. Most of the policy integrates existing policy on outside business activities and private consulting (AC80), use of university resources (FN14), and disclosure of significant financial interests (RP06). The policy also addresses teaching outside the University.

From AD77: University employees are prohibited from teaching at another institution in a manner inconsistent with their College’s Guidelines for the Implementation of AD77 unless prior written approval is obtained from the Budget Administrator (School Director/Department Head) and Budget Executive (Dean). Courses (resident or online) taught at another institution must not compete with coursework offered by the University. For purposes of this Policy, there is no distinction between resident or online teaching.

The University reserves the right to determine whether outside activities adversely affect the University mission. This provision applies throughout the calendar year, irrespective of the actual appointment period and subject to the discretion of the University.

Each College/Unit must promulgate its own set of Guidelines for the implementation of AD77, [which] should . . . identify a representative set of teaching activities that do, and do not, require approval from the Budget Administrator and Budget Executive.

It is the responsibility of the employee to bring to the budget administrator’s (school director/department head) attention the possibility of a potential conflict of commitment. The budget administrator must work with faculty and staff members to identify, manage, or eliminate potential conflicts.

To avoid having to check with the college administration on every possible external teaching activity, the College Academic Leadership Council has established the following guidelines to help employees decide when they need to ask for pre-approval.

The following do not require pre-approval by the Budget Administrator (School Director or Department Head) and Budget Executive (Dean):

- Occasional guest lectures and seminars at another institution.
- Serving on doctoral or master’s committee at another institution, when any compensation is only for travel expenses and perhaps a small honorarium (e.g., $2,500 or less.)
- Outside teaching that is not for academic credit, including professional education courses for licensing, etc.
- Outside teaching that is not in the general area of expertise of your appointment at Penn State.
- Outside teaching by FT-2 (part-time) faculty that does not interfere with Penn State assignment.
- Musical and other creative performances and exhibitions. (See AC80.)

Other activities may require more time, create the possibility for competition with Penn State offerings, or involve intellectual property ownership, increasing the possibility for a conflict of commitment.
Academic activities of the following type require pre-approval (before a contract is signed or specific arrangements are made) from the School Director/Department Head and Dean:

- Teaching or research/creative activity appointments (even short) that include intellectual property agreements;
- Teaching for credit during the academic year at another institution, domestic or international (likely not to be approved unless on an unpaid leave or it is part of an approved sabbatical plan);
- Tenured/tenure-line faculty teaching a summer credit course at another institution;
- Summer teaching by teaching faculty (likely to be approved if it does not interfere with teaching obligations at Penn State);
- Chairing Ph.D. committees at another institution, domestic or international;
- Holding a professional appointment at another institution, domestic or international (such as honorary chair; likely not to be approved unless on an unpaid leave or it is part of an approved sabbatical plan);
- More than one-day workshops or short course.

Example of academic activity that will not be approved:

- Tenure at another institution of higher education (unless a faculty member holds a visiting rank here, or if a faculty member holds emeritus status at another institution).

Approval process

1) Employee will request in writing to the budget administrator permission to pursue activities that may appear to create a conflict of commitment.
2) The budget administrator (school director/department head) will respond to the employee’s request, in writing, with notification to the dean and the HR office.
3) Unless the dean chooses to overturn the school director or department head’s recommendation, that decision will stand.
4) If permission is granted to engage in the activity, permission is granted only for the activity requested. Permission is not granted for all instances moving forward.

Policies to cross reference include;

AC80 – Private Consulting Practice
AD07 – Use of University Name, Symbols, and/or Graphic Devices
AD47 – General Standards of Professional Ethics
FN14 – Use of University Tangible Assets, Equipment, Supplies, and Services
HR35 – Public Service by Member of the Faculty and Staff
HR42 – Payment of Personal Compensation by a State Agency or Department of the Commonwealth
HR91 – Conflict of Interest
IP06 – Technology Transfer & Entrepreneurial Activity (Faculty Research)
RP06 – Disclosure and Management of Significant Financial Interests (Formerly RA20 Individual Conflict of Interest)

11.27.19 Developed in consultation with College Academic Leadership and Faculty Councils
9.27.20 Revisions to reflect University Guidelines and recommendations