

# Variation of Duties: Introduction and Overview

## Introduction

This scheme has been agreed by the Collegiate University for use from Michaelmas Term 2015, though, with the agreement of interested parties, it may be used in advance of that formal implementation.

The scheme provides for periods with variation in the balance of duties between the college and university parts of joint appointments, so enabling academics to focus on different aspects of their work at different stages in their careers. For example, individuals may wish to focus for a period on developing their research or establishing a new taught course; or they may wish to reduce their teaching and protect their research while they take their turn in an administrative role either for the University or for their College.

**It should be clear that the scheme is new in 2015, and the right is reserved subsequently to make changes to the Scheme in the light of experience. The scheme offers a flexible framework for considering and arranging Variations of Duties, and it does not establish any contractual right to such variations.**

## Overview

This overview is intended as a guide to the essential points of the scheme. The full details are set out separately in [The Scheme](#) and should be consulted by anyone seeking to arrange Variation of Duties.

The scheme is designed in the interests of equity and practicality to be applicable across the Collegiate University. The scheme is intended to meet the needs of academic staff holding joint appointments (i.e. Associate Professorships in the University held in conjunction with College Tutorial Fellowships) in order to support their career development as optimally as possible while also maintaining proper teaching provision, safeguarding both university and college interests, and being capable of providing any relevant external bodies with confidence as to the arrangements for academic duties at Oxford.

Variation of duties may involve a temporary reduction in almost any aspect of contractual duties (with the exception of the duty to serve as a university examiner). The variation available to any one member of staff necessarily has to be limited on grounds of fairness to others, both in terms of the opportunities available to all and the equitable distribution of the academic workload. For this reason, the maximum duration of a period of variation is normally limited to three years. In addition, variation has a financial cost. It follows that it will not be possible to agree to all requests, and some may need to be deferred. The scheme has considerable in-built flexibility and is intended as a framework embodying agreed norms to provide for greater transparency in decision-making.

A reduction in either university or college teaching is commonly a major aspect of variation, and, given the importance of teaching for the collegiate University, the scheme sets a maximum to the permissible reduction of duties: in brief, the duties owed to one employer

cannot normally be reduced under the scheme by more than 50% (e.g. in the case of college teaching, the limit is 50% of the college teaching stint and its associated duties). The

scheme also emphasizes the importance of ensuring proper provision for replacement teaching.

The scheme assumes that, over the long term, postholders will remain committed to the breadth of their joint appointment. Over an individual's career, the time allowed with maximum variation of duties should not exceed one half of the time spent working to standard contractual duties.

Variation of Duties is strictly subject to tripartite agreement in each case between the individual, the University, and the College. The scheme is designed to encourage and guide early discussion by these three parties so as to establish the reasonable expectations of each and to lead to agreement whenever possible. Where a reduction of teaching duties is involved, an arrangement may be made in which one employer (University or College) provides the other with replacement teaching free of charge; otherwise, there is an agreed scale of reimbursement for the buy-out of teaching duties. Arrangements for the [Provision of Cover and Associated Costs](#) are summarised separately. There is [a form](#) for recording agreements for Variation of Duties: this is intended to act as a checklist for what needs to be decided and it should be deposited with the college and division as a record and for use in monitoring the use of the scheme.

The scheme is not designed to cover all circumstances which require a buy-out from teaching duties. Two examples of exceptions are prestigious externally funded research fellowships that provide explicitly for a buy-out of teaching duties and the acceptance of senior administrative roles requiring a greater buy-out than allowed within the scheme: for detail, see [Scope of the Scheme](#) ([paras. 23-29 of The Scheme](#)).