



AAUP@FHSU

“Can a department chair require a faculty member to hold office hours?”

The short answer is “yes,” but MOA Article VII, Paragraph C.3., responds directly to this question and provides significant guidance for both faculty and department chairs.

“Each faculty member shall post and hold at least .5 regularly scheduled office hours per credit hour of instruction per week. The department chair will approve the faculty member’s office hour schedule, with a copy retained in the department office. Faculty members in good faith shall maintain office availability both physically and electronically proportionate to the modality of their semester teaching load with virtual office hours to include availability to students via telephone or synchronous electronic access including some availability in the evenings and/or weekends.”

By way of example, a faculty member teaching 12 credit hours must have six hours of regularly scheduled office hours. How these six hours are fulfilled (whether “physically and electronically”) will necessarily vary across faculty, dependent on course-delivery modality. If three of the 12 credit hours are delivered online, then a proportionate amount of the six office hours (90 minutes) should permit online students to access the faculty member via Zoom or other synchronous electronic means. Accordingly, distribution of office hours should reflect an appropriate balance to the modalities of the courses taught.

An ancillary question is whether faculty must make themselves available to students on weekends and evenings? Again, the answer is “yes, but...” The MOA provides that “virtual office hours” for *online modality students* should “includ[e] *some availability* in the evenings and/or weekends.” The quantity and timing of the office hours outside of the university’s normal operating hours are in the discretion of the faculty member, so long as the scheduling is done in *good faith*. Many faculty members include office-hour policy language that invites online students to “set appointments,” thus permitting the faculty member and student to set a mutually agreeable time to meet outside of regular business hours. Noteworthy, too, is that the MOA does not require online availability to be held at a time distinct and separate from a faculty member’s on-campus office hours. **Remember:** the MOA does not require you to be “on call” 24 hours a day, seven days a week!

Finally, as long as the faculty member’s schedule of office hours reasonably complies with the MOA and has been made in good faith, the department chair should not withhold approval of the schedule.