

Section:	II.3.60	
Title:	Office Hours-Faculty	
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Approved By:	Provost	
Responsible Unit:	Academic Affairs (609) 771-3080; academic@tcnj.edu	
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3.0	Spring 2022	Revised
2.0	Spring, 2011	Revised
1.0	1988	New Policy; initial release

I. INTRODUCTION

This policy discusses faculty office hours within the context of the teacher-scholar model, describes expectations for accessibility and responsiveness to students, and sets out a specific minimum number of office hours that full- and part-time faculty must hold each week.

II. DEFINITIONS

N/A

III. POLICY

According to the TCNJ Reappointment and Promotions document (April 2022), faculty should aspire to offer high caliber, effective teaching characterized by “thoughtful mentorship and advising” (p. 10). In order to meet this goal, and consistent with the College's core belief that “[t]he College's faculty and staff take pride in offering a personal educational experience to every undergraduate and graduate student” (<https://tcnj.edu/about/mission/core-beliefs/>), all faculty must be accessible to students in a variety of ways. This requirement for office hours includes faculty with partial/full course release due to SOSA or administrative roles (e.g., department chairs). Faculty on sabbatical leave are not required to hold scheduled office hours.

Acknowledging the teacher-scholar model and the character of our campus as a primarily undergraduate and residential college, all full and part-time faculty must

provide opportunities to students for in-person meetings with them as one mode of accessibility. Additionally, students enrolled at our primarily undergraduate and residential college should have access to their course instructors on a consistent, regular basis, as defined below.

Faculty meet expectations for accessibility to students when they:

A. Provide clear and explicit information regarding modes of accessibility:

Departments should maintain an up-to-date listing of office hours and locations for all full-time and part-time faculty. Faculty must post their office hours on their office doors, and must clearly communicate how they will be accessible to students on course syllabi, including the following elements:

- Days and times of scheduled office hours (full and part-time faculty).
- Preferred means by which to communicate with the faculty member outside of the class period (e.g., email, phone).
- Expectations for response times, availability and flexibility, as detailed below.

B. Are responsive: Faculty are expected to respond to student concerns, issues, questions, or needs within a reasonable amount of time, specifying typical expected response times in the course syllabus (e.g., “I normally will respond to email within [insert timeframe]”). When a faculty member finds they cannot satisfactorily address a student’s concerns, they should direct the student to the appropriate support resource (e.g., tutoring center, writing center, other students, administrative units).

C. Are flexible: Faculty members are expected to be flexible in terms of the modes by which students gain access to them; those modes include but are not limited to electronic communications (e.g., email, phone, instant messaging, message boards, virtual meetings), regularly-scheduled office hours, and on-campus appointments. To enhance accessibility to students, faculty should consider the following recommendations:

- Schedule multiple blocks of office hours throughout the week, which do not occupy related time slots in the campus scheduling grid (for example, do not schedule office hours for the same time on a Monday and Thursday, when students are likely to have the same time conflict).
- Replace some in-person office hours with virtual meetings, where appropriate (see Section D, below).
- When a course is taught by multiple instructors in a given semester, faculty should consider listing the names, contact information, and office hours of all instructors on their respective syllabi. Doing so should be a collective decision among that group of faculty members.

D. Are available for in-person meetings: Whenever a concern, issue, question, or student need cannot be easily addressed by electronic communications, faculty should have synchronous meetings with students, with the following requirements:

- To encourage in-person meetings, all full-time and part-time faculty members are required to hold office hours each week. Full-time faculty members must hold office hours for a minimum of 160 minutes (the equivalent of two 80-minute course meetings) each week. For part-time faculty members (i.e., those with fractional appointments), the minimum number of office hours is determined by the fraction of the appointment (e.g., a faculty member with a 5/8 appointment, the minimum expectation is 5/8 of 160 minutes or 100 minutes of office hours weekly). The timing and spacing of the office hours are determined by the faculty member (but see the accessibility recommendations in Section C, above).
- Office hours must be regularly scheduled and publicized on office doors and course syllabi. During office hours, faculty must either be available in their office, or provide a note on their office door directing students where to find them or how to directly contact them. Meetings “by appointment only” can supplement, but are not a substitute for, scheduled office hours. Scheduled office hours provide “walk-up access” to students, which is an important resource.
- While in-person office-hours are typically the most effective way for students and instructors to meet outside of class time, virtual meetings (i.e., video or audio calls) can enhance accessibility for students and can sometimes facilitate more productive interactions; thus, virtual meetings can replace up to half of in-person office hours for full- and part-time faculty who teach face-to-face courses. Office hours for online courses can be completely virtual, at the discretion of the instructor.
- While adjunct faculty are not required to hold regularly-scheduled office hours, adjuncts are encouraged to make themselves available in between class meetings for student questions. While in-person meetings are preferable, these meetings can be virtual considering the scheduling constraints faced by many adjunct faculty members. To facilitate in-person meetings between adjunct faculty and their students, departments should provide appropriate spaces, even if the spaces are shared.