



3.5.2 Research-teaching role

Many people experience the shift to a research-teaching role as daunting since it is the first time that they have to manage teaching, research and service simultaneously. The high number of hours worked by academics is often discussed; however, the exact nature of the work itself may be opaque. Here we share some of our participants' experiences of the typical work carried out in a research-teaching position.

Onova, and others in our research, regularly reported 50+ hour weeks. Here is her list of the activities she engaged in during one week:

- Lab work, organizing chemicals and safety sheets, and dealing with technical problems in the lab by emailing to arrange training
- Teaching undergrad class and posting readings
- Thesis supervision with 1 BSc, 2 MSc, and 1 PhD
- Administrative tasks: ordering supplies, dealing with chair committee emails, arranging reimbursements for workshop, completing forms for grant review panel
- Worked on a publication with PhD student, a resubmission of my own work
- Worked on a conference paper from a workshop
- Attended meeting regarding undergraduate education
- Attended weekly departmental seminar
- Acted as a journal reviewer completing 2 reviews
- Completed a thesis review
- Met with potential student
- Answered many emails
- Engaged in work-social events by hosting a visiting speaker at my house (dinner / breakfast), and having another dinner with the visiting weekly seminar speaker

The above, of course, is just a list which doesn't include the issues of dealing with departmental policies and politics. Onova also noted:

- The previous week 'I won a large grant. However, many others in the department were not successful. Therefore my department did not want to recognize my success for making others feel bad'
- A 'student on leave wanted a letter of recommendation for a job; I pushed the student to make a commitment to come back and finish, and CC'ed the grad chair on this issue'

Here is another account of a 55-hour week provided by PhD. As to his regular work, he noted teaching, research activities ('met with my students to discuss data analysis which will be included in an upcoming grant application' and 'talked to my faculty's advancement director about helping to find private donors to fund some of my research. (I felt that my faculty is trying to support me as a researcher, which is reassuring)'), and administrative tasks ('completed a research grant geared towards covering my expenses to travel [abroad] to



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collaborate with a colleague during my sabbatical'). Alongside this he was very involved in a departmental hire.

We are interviewing for new faculty position in our department in my area of research [and] I was tasked with giving the tour of the department and the initial introductory meeting. My chair assigned me the task. (I felt this reflected the confidence of my chair/department). [It meant that I] spent a lot of time with the faculty position candidates in a variety of ways (e.g., department tours, meetings, dinners).

Here is another case which highlights the demands of a typical week during semester time when Jennifer was teaching,

[Last semester] I taught Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, so I tried to keep Monday and Tuesday as research days ...I would come in, first thing in the morning, try and clear off any quick emails that can be dealt with quickly, try and get into writing as quickly as possible ...with the goal of trying to have a pipeline of papers to be going to different kinds of places ...taking papers that are already...either ...conceived ...or ...part-way through writing ...In between there would be meetings ...one of the things that's always surprised me ...how many there are, and how much time that stuff takes up ...then, in a teaching term, ...if it's a day of delivery, coming in, prepping for the lecture, so I will already have ...had the slides prepared ...delivering it, and then ...responding to emails, talking to students, getting ready for the next lecture ...Then, in the summer, it's more like a research term, but of course we've got all the MSc students that we're supervising ...then ...there's conferences ...on top.

Ginger reported similar difficulties in finding time for research amongst teaching commitments. She used the summer break in teaching duties to engage in a more research-focused routine. She was also careful to preserve some research-only time every week:

During the school year, I spend a minimum of one day a week pursuing research-related activities (reading, writing, analysing [data], preparing conference presentations). The rest of the week is taken up with teaching-related activities (class preparation, meeting with students, marking, collaboration with teaching colleagues) and service-related activities (Faculty Council, campus academic meetings, academic advising). [So, to give you an example], this week, I spent about 48 hours [as follows]:

- Taught four classes with a total of about 130 students
- Attended monthly Faculty Council meeting
- Did academic advising ...mostly ...reassuring students that they are on the right track and have taken the right courses
- Worked on preparing a paper so that I could submit it in time to include it in my [application for contract] renewal ...due at the end of the month

Ginger's last activity is a reminder that often positions are subject to a probationary period during which academics must pass a range of evaluations in order to progress towards



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permanence. Of course, there is institutional as well as national variation in how permanence will be assessed. It may include two to three contracts, and several reviews of your research, teaching and service/administration. Usually the greatest emphasis is on research achievements; however, early career academics are increasingly expected to develop their teaching and supervision profiles in addition to meeting expectations regarding research funding and publication. Make sure that you understand the path to permanence in your institution, including any flexibility according to your circumstances. For instance, in Ginger's case the renewal committee recognized that she had had less time to develop her research profile since she had had five new courses to teach her first year, and had taken on significant administration duties.

As your progress reporting is crucial to career success it is important to track your contributions from the beginning of your contract; see *teaching portfolio* section. Also, make sure you have a plan to both achieve your goals and demonstrate this achievement at employment reviews. To ensure that you stay focused, you might try this exercise to distinguish urgent and important tasks.

Finally, we want to emphasise the importance of developing personal resilience. As competition is a fundamental part of university life (e.g. for research funding, publication, teaching awards, committee membership), so you must be prepared to deal with rejection as well as success. Barbara describes her approach to rejection and the need to be resilient in order to progress her career:

I think that rejection is a very big part of the experience ...as you are beginning as an academic you have to deal with a lot of rejection. You get rejected to go to a conference; you get rejected for a grant; your article gets rejected ...when you have had a career in academia for 20 years ...you don't take it personally because ...you feel secure enough in your field and ...among your peers ...but when you are first starting out and you get these rejections, then it is hard not to take them as a sign that you don't belong, right?



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