

College of Public Health
Conflict of Commitment Guidelines

Given the status as both an academic and professional institution, where faculty involvement in the broader public health community is not only desirable but oftentimes necessary for faculty to be excellent in their fields, while faithfully implementing 4021, the College of Public Health (CPH) specifies the following procedural guidelines, to be read in conjunction with, and furtherance of, the University Procedures.

Faculty should be familiar with and follow George Mason University's Conflict of Commitment [Policy 4021](#). Pursuant to University Policy 4021 regarding conflicts of commitment (IV.A), Deans, in consultation with LAUs are allowed to specify College-level Procedures that implement the *Prompt Disclosure, Prior Approval, and Annual Certification* requirements to fit the norms and expectations of their units. This document is intended to supplement, not replace, Policy 4021.

The University and the College of Public Health (CPH) are committed to the protection of faculty. For this protection to occur, there must be transparency in faculty outside professional activities and work pursuant to guidelines set by the federal government relative to Conflict of Commitment. By accepting appointments for employment, all faculty members governed by the Faculty Handbook agree that their primary professional responsibility is their employment as a faculty at the University, and specifically, to the College of Public Health and to the school or department to which they work, and that they will devote their time primarily to the performance of their University, College, department, or school duties. The University and the College recognize that participation of faculty members in outside professional activities and other paid work may often serve the mission of the University, College, and profession. Clinical practice, professional consulting, leadership in professional societies, and various forms of public service promote the professional development of the faculty, expose the work of Mason faculty to others, and may be beneficial to faculty for maintaining currency and competence in their discipline.

A member of the CPH faculty may engage in non-University employment, consulting, or professional practice based on the guidelines of the University and College. ***Conflicts of commitment occur when the faculty members' time and attention devoted to outside professional activities interfere with their ability and availability to fulfil their obligations to the George Mason University College of Public Health and specifically to the academic unit in which they are employed.*** Outside activities, whether remunerated or not, may interfere with faculty responsibilities through disproportionate commitment of professional effort devoted to such activities.

CPH faculty are responsible for seeking advice from the academic unit head (director, divisional dean, or chair) and the Dean prior to engaging in any activities that could conflict

with their time devoted to research, teaching, and service responsibilities. As stated above, while faithfully implementing Policy 4021, the College of Public Health specifies the following procedural guidelines, to be read in conjunction with, and furtherance of, the University Procedures.

As a professional school with professional academic units, commitments outside of Mason may be critical for faculty development, professional licensure, and academic program accreditation. College and unit leaders attempt to schedule academic responsibilities in advance as much as possible, so agreed upon outside practice responsibilities may routinely or occasionally be completed. Recurring, required, scheduled commitments, including in-class teachings, and unit staff meetings for faculty members are usually notified in advance, including before the semester starts. Generally, for schedule changes a 30-day advanced notice is provided.

Prior approval is necessary when providing outside professional activities such as consulting services, or referrals, or professional/clinical practice commitments that exceeds the guidelines around spending more than one-day per week (12 hours maximum per 7-day week) or engaging in professional practice as an individual or through a single-member professional corporation or sole proprietorship. Just because a faculty member's combined outside activities exceed one day per week does not mean that they will be prohibited. These professional activities require the prior approval of the Dean. The Dean will review requests to exceed the one day per week limit and provide an opportunity to discuss what is best for the faculty member and the College before making a final decision.

[The sections below refer to the sections of the Procedures for University Policy 4021.]

III. One day per week (Definitions): Consistent with *Procedures for University Policy 4021*, which provides that “one day” shall be defined pursuant to “common sense and customary practice,” the College of Public Health is defining “one day” as 12 hours maximum per 7-day week. The one day per week guideline is intended to encourage activities and to reduce the amount of approval needed for activities which add up to less than one day per week.

IV.A.4. (Under Prompt Disclosure). “Outside consulting services” shall not be understood to mean activities that would be seen as typical utilization of expertise and often expected of productive College of Public Health faculty to maintain a faculty member’s clinical license or obligation to practice such as:

- speaking with agency providers or leaders of organizations,
- speaking with journalists or others from the media,
- one-time lectures to non-profit institutions, hospitals, clinics, etc.

While providing outside consulting services or referrals or engaging in professional/clinical practice as an individual or through a single-member professional corporation or sole

proprietorship, faculty are not permitted to engage any Mason or CPH employees or students, trainees, and post-doctoral fellows to provide services under the external agency or organization. Criteria established under Mason's Conflict of Interest policy must also be followed.

Please note: According to Mason's Faculty Handbook (2.10.7), teaching at an educational institution outside the University requires prior approval from the Provost. Full-time employment at another educational institution is not permitted under any circumstances.