

PCAL Grant Application Course Release Program

Background

External grants are important to the success of an academic college. They provide resources necessary for the creation and promotion of faculty research and creative scholarship, afford opportunities for release time to engage in the process of research or creative scholarship, and enhance the regional, national, and international reputation of an institution. As a result, individual faculty, academic departments, and the college benefit when faculty seek and successfully secure external grants.

Despite the potential benefits of external grants, many faculty hesitate to seek external support. While there are a number of barriers to seeking external grants, faculty commonly cite the time commitment needed to complete a grant application as a major obstacle to grantsmanship. Put simply, most faculty feel they do not have the time to pursue external grants.

To help overcome this barrier, the PCAL Research and Grants Committee has developed the PCAL Grant Application Course Release Program. The goal of this program is to help create faculty time for pursuing external grants.

Program Overview

The PCAL Grant Application Course Release Program is relatively simple. Faculty complete a [brief application](#) that requests a one three-credit hour course (or equivalent) release to pursue a specified external grant. Faculty should make the request in advance of the grant application deadline—the purpose of the release is to make time to complete the application. If the release is awarded, the faculty member's home department or school will receive an increase in their part-time budget to ensure the released course can still be offered (if necessary). Importantly, there is no requirement that faculty be successful in receiving the grant—only that the application is made. Any faculty member given a release who successfully applies for the grant identified in the application in the year the application was made has completed the requirements of the program.

Important Questions

- *Who is eligible to apply?*

All permanent, full-time faculty are eligible to apply. By permanent, this includes all faculty who do not have an end-date in their appointment letter. Faculty with end date contracts are typically employed for a short period of time (frequently a year) and thus will not be able to apply far enough in advance to receive and implement a course release.

An applicant must be a principal investigator (PI) or a co-principal investigator (Co-PI) for the proposed grant. In addition, only one course release may be provided per grant application, independent of the number of faculty members on the grant. For example, if a grant included two PCAL faculty as co-PIs and two PCAL faculty as contributors, only one total course release can be provided. In this and similar circumstances, all parties to the grant should decide who will apply for a course release. If more than one application is submitted for the same grant in the same cycle by parties to a common application, all such applications will be rejected.

- *What do I need to apply?*

The application process requires an updated CV and a completed [application form](#).

- *What do I need to complete the application form?*

In addition to some basic information, an applicant will need to submit the following through the application form:

1. **Information about the grant.** The purpose of the program is not to release faculty from a course to apply for any grant; it is to give faculty time to apply for a specific grant. This means that applicants should identify the grant they intend to pursue *prior* to completing their application. As part of their application, applicants will have to share important information about the grant, including the funding organization, eligibility criteria, an overview of the grant, the application due date, etc. All applicants will be asked to provide a link (or other resource with the same information) to the grant that verifies all of the information submitted by the applicant. In total, this means that applicants should have already done substantial homework about the grant before applying.
2. **Brief description of the project.** The purpose of the program is to provide faculty with time to apply for an external grant. As such, it is not necessary that the grant proposal be complete when applying for a course release. However, applicants will need to provide a basic description of the intended project to ensure it is a feasible project for the identified grant.
3. **Confirmation of support from your Department Chair/Director.** Prior to applying, prospective applicants must discuss their application with their department chair/director. When deciding to support an application, department chairs will need to consider whether the faculty member can be released, what course the faculty member will be released from, and the broader needs of the department. Chairs/directors can decide not to support an application based on the needs of the department. While chairs/directors will not be required to write an endorsement, applicants will be asked to confirm they have received the support of their chair/director, identify their typical workload and which course

they will likely be released from. All of these must be discussed with the chair/director, and the decision of which course you will be released from will be made in consultation with your department chair/director.

4. **Agreement to comply with other WKU external grant processes.** Applicants will be required to confirm they understand and intend to comply with other WKU external grant practices. These include, but are not limited to:
 - Complying with all policies and procedures related to the [Institutional Review Board and work with human subjects](#). This includes completing all relevant compliance training, completing all forms relating to financial conflicts of interests, and seeking Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (when appropriate).
 - Working with the [Office of Sponsored Programs \(OSP\)](#). This includes complying with the [timeline for proposal submission](#) provided by OSP.
- *Are any grants eligible?*

No. There are minimum requirements for the proposed grant to be eligible for the course release program. These requirements are as follows:

1. It must be an external grant. No course releases will be provided to apply for an internal grant (e.g. RCAP, QTAG, or FUSE).
 2. The total amount of the external grant award must be at least \$6000.
 3. It is **not** a requirement that the grant is eligible for facilities and administrative (F&A) costs.
 4. Competitive academic fellowships and similarly-situated awards are eligible.
 5. Grants submitted through the WKU Foundation will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- *What if the grant I am applying for includes buy-out time? Does this factor into the decision on my course release?*

No. The course release is for applying for the grant. Buy-out time is specific to completing the grant.

- *When are applications due?*

There will be two application due dates a year. They are as follows:

- January 3rd at 11:59 p.m.
- August 20th at 11:59 p.m.

If either falls on a day the university is closed the due date will shift to the next day the university is open.

Because the goal of the course release program is to create time to complete a grant application, faculty should apply the semester before they intend to work on the application. For example, if a grant application is due in December, a faculty member will apply to have a course released in the fall semester. That application should be made by the January deadline so course schedules can be adjusted as needed in the event that an application were to be successful. To summarize:

Intended fall semester release: Apply by January deadline

Intended spring semester release: Apply by August deadline

- *Who decides whether I will get a course release?*

Applications will be submitted to the PCAL Dean's Office but will be reviewed by the PCAL Research and Grants Committee. While the Dean has final approval of any release, the Committee will play a dominant role in the decision-making process.

- *What criteria will the committee use?*

There is no single criteria that the committee will use to determine whether a course release is awarded. However, there are several factors, among others, that the committee is likely to weigh:

1. *Does the application meet all of the requirements?*
2. *Size of the grant.* On average, larger grants are more likely to be favored.
3. *The prestige of the grant.* Some grants are prestigious, independent of their size. The committee may evaluate the prestige of a grant when making an assessment of the application.
4. *Potential for Facilities and Administrative (F&A) Costs.* F&A costs benefit the department, the college, and the university. Grant applications with the potential to generate F&A dollars will be viewed more favorably than other grants, all other things being equal.
5. *Incorporation of students.* Student research is a demonstrated high impact practice. Any grant application that can incorporate students will be viewed more favorably than other grants, all other things being equal.
6. *Academic rank of the applicant.* For some faculty, research and creative activity is part of their professional expectations. This is particularly important for junior faculty working toward tenure and promotion. The committee may look more favorably on applications from junior faculty working toward tenure and promotion, all other things being equal.

- *How competitive is the application process?*

The application process is competitive. The PCAL Research and Grants Committee will be provided a limited set of funds to offset the course releases provided. As a result, it is unlikely the committee will be able to fund every application, although that will depend on the number of applications.

- *What happens if I don't submit the grant application?*

The purpose of the release time is to help you submit the application. Therefore, the expectation is that you will complete the application. If you fail to do so, you may be expected to make up the course for which you were released. It is our expectation that 100% of the successful course release applications will turn into grant applications.

- *What happens if I don't get the grant?*

Grants are not always successful. The purpose of this program is to help faculty make the application. However, unsuccessful grant applications can often be revised based on review feedback, sometimes with relatively minor effort, and be successful in future cycles. Even if an application is not initially successful, faculty can use this program to enhance their chances of success on future submissions.

- *How often can I be awarded a course release?*

- If a faculty member applies for a course release and the application is **unsuccessful**, they can apply for a different grant application at any time after the notification of the denial.
- If a faculty member receives a course release and the application is **successful**, they cannot have another course release for at least for one academic year. As a result, no faculty member can ever have more than one course release through this program at a time.