

# *FLEX*

# *HANDBOOK*

***The Flexible Calendar Program –  
In Support of Faculty Excellence  
and Student Success***

*Mendocino College*

*Revised Fall 2020*

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## **Mendocino College Flexible Calendar Program**

### **HISTORY**

The flexible calendar program was initiated by six California community colleges in 1976 as a pilot project authorized by Assembly Bill 2232 (1975). The bill allowed colleges the opportunity to replace up to fifteen days of regular instruction with alternative activities, such as course and program development and revision, staff development activities, development of new instructional materials, and other instruction-related activities. After the success of the pilot programs was noted, legislation (AB 1149) in 1981 allowed all colleges the option of adopting a flexible calendar program.

On 11/1/89, the Board of Trustees approved the Flexible Calendar Program for Mendocino College, replacing nine days of instruction with nine flex days (increased to 11 in the 2010-11 calendar year). There are two institutionally planned flex days (hereafter referred to as “flex/in-service”), one at the beginning of each semester. Three of the nine days are allotted to completing Program Review and SLO assessments (18 hours). The remaining six flex days (36 hours) are planned individually. In 19-20 and 20-21 it was agreed that an additional 6 hours would be allocated to a second in-service day during the spring semester. Reporting requirements for these academic years is reduced to 30 hours.

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the flexible calendar program<sup>1</sup> is to provide time for faculty to participate in development activities that are related to “staff, student, and instructional improvement” (Title 5, section 55720). The flexible calendar program is a component of the staff development program and the major vehicle for faculty participation in development activities.

The flexible calendar program allows faculty (full-time, part-time, instructional and non-instructional) the time to work individually or with groups to achieve improvement in a number of areas, designated to align with Chancellor’s Office reporting requirements:

- Staff Development or Instructional Improvement
- Program and Course Curriculum or Learning Resource Development
- Learning Resource Services (Support Services)
- Student/Faculty/Staff Diversity
- Department Meetings with Part-time Faculty
- Conferences, Workshops, or Webinars
- Institutional Research

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<sup>1</sup> Guidelines for the Implementation of the Flexible Calendar Program (ASCCC and CCCCCO, 2007) pg. 9

Faculty design and propose their professional development activities under the flex program. Full-time faculty submit an annual agreement setting forth a professional development plan for the fiscal year (July 1 through June 30; Title 5, section 55720 a). Part-time faculty submit an agreement each semester. Part-time faculty who are eligible to participate in the flex program have flex hours allocated on their contract, although participation is optional. Full-time faculty teaching overload will be allotted hours in the same manner as part-time faculty and may submit an agreement to be compensated for overload flex hours.

All flex activities must be directed toward improvement of instruction, counseling, or other non-instructional professional skills and/or curriculum improvement, and not directed toward meeting routine professional obligations of the faculty. Ideally, flexible calendar programs should allow for freedom of choice by individual staff members. Flex activity days requiring attendance should only be done by agreement of all parties through a local shared governance process, as outlined in the collective bargaining agreement.

The intent of the legislation is that the flexible calendar program be optimally flexible. This is accomplished by allowing campus participants to design a program that meets the individual needs of students, staff, and the institution. These needs are determined through an assessment process which is required by Title 5, section 55730(a)(b).

The validation and evaluation of change are more meaningful through the use of individual contracts with measurable objectives and a plan for change in classroom instruction. In addition, large-scale programs that attempt to target the improvement of faculty in one or two-day activity sessions are less meaningful to participants and are more difficult to validate.<sup>2</sup>

Flexible Calendar activities may be designed for the benefit of the individual staff member and/or the institution as a whole. There should be adequate time to allow for individually designed activities that best suit a faculty member's personal professional development needs. In addition to this, time may be needed for interaction among faculty for the purposes of communication or coordination of effort.

The flexible calendar program represents time removed from the classroom for the purpose of instructional improvement and professional growth. The types of activities that will best serve faculty are also best understood by faculty. It should be recognized that the flexible calendar program is an academic and professional matter that falls under title 5, section 53200 (b), which states that the governing boards rely primarily upon the academic senate.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Guidelines for the Implementation of the Flexible Calendar Program (ASCCC and CCCCCO, 2007), pg. 13-14

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, pg. 20

## The Flex Committee

Three full-time faculty members serve on the Flex Committee, as appointed by the Academic Senate. One faculty member will be designated as chair and at least one serves a two-year term.

The Flex Committee reviews and approves all Full-time Faculty Flex Agreement & Completion Forms and forwards them to the responsible Deans for their approval.

The Flex Committee, in consultation with the Vice-President of Academic Affairs, and the Director of Human Resources, will update the Flex Handbook as needed (MCFT CBA 7.9.4).

## GUIDELINES FOR FULL-TIME FACULTY

### **Determining Flex Hours**

Section 7.1 of the Mendocino College Federation of Teachers (MCFT) Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) states that the base work year for faculty consists of 175 days. There are 164 instructional days, 2 mandatory attendance flex days (inservice), and 3 days designated for Program Review and SLO assessment. This leaves 6 days (36 hours) of individually designed flex time for which full-time faculty must account. In the 2019-20 and 2020-21 academic years, it was agreed that an additional 6 hours would be allocated to a second inservice day during the spring semester. Reporting requirements for these academic years is reduced to 30 hours.

Section 7.9.4 of the MCFT CBA states that faculty must complete these hours pursuant to the Flex Handbook, including a flex plan and a completion report, which are reviewed and approved by the Flex Committee and the responsible Dean.

Because the flex program is part of the contract year, failure to attend flex/inservice or complete the individually planned professional development activities may result in a forfeiture of pay.

### **Flexible Calendar Agreement**

Full-time faculty are required to complete a Flexible Calendar Agreement each year proposing how they will use their (36) individually planned flex hours for professional development activities, pursuant to the guidelines on pages 4 - 8 of this handbook.

The agreement must include:

- A brief description of each proposed activity.
- A detailed description of how the faculty member expects each activity to inform future practices
- Identification of the appropriate category for each activity (see pages 11 - 14)
- The estimated number of hours needed for the activity

In addition to these activities, faculty are obligated, per the CBA to use 18 hours of flex time for program review and SLO-related activities. Faculty do not need to include these hours in their agreement but will verify that they have met this obligation when they turn in their completion form.

### **Timelines and Approval Process**

Each fall, the flex committee will provide full-time faculty with the current flex forms and convey the method in which they are to be submitted. Faculty members will submit their proposed flex agreements to the Flex Committee for approval. After the Flex Committee approves an agreement, the committee will notify the faculty member of the committee's approval and the form will be forwarded for approval by the responsible Dean. Flex forms will be maintained in the college's learning management system (currently Canvas) and faculty members may access a copy of their form at any time during the academic year.

The Flex Handbook and all flex forms for full-time faculty will be made available in the flex course shell of the college's learning management system.

On or before 12:00 p.m. of the Friday of the first instructional week of the Fall semester, faculty members must submit their proposed flex activities for the year using the Flex Agreement and Completion form (Form 101). The submission is uploaded as an assignment in the flex course shell.

Flex activities must be planned during the fiscal year (July 1 through June 30). If the faculty member plans a flex activity for July or August, they may apply to the Flex Committee for prior approval by the Friday before the last week of the Spring Semester. Retroactive approval of a July/August flex activity is also possible; however, approval after the fact is not guaranteed.

The Flex Committee will meet during the second week of the Fall Semester to review Full-time Faculty Flex Agreement and Completion.

Faculty members who have not submitted a Flex Agreement and Completion Form (Form 101) by 12:00 p.m. of the Friday of the first instructional week of the Fall semester or whose proposed flex activities are not approved will receive a notice from the Flex Committee Chair giving them five working days to submit/resubmit their form.

Faculty members who have not submitted a Flex Agreement and Completion Form (Form 101) by 12:00 p.m. of the Friday of the third instructional week of the Fall semester will receive a notice from the Vice President of Academic Affairs or the Vice President of Student Services giving them five working days to do so. The notice will inform them that if the agreement is not received by the designated date, the District will assume they do not intend to participate in the Flex Program, and their annual pay will be reduced by 36 hours. (An adjustment of pay such as this decreases retirement service credit as well as one's retirement allowance.) If extenuating circumstances exist, such as a serious illness or a family emergency, the faculty member should notify their Dean in a timely manner.

Flex Agreement & Completions (Form 101) will be approved based on the professional development activities guidelines, Pages 11 - 14 of this handbook.

Two members of the Flex Committee must approve each Flex Agreement & Completion form (Form 101). If not approved, the faculty member will be provided with suggestions for revision and asked to resubmit the form. Faculty have 5 days to resubmit the Flex Agreement. If still not approved, the agreement will be referred to the responsible Dean to assist with submission.

The college retains the approved Flex Agreement & Completion forms (Form 101).

Proposed changes to the agreement must be filed on a Full-time Faculty Flex Modification & Completion form (Form 201) and submitted to the Flex Committee. The form should be approved by the Flex Committee prior to completing the proposed modifications as approval is not guaranteed after the fact. Proposed modifications will not be accepted beyond the deadline for completion of flex activities.

### **Certification of Completed Flex Activities**

When flex activities are completed, faculty must submit to the Flex Committee their original Flex Agreement & Completion form (Form 101) with the sections related to activity completion filled out. In addition, faculty will certify completion of the 3 days (18 hours) for program review and SLO-related activities and check the appropriate boxes for the activities in which they participated. Approved activities must be completed no later than the Friday before the final week of classes in May, unless an activity scheduled for June was previously approved.

The Flex Committee will meet during the final week of classes to approve the Flex Agreement & Completion forms (Form 101) verifying that activities have been completed. If the flex obligation is not met or the completion form is not submitted, flex hours unaccounted for will result in a reduction of pay in the first check of the **following** academic year. The Flex Committee will notify the responsible Dean and Human Resources and a notice will be sent to the faculty member by Human Resources informing them of this.

Copies of all forms will be provided to the faculty member, to the responsible Dean, and to Human Resources for inclusion in the faculty member's personnel file.

### **Flex Hours and Overloads**

Overload contracts for full-time faculty include optional flex hours for that assignment. When submitting requests for overload flex activities, use the Full-time Faculty Flex Agreement & Completion form (Form 101), checking the box for overload in the appropriate term. Overload flex activities must be completed and approved within the semester in which they are earned. Completion forms must be submitted by 12:00 pm on the Friday before the last week of classes for the appropriate semester.

If an overload assignment is cancelled, flex time will only be paid if it was approved and completed prior to the cancellation.

### **Leave and Banked Time**

Full-time faculty who are on full or partial leave are exempted from a portion of the flex obligation based on the percentage of their leave. For example, a faculty member on 100% leave (one year professional development or load bank leave) has a flex obligation of 0 hours; 50% leave (professional development or load bank leave) has a flex obligation of 18 hours.

### **Flex Credit for Building an Online Class**

Full-time faculty may use all of their individually planned flex hours (36) to build an online class.

### **Flex Credit for Faculty Who Present Flex Activities**

Faculty members presenting flex activities will earn three (3) hours flex credit for each hour of presentation. For example, when presenting a 2-hour activity, a faculty member will earn 8 flex hours – 6 hours for prep time and 2 hours for presentation time. If no one attends the activity, flex hours will be earned for prep time only. For faculty members presenting an activity more than one time in a semester, flex hours for the prep time may only be claimed once.

### **Flex Credit for Online Training or Audio/Video Resources**

Faculty may propose online trainings (such as webinars) and/or the use of audio/video resources, such as podcasts or documentaries, for individually planned flex activities.

### **What is meant by "Beyond a normal workday?"**

On a daily basis, work duties vary from instructor to instructor and from semester to semester. To allow for consistency in determining what counts towards flex time, an



instructor must first account for six hours of an instructional day to determine if flex activities may take place that same day. Examples:

- For a faculty member who conducts a 2-hour class (or spends 2 hours working on an online class) and 1 office hour scheduled on an instructional day, then attends an 8-hour conference, 5 flex hours may be earned.
- For a faculty member who does not conduct a 2-hour class and 1 office hour scheduled on an instructional work day, but instead attends an 8-hour conference 2 flex hours may be earned (because 6 hours of work per day are assumed and already compensated).
- For a faculty member attending an 8-hour conference on a non-instructional day, such as a Saturday, 8 flex hours may be earned.
- An instructional day for counseling faculty is a day in which they have agreed to work per scheduling requirements as outlined in the CBA.

## GUIDELINES FOR PART-TIME FACULTY

### **Flex Hours for Part-time Faculty**

While all part-time faculty members are encouraged to take advantage of the professional development opportunities provided by the Flexible Calendar Program, compensation for such is only possible when flex hours are allocated on the employment contract and completed pursuant to the process set forth below. Completion of flex hours is optional.

### **Allocating Flex Hours for Part-time Instructors**

Because the flex calendar reduces the number of teaching days for semester-length courses, the State pays the District for the reduced days as if classes were taught on those days. The District in turn pays part-time faculty for flex hours rather than instructional hours (Title 5, Section 58188; Guidelines for the implementation of the Flexible Calendar Program, Statewide Academic Senate, 2007).

Optional flex hours for professional development purposes shall be included in part-time faculty contracts each semester as follows: Instructors – 1 hour for each fourteen (14) hours contracted.

If a course is cancelled, flex time will only be paid if it was approved and completed prior to the cancellation.

### **Allocating Flex Hours for Part-time Counselors and Librarians**

Flex hours for part-time counselors and librarians are allocated based on their contracted FTE percentage for the semester applied to the flex obligation for full-time Counselors and Librarians (54 hrs./year, or 27 hrs./semester).

### **Flex Credit for Part-time Faculty Who Present Flex Activities**

Faculty members presenting flex activities will earn three (3) hours flex credit for each hour of presentation. For example, when presenting a 2-hour activity, a faculty member will earn 8 flex hours – 6 hours for prep time and 2 hours for presentation time. If no one attends the activity, flex hours will be earned for prep time only. For faculty members presenting an activity more than one time in a semester, flex hours for the prep time may only be claimed once.

If a part-time instructor is scheduled to present a flex activity and his/her teaching contract is changed thereby reducing or eliminating his/her flex hours, he/she will still be paid for the flex activity in accordance with the paragraph above.

### **Flex Credit for Building an Online Class**

Part-time faculty may use flex hours to build an online class.

### **Flex Credit for Online Training or Audio/Video Resources**

Faculty may propose online trainings (such as webinars) and/or the use of audio/video resources, such as podcasts or documentaries, for individually planned flex activities.

### **Timelines and Approval Process**

Your employment contract includes the optional flex hours that have been allocated for the semester.

To be paid for flex hours, complete a Flexible Activities Agreements (Form 100) describing how you plan to use the hours for professional development purposes, and submit it to your supervising Dean.

Part-time Faculty may use their flex hours to participate in any institutionally planned professional development activities such as those scheduled on inservice days or institutionally planned activities that are scheduled throughout the semester.

The supervising Deans will approve part-time faculty agreements and return a copy of the approved agreement to the faculty members.

If you need to change an agreement, complete an Agreement Modification Form (Form 200) and submit to the supervising Dean.

Part-time faculty must complete fall flex hours by the end of the semester break in January and spring flex hours between the beginning of the January semester break and the last day of classes for the spring semester.

Upon completion of flex hours, submit a Certification of Completed Flex Activities (Form 300) to the supervising Dean who will verify completion of flex hours. **Certification forms for the fall semester are due no later than the first day of class for the spring semester. Certifications for the spring semester are due no later than the last day of classes for the spring semester.**

Copies of all forms are forwarded to Human Resources for inclusion in the faculty member's personnel file. Once Human Resources receives the paperwork, payment for flex hours will be included in the part-time faculty member's next available check.

## GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

### **Title 5 Regulations**

Title 5, Section 55724, relates that the activities which college personnel will be engaged in during their designated staff, student and instructional improvement days may include, but need not be limited to, the following:

- Course instruction and evaluation
- Staff development, in-service training and instructional improvement
- Program and course curriculum or learning resource development and evaluation
- Student personnel services
- Learning resource services
- Related activities such as student advising, guidance, orientation, matriculation services and student, faculty and staff diversity
- Departmental or division meetings, conferences, workshops and institutional research
- The necessary supporting activities for the above

### **Sample Activities**

Mendocino College faculty members must propose professional development activities within one or more of the categories noted in the Title 5 regulations. For reporting purposes, these have been broken down into categories designated by the Chancellor's Office. Sample activities (based on Guidelines for the Implementation of the Flexible Calendar Program by the Faculty Development Committee of the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges in cooperation with the Chancellor's Office program staff, April 2007) are provided as a guideline and are not meant to be all-encompassing.

Note: Approved activities must be supplemental to faculty responsibilities outlined in the collective bargaining agreement.

Categories for reporting purposes are:

- Staff Development or Instructional Improvement
- Program and Course Curriculum or Learning Resource Development
- Learning Resource Services (Support Services)
- Student/Faculty/Staff Diversity
- Department Meetings with Part-time Faculty
- Conferences, Workshops, or Webinars
- Institutional Research

### Staff Development or Instructional Improvement

- Developing new programs (e.g., a workshop on designing curriculum/programs)
- Orientation/education of new/current faculty, both full and part-time (e.g. campus procedures; role of the academic senate; participatory governance; professional responsibilities outside the classroom; department procedures; training students, staff and faculty to serve on committees; changing role of technology in education)
- Learning a second language to better communicate with the diverse student population
- Programs/activities involving wellness information or skills, which will assist individuals to be physically and mentally better able to perform their jobs. (e. g. workshops and programs involving humor in the workplace, stress reduction, self-defense, nutrition education, exercise education/planning, mindfulness practices, weight reduction, and diabetes awareness) *You may use up to 20% of your obligated flex time for wellness programs. For example, up to 7.2 hours for a 36 hour obligation. Wellness activities may not include daily/ weekly exercise such as walking your dog or attending a fitness class. The purpose of allowing wellness activities is to encourage education and development beyond your current practices.*
- Instruction in the use of computers, software, learning management systems, and other new technologies that impact education
- Significant modification of a course to address the learning needs of diverse students (e.g. creating self-paced learning modules)
- Visit the class of a colleague

### Program and Course Curriculum or Learning Resource Development

- Meetings designed to improve a cohesive working relationship among different faculty and staff groupings *Such meetings must be clearly over and above your general professional obligation and contract hours.* (e.g. regular department meetings would not be included but special meetings for cross-discipline/constituency may qualify.)
- Developing a new program to meet changing student needs
- Review of learning resource materials to eliminate outdated items and make recommendations for additions
- Creating self-study modules and/or computer-assisted instruction
- Development or revision of programs, courses, learning resources and evaluation methods (e.g. writing a royalty-free text that would be used by a department for a course, re-writing online course resources that are copied and used by all instructors who teach the course, creation of department-wide assessments through learning communities) Note that course design that requires Curriculum Committee review is part of the regular contract duties for FT faculty and may not be used for flex.

- Development of a new course or comprehensive modification of an existing course to comply with changing institutional or discipline requirements (e.g. changing theories in a discipline, articulation with transfer institutions, transition to a new learning management system (LMS), multiculturalism, writing across the curriculum, working with a learning community to rewrite course materials with an equity focus) Note that course design that requires Curriculum Committee review is part of the regular contract duties for FT faculty and may not be used for flex.
- Developing student readiness programs specific to course disciplines
- Meetings with classroom and counseling faculty to address areas of curriculum
- Departmental or division meetings to discuss curriculum, program direction/revision, outside of contract hours and clearly over and above professional obligation

#### Learning Resource Services (Support Services)

- Faculty and staff ( e.g. tutors, lab assistants) meetings to improve learning resource support services to students
- Teaching a class in shortened format during a flex period (in lieu of pay)
- Faculty and staff meetings to improve services to students (e.g. tutors, lab assistants)
- Mentoring and advising of students (e.g. work in dept. or campus-wide organized mentoring program for students, discipline specific academic advising by faculty in a mentoring capacity)
- Faculty participation in student orientation programs
- Matriculation services (e.g. special orientation for ESL students, workshops in specific disciplines for students with undecided majors)
- Articulation to improve transfer processes
- Outreach for special projects (e.g. MESA)
- Conducting special workshops for students (e.g. understanding the college schedule, transfer requirements, setting academic goals)
- Serving as a club advisor - you may use up to 20% of your obligated flex time for club-related activities. For example, up to 7.2 hours for a 36 hour obligation.

#### Student/Faculty/Staff Diversity

- Sexual harassment workshops
- Affirmative action conferences
- Cultural diversity seminars
- Multicultural activities
- Outreach for special projects (e.g. MESA)

### Department Meetings with Part-time Faculty

- Meetings designed to improve a cohesive working relationship among different faculty and staff groupings. *Such meetings must be clearly over and above your general professional obligation and contract hours.* (e.g. regular department meetings would not be included but special meetings for PT faculty may qualify.)
- Meetings (department/division/college-wide) specifically to discuss strategies for improving service to students

### Conferences, Workshops, or Webinars

- Workshops on how to mentor students or how to mentor faculty
- Workshops or individually designed activities to improve or enhance a person's skills or knowledge in his/her discipline
- Disaster preparedness for improved on-campus response (e.g. district procedures, first aid, review of facilities to determine areas of need)
- Workshops on how to write grants
- Attending workshops or conferences on teaching methods or techniques (e.g. classroom-based research training; Instructional Skills Workshops; local, regional, national Great Teachers Seminars)

### Institutional Research

- Training in classroom research (assessment) techniques
- Institutional research focused on meeting the needs of students (e.g. job market surveys, transfer ratios, ethnicity data on students, gender equity, campus climate)
- Writing grants aimed to improve services to students
- Writing grants to secure funds for improvement of instruction

### Ineligible Activities

The following may not be used for flex activities:

- conducting faculty evaluations
- serving on advisory committees