

Designation as Academic Policy			
Policy Sponsor	Chief Human Resource Officer	Category	Board
Policy Contact	Chief Human Resource Officer	Effective Date	September 11, 2020
Approved By	Board of Governors	Review Date	September 11, 2025
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1. Purpose

This policy aims to ensure clarity and consistency with respect to how the University designates, excepts from designation, or changes the designation of individual employees and/or categories of employees as “academic staff” in AU’s digital learning environment.

2. Scope

The Post-secondary Learning Act (“**PSLA**”) outlines the rights, powers and privileges of the Board of Governors of Athabasca University (the “**Board**”). Specifically, Section 60(2) grants the Board the discretionary authority to designate or make changes to the designation of employees and/or categories of employees as “academic staff.”

3. Definitions

AU Academic	An employee designated as such by the Board.
Board	The Governors of Athabasca University and any delegate thereof.
Chief Human Resource Officer	The person or persons occupying the position of Chief Human Resource Officer and any designate of the Chief Human Resource Officer.
Executive	A member of the University Executive including the President, Provost, Deputy Provost, Vice-Presidents, Associate Vice Presidents, the University Secretary, Chief of Staff to the President and the Chief Human Resource Officer, and any other positions as so designated.

PSLA	The Post-secondary Learning Act
PSERA	The Public Service Employee Relations Act
University or AU	Athabasca University

4. Guiding Principles

To inform and assist the application of the Board’s authority to designate, except from designation, or change the designation of individual employees or categories of employees, the following objective criteria will be used to define an “AU Academic”. These criteria may be revised by the Board in its discretion, subject to any legal obligations surrounding that revision.

4.1 The role of an AU Academic

- a. Research and Scholarship; an AU Academic will:
 - Independently conduct or direct original research and scholarship that advances the knowledge in their specific and relevant discipline and that leads to forms of dissemination that are appropriate to the discipline; and/or
 - Conduct or direct research in collaboration with external stakeholders (e.g., business, industry, and organizations) that leads to innovations that will have an environmental, social, cultural, or economic impact on the community they serve.
- b. Service to the University and society; an AU Academic will:
 - Contribute to or directly participate in the formal governance of the University’s academic affairs;
 - Contribute to the institution’s academic environment through peer-to-peer activities (e.g., academic mentorship), collegial activities (e.g., hiring committees, program reviews, and quality assurance processes), and model highest ethical standards and service;
 - Contribute to the enhancement of their specific and relevant discipline or profession through activities (e.g., leadership in scholarly associations or organizations, participating in peer review processes and/or editorial committees, serving on or leading academic conference organizing

- committees, and/or participating in accreditation and assessment activities);
and
- Contribute to serving the public good through civic engagement.
- c. Teaching and Learning; an AU Academic will:
- Remain current in their specific and relevant discipline;
 - Provide direct academic instruction or support to students in their achievement of learning outcomes in AU's asynchronous or synchronous learning environment at the undergraduate and/or graduate level;
 - Incorporate current scholarship, research, knowledge, and theory to instruction and delivery;
 - Be directly involved in the design and development of credit curriculum, programming, and content, including the development of learning outcomes, pedagogical innovations, new program proposals, and program reviews; and
 - Have direct responsibility and accountability for the quality and integrity of curriculum development, delivery, and course-related student assessment towards the goals of the University, the program, and the course;

Academic credentials are necessary for these three pursuits. Therefore, AU Academics will hold a terminal academic credential in their specific and relevant discipline or an advanced degree in combination with a professional designation/credential in their specific and relevant discipline.

Together these three pursuits – Research and Scholarship, Service, and Teaching and Learning – comprise the role of an AU Academic. The definitions of the above three pursuits are not exhaustive and are meant to illustrate the nature of these pursuits.

AU Academics may from time to time be provided with release from any one of the above three pursuits by the University in its discretion and subject to any applicable Collective Agreements.

4.2 Other factors

The Board will also take into account the following in making any decisions with respect to designation under this policy and will assign weight as it deems appropriate:

- a. History of collective bargaining with the University;

- b. The nature of the functional relationship (if any) between the subject employee(s) and AU Academics;
- c. The presence of any conflicting goals in collective bargaining, including but not limited to having access to information supporting the University management in its negotiations of collective agreements and/or in the application and administration of the Agreement itself;
- d. The impact of a designation decision on an employee or category of employees;
- e. Whether the employee occupies a managerial role;
- f. Whether the position would be excluded in accordance with the Alberta *Labour Relations Code* or any other applicable legislation.

Should the Board consider additional factors in making a designation decision, it shall provide all the stakeholders to the decision with notice of those factors prior to making a decision, and will consult with the stakeholders regarding the application of those factors to the designation decision, in accordance with the PSLA.

5. Exemptions

Notwithstanding the criteria above (4), the following positions are not considered to be academic staff:

- President
- Provost (including Deputy)
- Vice Presidents (including Associate)
- University Secretary
- Chief Officers (including Deputy)
- Directors (including the University Librarian and Registrar)
- Executive Assistants or Administrative Assistants to Members of the Executive
- Office of the University Secretariat Staff
- Financial Managers (Budget, Planning, Reporting, Investments, Bank Signing Authorities, Fundraising)
- Human Resources Staff

Within the powers granted under the *PSLA*, and in accordance with the intent of this policy, the Board reserves the right to modify these lists.

6. Procedure

Although the Board has the authority to designate, except from designation, or change the designation of employees and/or categories of employees as academic staff; the Board recognizes its obligation to consult with all affected bargaining agents. To this end, and to ensure a thorough and timely consultation process, the Designation as Academic Procedure (DAP) outlines the consultation process.

7. Applicable Legislation and Regulations

[Labour Relations Code](#)

[Post-Secondary Learning Act](#)

[Public Service Employee Relations Act](#)

8. Related Procedures/Documents

AUFA/The Governors of Athabasca University (The Board) Collective Agreement

AUGSA/The Governors of Athabasca University (The Board) Collective Agreement

AUPE/The Governors of Athabasca University (The Board) Collective Agreement

[Bill 7 An Act to Enhance Post-Secondary Bargaining](#)

CUPE/The Governors of Athabasca University (The Board) Collective Agreement

[Designation as Academic Procedure](#)

[Designation Business Case Form](#)

History

<i>Date</i>	<i>Action</i>
September 11, 2020	Policy Approved (The Governors of Athabasca University Motion #245-C2.02)