

ECU Phased Retirement Program

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Updated August 2024

Questions From Faculty Members

Q1: What are the basics of the Phased Retirement Program (PRP)?

A: The ECU Phased Retirement Program (PRP) allows a full-time, tenured faculty member who meets certain age and service conditions to change employment status to half-time employment. Such employment consists of a half-time workload and a half-time salary based on the individual's final year of full-time service. After retiring, and upon entering the PRP, a faculty member relinquishes permanent tenure in exchange for a term contract of three (3) years.

Q2: Who is eligible for the PRP?

A: A full-time tenured faculty member at ECU who meets the following set of conditions is eligible to apply for participation in the PRP:

Participant in Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System ("TSERS") –

1. has at least five years of full-time service at ECU, and
2. is at least age 62 by August 1 (9-month faculty) or July 1 (12-month faculty) in year of entry to PRP, and
3. is eligible to receive retirement benefits through the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System ("TSERS")

OR

Participant in the Optional Retirement Program ("ORP") -

1. has at least five years of full-time service at ECU, and
2. is at least age 59 ½ by August 1 (9-month faculty) or July 1 (12-month faculty) in year of entry to PRP, and
3. is eligible to receive retirement benefits through the Optional Retirement Program ("ORP")

Q3: I think I am eligible for the PRP but did not receive a PRP eligibility for enrollment letter. What should I do?

A: Contact Linda Ingalls, at ingallsl@ecu.edu.

Q4: Is it possible for a faculty member to receive a PRP eligibility for enrollment letter and not be eligible to participate?

A: Yes, if the applicable personnel data file elements are not correct for the faculty member. The determination of who received a PRP enrollment letter assumes the date of birth (DOB), tenure status, years of service, retirement plan, and employment status in the university's personnel database are correct. However, there may be incorrect or incomplete data in the individual's record that could affect these required data eligibility criteria. The UNC Program states that it is the individual faculty member's responsibility to provide to the institution all correct information necessary to determine their eligibility. Therefore, if you believe you received a letter in error, please contact Linda Ingalls at ingallsl@ecu.edu

Q5: How do I apply for the PRP and what is the deadline for applying?

A: The ECU Phased Retirement Policy number (7) explains the application and enrollment process. An eligible faculty member may apply by submitting the UNC PRP Application and Reemployment Agreement to their respective department/unit head. Applications for participation commencing Fall Semester 2025 [July 1 for 12-month and August 16 for 9-month faculty] may be submitted only after September 1, 2024, and not later than February 1, 2025. Applications for participation in the Phased

Retirement Program from Eligible Faculty Members will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis.

Q6: What resources are available to learn more about the PRP?

A: ECU Phased Retirement Program materials may be found at <https://humanresources.ecu.edu/forms/#retirement>

In addition, interested faculty members are strongly encouraged to consult one of the Program officials noted in **Q7** below. Interested faculty members may also consult the UNC Policy Manual, Chapter 300.7.2 at the web site <https://www.northcarolina.edu/apps/policy/doc.php?id=133>

Q7: If I have questions after I read the guidelines and benefits information, whom do I contact?

A: For Program questions, contact Linda Ingalls at ingallsl@ecu.edu. For Benefits questions, contact Lee Ann Goff at 252-328-9825 of goffle@ecu.edu or Trina Baker at 252-328-9889 or bakertr@ecu.edu.

Q8: Can I start the PRP in January?

A: No, the UNC PRP requires that institutions follow the academic year, and program participation begins at the start of the fall semester [July 1 for 12-month and August 16 for 9-month faculty].

Q9: How much do I earn while on Phased Retirement?

A: You earn 50% of your previous year full-time faculty base salary, excluding temporary stipends or other temporary compensation that is not considered part of the faculty base salary.

Q10: How long will I be re-employed under PRP?

A: ECU's reemployment period for PRP is three (3) academic years, with beginning and ending dates consistent with either a 9-month or 12-month appointment period.

Q11: How will I be notified if I am approved or disapproved for PRP?

A: A personnel representative of the Department for People Operations, Success, and Opportunity will notify you by letter.

Q12: If I decide not to enter into PRP once I turn in my application, what steps do I take? Please

A: contact your unit head (department chair, dean, director) immediately to withdraw your application. For additional guidance, if needed, please contact your College Personnel Coordinator.

Q13: If I meet the eligibility criteria and apply for the PRP, am I guaranteed participation?

A: No. Sections (2) and (3) of the ECU Phased Retirement Program explain that financial exigency and academic program compromise considerations are grounds upon which a PRP applicant may be denied entry to the PRP.

Q14: Why do I relinquish my tenure?

A: A PRP participant retires from the regular faculty in order to enter the Program; relinquishing tenure is required for all retired faculty.

Q15: Once I enter into the PRP and decide I would no longer like to participate, what steps do I take?

A: Upon written resignation by the faculty member and acceptance by the Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor, the PRP agreement may be terminated at the end of an academic year.

Q16: How do I apply for emeritus status?

A: Since retirement is required immediately prior to entering the Phased Retirement Program, emeritus status should be considered at the time of retirement **not** at the end of the Phased Retirement Program. Therefore, upon executing the appointment letter to **enter** the Program, a faculty member who is interested in emeritus status should provide a written request to the unit head, who will then notify the

unit personnel committee to consider whether emeritus status will be recommended. Consult your unit code for additional guidance regarding the unit's criteria and process. Link to Faculty Manual provisions regarding emeritus status: [part8section1.pdf \(ecu.edu\)](#)

Q17: Why is no salary increase permitted during the first year of PRP?

A: With respect to the initial year of participation in Phased Retirement, the participant's salary, as stated in both the Announcement to Eligible Faculty and the Application and Reemployment Agreement is one-half (50%) of the salary that faculty member earned during the last 9- or 12-month period of full-time employment prior to entering the program. Subject to any limitations imposed under the State Retirement System, the legislative appropriations process, or the UNC Board of Governors, participating faculty members are eligible for salary increases and merit pay in subsequent years of Program participation based on satisfactory annual performance evaluations. *Participants retired with the State Retirement System (TSERS) will also need to monitor earnings in order not to exceed the TSERS earnings limitation (earnable allowance).*

Q18: If a faculty member decides to enter PRP employment and delay receiving a retirement benefit, will the university pay for the employee's medical insurance?

A: No. The State of North Carolina pays the cost of medical insurance only for an eligible individual receiving a retirement benefit who elects the 70/30 health insurance benefit option (for those retirees electing any other health plan or ineligible for the free individual coverage, premium costs may apply). PRP participants who choose to defer retirement benefits from an Optional Retirement Program until a later date are responsible for paying the full cost of health insurance premiums.

Q19: Do faculty in the PRP participate in departmental activities as before?

A: Participants in PRP are responsible for services negotiated and approved in the Application and Reemployment Agreement, which includes half-time assignments from among teaching, research, and/or service. **Assigned responsibilities for half-time PRP participation are not equivalent to half of the responsibilities of a full-time, permanently tenured faculty member.** The negotiated work plan may include assigned activities that do not require tenured faculty status. University-approved workload policies govern all faculty responsibilities.

Q20: How much am I paid for teaching in Summer Sessions outside my PRP workplan?

A: Summer session teaching is a separate contract. Compensation is governed by the regulations for summer instruction available from the Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor's Office. *Re-employed retirees in the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System (TSERS) are strongly cautioned to carefully consider separate summer teaching, as the amount of money earned for teaching summer session courses could jeopardize the monthly TSERS retirement benefit. Please consult your individual earnable allowance available through the State Retirement System Office Phone: (919) 814-4590.*

Q21: How do I apply for my retirement benefits once I am approved for PRP?

A: Start by reviewing the Guidelines for Retirement and contact a Benefits Consultant in Department for People Operations, Success, and Opportunity at 252-328-9889.

Q22: How do I find out how much creditable service I have?

A: Contact the University Benefits Office at 252-328-9889 or bakertr@ecu.edu for this information.

Q23: Do I still contribute into my retirement plan while on PRP?

A: No. You will no longer contribute to a State mandated retirement plan; however, you may be eligible to continue participation in your 403(b) or 457 supplemental retirement options.

Q24: What benefits may I maintain while on PRP?

A: You may continue participation in benefits that are available to half-time faculty employees. For more

details, review the Continuation of Benefits chart with Phased Retirement materials posted on the web site <https://humanresources.ecu.edu/forms/#retirement>

Q25: How will being reemployed in the PRP impact my parking permit?

As stated in the “Continuation of Benefits” chart, Retired Faculty are eligible to apply for a free, retired faculty permit to park in specifically marked ‘Retired Faculty’ spaces on campus upon submitting an Application Form to the Parking and Transportation office. Upon receipt of the Application, the Parking Office staff will contact Department of People Operations, Success, and Opportunity to confirm the faculty member’s retired status. Phased Retirement Faculty participants for whom status has been confirmed by Department of People Operations, Success, and Opportunity (POSO) have the option to upgrade the free retired faculty permit to an A permit for half the price of the A permit ONLY IF the permit they held at the time they retired was an A permit. Individual faculty may submit an Application Form through the website [Retired Faculty Parking | Parking & Transportation | ECU](#). Questions should be directed to the Parking and Transportation Office.

Q26: May I earn money outside my PRP contract with the University?

A: No, except for summer school teaching. It is important to note that members of the Teachers’ and State Employees’ Retirement System (TSERS) are subject to an “Earnable Allowance Limit.” If you are re-employed on a part-time, interim, temporary, or contractual basis, or otherwise engaged to perform services on any basis that does not require membership in the Retirement System, your retirement payment and your health insurance will be stopped immediately if your earnings during the 12-month period following the effective date of retirement or during any calendar year after retirement exceed the earnable allowance limit. Set by TSERS, the limit is reviewed and may be adjusted on January 1 each year based on the Consumer Price Index. *Members of the Optional Retirement Plan are not subject to this limit.*

Questions from Deans and Department Heads

Q1: Why did I, as a dean or department head, receive a copy of the PRP eligibility for enrollment letter?

A: All academic deans and department heads are provided an electronic copy of the PRP eligibility for enrollment letter, whether or not the individual is otherwise eligible for PRP in order to assure that all parties have the same Program materials. An Eligible Faculty Member will negotiate the proposed work plan with the department head. It is important that both parties receive, read, and understand the same PRP information. As the Phased Retirement Program materials explain, after the faculty member and department head sign a PRP application, it is sent to the dean for review and signature.

Q2: Can I receive a list of all eligible faculty members for this year and future years?

A: No. UNC System Office's review of the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) indicates that individual age-related data cannot be shared with any administrative party involved in the PRP work plan negotiation process. Therefore, deans and department heads will not receive such information. In fact, the list of eligible and ineligible faculty members is prepared by ITCS using the ECU personnel data file.

Q3: A faculty member in my department says they are eligible and should have received a PRP eligibility for enrollment letter but did not. What do I do?

A: Refer the faculty member to Linda Ingalls at ingallsl@ecu.edu.

Q4: Is it possible for a faculty member to receive an eligibility for enrollment letter and not be eligible?

A: Yes, if the personnel data file elements are not correct for a faculty member. The determination of who received a PRP enrollment letter assumes the date of birth (DOB), tenure status, years of service, retirement plan, and employment status in the university's personnel database are correct. However, there may be incorrect or incomplete data in the personnel data file that could affect these required data eligibility criteria. The UNC Program Guidelines state that it is the individual faculty member's responsibility to provide to the institution all information necessary to determine their eligibility.

When do the 45-day review and 7-day revocation time periods begin?

Q5: Section (7) of the ECU Phased Retirement Program explains that after the vice chancellor (Provost) has approved the preliminary UNC Phased Retirement Program Application and Reemployment Agreement, the faculty member will be provided an Agreement and Release package by the vice chancellor. The date the vice chancellor signs the preliminary Agreement begins the individual faculty member's review period. The faculty member will have at least forty-five (45) calendar days to sign and return the Agreement and the Release to the vice chancellor. An additional seven-day revocation period follows the 45-day review period. Program participation is only executed after the 7-day revocation period ends.

Q6: When does the unit consider emeritus status for a faculty member who is enrolling in the Phased Retirement Program?

A: Since retirement is required immediately prior to entering the Phased Retirement Program, emeritus status should be considered at the time of retirement **not** at the end of the Phased Retirement Program. Therefore, upon executing the appointment letter to **enter** the Program, a faculty member who is interested in emeritus status should provide a written request (or follow the unit's internal procedures) to the unit head, who will then notify the unit personnel committee to consider whether emeritus status will be recommended.

Q7: What happens to the FTE and salary funds associated with a PRP position?

A: During PRP participation:

1. One-half (0.50) of the salary and benefit funding for the PRP participant remains with the unit

(department, school, college) to support that participant while the individual remains in the PRP (up to the maximum 3-year period).

2. One-half (0.50) of the salary and benefit funding is governed by existing policies and procedures for all other vacant faculty positions.

Q8: In negotiating the proposed work plan with a faculty applicant for PRP, what factors need to be considered to determine a half-time workload?

A: The typical PRP faculty work plan consists primarily of teaching responsibilities on a half-time basis, consistent with half of the teaching assignments that a full-time faculty member with only teaching responsibilities would have. A participating faculty member is no longer permanently tenured and may not be assigned responsibilities that require full-time and/or tenured faculty status; for example, the faculty member may not serve on the unit's personnel-related committees. Therefore, responsibilities in service will be minimal. Some PRP participants with funded research or completing research/creative activities in progress may negotiate a work plan to continue participating in those responsibilities under an approved work plan.

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