
Condensed Version of CHESS Schrift 2/2021 New Organizational Models for Part-Time Leadership Functions at UZH

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This condensed version of [CHESS Schrift 2/2021: “New Organizational Models for Part-Time Leadership Functions at UZH”](#) focuses on the main deliverables and findings of the project of the same name, which was conducted as part of the University of Zurich’s 2017-20 Gender Equality Action Plan and was funded through the Swissuniversities P-7 Equal Opportunities and University Development program.

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1 General Information about the “New Organizational Models for Part-Time Leadership Functions at UZH” Project

Objective	Present a sustainable package of measures tailored to the different disciplinary cultures at UZH with concrete organizational models for part-time leadership functions.
Procedure	Open-ended: Interviews with representatives of different UZH units (around 50 interviews) and contact with similar initiatives, analysis of existing models in other organizations or enterprises, conducting of workshops with faculties, research, and communication.
Duration	January 2017–June 2021
Organization	The project was based at the Center for Higher Education and Science Studies – CHESS at the University of Zurich, was managed by project head Miriam Ganzfried, and was supervised by a project committee .
Embedded in / framework	UZH 2017-20 Gender Equality Action Plan
Funding	Swissuniversities P-7 Equal Opportunities and University Development program
Resources	~40% academic associate

2 Main Deliverables

- A discussion on flexible leadership models and part-time leadership functions for professors and other managers was initiated, and these topics were publicized internally throughout the university.
- A comprehensive body of literature (research and practice) was assembled and made permanently accessible via the [Flexible Leadership Toolbox](#). The toolbox is in German and facilitates literature searches by publication type, target group, model type, and region.
- Concrete organizational models for part-time leadership functions in Human Medicine and Veterinary Medicine were developed in collaboration with representatives of those faculties.
- An [FAQ on flexible work models for medical staff](#) (available only in German) was drafted in collaboration with the University Hospital Zurich Diversity & Inclusion Office.

3 Main Findings

There seems to be a need for flexible work models at the professorship level in some disciplines, and use of and demand for flexible work models at UZH differs by faculty and department. There appears to be a greater demand for flexible work models in medical disciplines (Faculty of Medicine and Vetsuisse Faculty) than in other fields such as business and economics, arts and humanities, or social sciences. This difference can be explained by the fact that in medicine, members of senior staff are not only actively involved in research and teaching, but also work clinically. This requires professors in the medical field to be present more often onsite and allows little leeway for flexibility.

3.1 Part-time professorships at UZH

Part-time professorships at UZH have been in existence for several years now. The fact sheet on part-time professorships has established a corresponding institutional basis at UZH since 2015 that states that the salary funds “saved” through the reduction of the work hour load can be used for replacement appointments to relieve the part-time professor. This means that new professorial appointments can be filled with a part-time employment option or the work hour load of existing professorships can be adjusted temporarily or permanently. However, full-time professorships shall remain the norm at UZH. Discussions with professors who have reduced their work hour load (for a fixed-term period) revealed that the possibility of making their employment flexible for a temporary period is regarded as being very useful because it allows them to adjust their work hour load as stages of life require, for instance to discharge caregiving responsibilities. However, part-time professorships are still the exception at UZH. In 2020, only 6.9% of all professors worked part-time, with only a marginal difference between women and men. There are multifarious reasons for part-time employment, and a distinction can be drawn between two types of part-time employment relationships: an initial full-time professorship with a later workload reduction and a part-time professorship from the start of employment.

3.2 Initial full-time professorship with later workload reduction

The first type – an initial full-time professorship with a later workload reduction – is often grounded on family considerations, gets requested during the employment relationship by professors who then go on to work part-time (predominantly women), and is granted by the university for a certain period. The persons interviewed regarded a reduction to up to 80% as being unproblematic. The implementation usually proceeds smoothly. Part-time professors consider the relief provided by the appointed substitute very valuable and appreciate the possibility of occasionally being able to decline requests for committee work and the like on the grounds of having a reduced work hour load. In addition, some report that this work model relieves mental stress, which can also have a beneficial effect on research activities. The possibility of a (temporary) part-time professorship appears to be an attractive work model primarily for associate professors and full professors because they fear that a work hour load reduction in an earlier stage of their academic career could have an adverse impact on their ability to earn further qualifications. However, many assistant professors interviewed likewise could envision a work hour load reduction in principle, but at the same time cite potential negative consequences with regard to attaining further

qualifications. They express concerns that a part-time professorship could adversely affect performance evaluations, that the effective workload would not decrease in reality and that a part-time professorship would merely result in a loss of salary, or that a work hour load reduction would signal a reduced work commitment. In many departments at UZH, a work commitment of more than 100% is still expected, often coupled with an unspoken expectation of being on call at all times.

3.3 Part-time professorship from the start of employment

For the second type of part-time professorship, the reason for a reduced work hour load is employment at another university, research institution, or in the private sector, or engagement in politics. In many cases, the reduced work hour load exists from the start of employment and is explicitly desired by the university. One advantage of this form of part-time professorship for UZH and the second university or research institution is that it facilitates collaboration across institutional boundaries. At the same time, however, such part-time professors often have a disproportionately large workload due to their involvement in the self-management of two institutions, in contrast to their colleagues employed at just one institution.

Taking a deeper look at the two types of part-time professorships, it becomes evident that UZH's attitude toward part-time professorships differs depending on the motive. Part-time employment at the professorship level due to a second job in science, business, or politics is basically viewed as added value for the university. In contrast, a reduced work hour load due to caregiving obligations tends to face reluctance from UZH. This is evidenced not only by the fact that no professorships to date have been advertised with the possibility of part-time employment, but also by statements from full-time professors who could picture reducing their work hour load in the future. According to their statements, these professors had not yet taken any steps in this direction because they feared negative reactions from colleagues. Some part-time professors reported initial concerns about mentioning a work hour reduction to their colleagues, but no one reported actually receiving negative reactions. In the professorial appointment procedure as well, it is evident that the image of the ever-available scientist is still prevalent in academia. The possibility of part-time employment thus practically never comes up in appointment negotiations. The reason may be that candidates proceed on the assumption that raising the possibility of part-time employment could tend to hurt their prospects.

3.4 Job sharing at the professorship level

Job sharing at universities is still very rare. Two female assistant professors in the Vetsuisse Faculty are the only currently known job-sharing example at UZH. A few job-share duos exist at other Swiss universities: two at the EPFL and one each at the University of Basel, the University of Bern, and the University of Fribourg (as of February 2021). However, job sharing is definitely an issue today for junior researchers because it can present a practical career model for a certain stage of life. Although universities are still rather skeptical about the possibility of offering shared professorships, this model definitely has advantages for job-sharing partners and universities. Both sides benefit from a stronger work commitment, greater motivation, and enhanced managerial effectiveness. An integrated concept that lays out the details of the teamwork is essential to the success of a job-share duo in the professorship application process (see the University of Bern's [job-sharing guidelines](#) for more on this).

In the discussion about the introduction of part-time employment and job sharing at the professorship level at universities, the question for the future is whether universities are willing also to advertise new professorships with a work hour load of 80%–100%, accept job-sharing applications, and thus enlarge the pool of candidates. Or, on the contrary, will availability at all times continue to be deemed an important criterion for an academic career? As examples from the private sector and public administration show, part-time management functions and job sharing are now an established part of contemporary management models. They have a beneficial impact on staff recruitment and retention, and enable universities to position themselves internationally as attractive employers.

3.5 Flexible work models in medicine - pilot project at the Institute of Emergency Medicine

The Institute of Emergency Medicine at University Hospital Zurich has been deploying flexible work models for several years now. More than half of the senior physicians there work part-time (most with an 80% work hour load), administrative work is done from home offices, and the flextime system gives senior physicians flexibility to conduct research activities or perform administrative tasks at the beginning and end of the workday. The pilot project at the Institute of Emergency Medicine, which was run in collaboration with the University Hospital Zurich Diversity & Inclusion Office, rendered the positive experiences with flexible work models for physicians visible to other clinical departments of University Hospital Zurich. During the pilot project, interviews with physicians and a workshop were conducted and an [FAQ on flexible work models for medical staff](#) (available only in German) was drafted.

3.5.1 Challenges in implementing part-time models

Only a few clinical departments at University Hospital Zurich offer their physicians part-time work models. At the same time, though, interviews with physicians made it clear that there is a pressing need among physicians for more flexibility. The daily work routine of senior physicians is often determined by duty schedules, and the 50-hour work week leaves little leeway for flexibility. Research is often done either during office hours or leisure time. There appear to be differences between clinical departments regarding the feasibility and the offering of part-time jobs at the senior physician level. In principle, it is easier to offer part-time models in clinics and departments that operate in shifts, such as the emergency unit or an anesthesia department. Communication was cited as the main challenge in implementing part-time work in surgical clinics. For example, part-time senior physicians would need to be able to communicate patient information to their colleagues in a timely manner to ensure continuity of care. However, the reason for the dearth of part-time jobs for senior physicians in surgical fields can be attributed to an absence of will to institute change and to fears of encountering resistance to change.

3.5.2 Prerequisites and solution approaches for implementing part-time models

Clinics or departments that set a good example are a key prerequisite to implementing flexible work models for physicians. The more clinics and departments that offer them, the more flexible work models will become commonplace. In addition, efforts should be undertaken to raise awareness that one person alone cannot do everything and that it is normal for multiple physicians to work on one patient. To bring about change toward more part-time job offerings for senior physicians, there must be a basic acceptance of part-time work models at the managerial level. Hospital administrators should realize that

more and more physicians today would like to work part-time and that it becomes easier to recruit qualified personnel and retain existing talent if part-time positions are offered. At the same time, employees would have to manifestly express the need for part-time work options and demand that it be met. This therefore requires the commitment and support of line supervisors and top management as well as pressure from below. Role models that exemplify flexible work arrangements and thus motivate others to demand them appear to be important as well.

4 Further Literature

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