

University of Pittsburgh  
Department of English

**BYLAWS OF THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH**

September 1974. Amended November 1987. Amended November 2003. Amended December 2005. Amended November 2010. Amended April 2011. Amended April 2021.

**1. Preamble**

In the belief that the work of an academic department can be carried out most responsibly, effectively, and equitably when its procedures are as clearly defined and as open as possible and provide for a high degree of participation by its members, the English Department of the University of Pittsburgh adopts the following bylaws and regulations.

**2. Full Department**

**A.** All powers and responsibilities delegated by the University of Pittsburgh to the department reside in the body of its voting members. The powers and responsibilities of the officers and committees vis-à-vis the department are delegated to them by the department, on whose behalf they act, and their decisions and actions are therefore subject to review by the full department.

**B.** The voting membership of the department shall be defined as follows. Each person holding a full-time or fractional tenured or tenure-stream appointment and each Lecturer holding a full-time or fractional multi-year contract shall have one vote. Graduate students with full graduate status and registered for at least nine credits or teaching in the current term shall be allocated a number of votes to be determined by dividing the number of them by ten, and rounding to the next higher integer if the result is fractional, the total not to exceed 15% of the total full-time faculty. Each graduate student shall have one-half vote, up to the total allotted according to the preceding formula; if that total is reached, the total number of votes allotted graduate students shall be shared equally among those voting. Faculty on short-term contracts (Part-time and visiting Lecturer appointments) shall likewise be allotted votes by dividing the number of them teaching in the current term by ten, and rounding to the next higher integer if the result is fractional. Each short-term-contract faculty member shall have one-half vote, up to the total allotted according to the preceding formula; if that total is reached, the total number of votes allotted short-term contract faculty members shall be shared equally among those voting. Persons with one-semester or one-year Visiting Professorships of any rank shall not vote. This voting allocation procedure must be used on all initial permanent, regular faculty appointments to positions in which candidate will have voting rights within the Department of English, regardless of their primary institutional affiliation at the University of Pittsburgh or elsewhere. All such appointments to the department will be announced to the full voting body with due consideration of the necessary time for faculty to apply for, solicit applications for, review applications for, and/or vote on the position.

**C.** Matters of general departmental policy, and any particular administrative, procedural, or substantive questions brought before the department, shall be determined by the full department. If a departmental meeting on a particular issue indicates the need for further investigation and clarification of points of view, the Chair may be requested to form an ad hoc discussion group or committee, attempting to insure that the various points of view expressed in the meeting are represented. The group or committee will hold open discussions of the issue, and may formulate written recommendations or proposals, which

can form the basis for further debate and action by the full department. In the areas of curriculum, personnel, and graduate procedures, departmental meetings each September shall be devoted to the states of those concerns and committees shall be appointed in these areas in the same ad hoc manner to serve for as much of the academic year as the particular issue requires, in accordance with published guidelines formulated by the Chair in consultation with the full department.

**D.** The full department shall meet at least monthly, September through April, with additional meetings as needed. Minutes which record the proceedings of each department meeting shall be taken; they shall be posted on the department website in advance of the next meeting, where approval of the minutes shall be the first agenda item; the approved minutes shall be kept for reference in a department file. Each meeting of the department shall be announced in advance, with an agenda and shall be open, unless matters are to be considered which have been determined by the full department to be confidential and to require restricted attendance and /or participation. Any member of the department or student shall be able, upon request to the Chair, to have an item placed on the agenda. A quorum shall exist when one-third of the voting membership is present. Members unable to attend a given department meeting may ordinarily submit absentee ballots to the department chair in advance of the meeting about a question put to a vote at that meeting. However, the majority of those present at the meeting may vote not to accept absentee ballots if they believe that an amendment to the question or the importance of debate at the meeting make absentee voting inadvisable. Questions that come before the full department shall be determined by a majority of the votes cast, except in cases where a larger percentage of the vote has been explicitly required by the department's bylaws or regulations. Voting in the selection of a departmental Chair shall be by secret ballot. In other matters, voting shall be by voice or by show of hands, unless a secret ballot is requested by a voting member, in which case the request shall be honored. Where procedural matters are not covered by any departmental bylaw or regulation, upon request by any voting member the transactions of the department shall be governed by Robert's Rules of Order Revised.

**E.** Election of the Chair. One semester in advance of an upcoming election the current Chair shall notify all voting members of the department of the election. Shortly after notification the Chair shall designate as "Election Chair" a full-time faculty member who has decided not to run. The Election Chair" shall receive nominations and arrange a meeting or series of meetings to allow a statement or statements by the candidate or candidates and discussion by department members. Voting shall be by secret ballot, and the outcome reported to members of the department and to the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Any department meeting with the Dean to discuss the choice of the Chair shall be separate from the above-designated procedure; there shall be no procedure of reappointment.

**F.** The department may, from time to time, establish such standing committees as it deems appropriate or which may be required by the School of Arts and Sciences or the University. A list of current committees is maintained on the English Department website.

### **3. Executive Officers**

**A.** The executive officers of the department shall include the Chair, and such others as the Associate Chair, the Director of Graduate Studies, the Directors of the Composition,

Film Studies, Literature, and Writing Programs, and others which may from time to time be instituted. The Chair is appointed by the Chancellor upon recommendation by the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences after consultation with the department. Upon appointment the Chair shall serve for a term of four years, renewable by mutual agreement of the department, the Dean, the Chancellor, and the Chair him or herself. Other officers of the department shall be appointed by the Chair, with the advice and consent of the full department, and each shall serve as long as is agreeable to the department, the Chair, and the officer.

**B.** The Chair is the Chief Executive Officer of the department. He or she shall be responsible for the administration of departmental business and shall represent the department to the administration, the University at large, and the profession; in hiring and other negotiations (with interdisciplinary programs, for instance); and in dealing with student complaints and problems. The Chair is responsible for all recommendations to the Dean with regard to faculty actions (including but not limited to contract renewal, tenure and promotion, medical leave, leave of absence, and sabbatical leave). He or she shall preside over meetings of the full department, the Personnel Committee, and the Planning and Budgeting Committee. He or she shall prepare the department's budget, negotiate it with the Dean, and inform the department, in writing, of its general dimensions. He or she shall exercise jurisdiction over the expenditure of departmental funds and over the office staff. In general, he or she shall be responsible for the execution of the department's bylaws, regulations, policies, and procedural guidelines; for the day-to-day functioning of the department; and for keeping the department informed of matters that concern it.

**C.** The Director of Graduate Studies shall preside over meetings and activities of the Graduate Procedures and other Graduate Committees, and shall be responsible for the day-to-day detail of administering the regulations of the graduate programs.

**D.** The other executive officers of the department shall exercise authority delegated to them by the Chair in administering departmental programs and shall advise him or her on administrative matters.

#### **4. Waiving Provisions of the Bylaws**

Any provision of these bylaws may be waived at any meeting of the department for the duration of that meeting or part thereof, by the consent of three-quarters of the voting members present. Any provision may be waived outside a departmental meeting if three-quarters of the voting members of the department consent. Voting shall be by secret ballot, signed envelope, in response to a written proposal to waive the provision, indicating the duration of the proposed waiver.

#### **5. Amendments**

Amendments to these bylaws may be proposed upon petition by at least ten voting members of the department. Copies of the proposed amendments shall be distributed to all members of the department, and the date of the meeting in which they are to be acted upon shall be announced at least two weeks in advance of any formal action. A majority of two-thirds of the votes cast shall be required for passage of an amendment.

#### **6. Departmental Course Approval Procedure for Undergraduate Courses**

The English Department has the authority to approve new undergraduate courses within its areas of curricular supervision. Because the department curriculum is divided among the four programs, the course approval process operates primarily through the program

committees, with final review by the Executive Committee. In order for a new course to fulfill general education requirements, separate approval must be obtained from the School of Arts and Sciences.

**A. Programmatic Review and Approval.** A proposal for a new course should be submitted to the director of the program that supervises the relevant undergraduate curriculum (EngComp, EngFilm, EngLit, or EngWrt). The proposal shall include information about the nature of the course, its projected role within the curriculum, and the reasons why it is a desirable addition. The proposal shall be circulated to members of the relevant committee charged with curricular supervision at least one week before the meeting at which it is to be reviewed and put to a vote. Proposals for new courses that would change the structure of one of the department's majors or minors shall offer a rationale for the change.

**B. Executive Committee Review.** The Executive Committee of the department is charged with reviewing all course proposals approved by program committees in order to approve them, reject them, or recommend revisions. The purpose of this review is to check that proper procedures were followed and to ensure that the department curriculum across programs is sustainable. In addition to reviewing new courses, the Executive Committee is charged with reviewing any changes to the structures of majors or minors and should bring such changes to the department.

### **Supplement to the Bylaws:**

#### **LIST OF DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEES**

The following is a list of current departmental committees. Graduate students are invited to serve on departmental committees. The normal procedure is for graduate students to make their preferences known to the Graduate Student Organization (GSO), which then transmits this information to the Chair. The Chair, in conjunction with program directors and committee chairs, then selects representatives to sit on each of the following committees.

##### **1. Awards**

Function: To oversee the awards for undergraduate and graduate student work.

##### **2. Computer**

Function: To oversee and coordinate the computer and information technology policies and practices of the department.

##### **3. Development**

Function: To oversee and coordinate the department's development efforts, particularly through alumni and community contacts, donor contacts, events organization, and other related activities.

##### **4. Executive Committee**

Functions: Final approval of undergraduate course proposals; selection of visiting NTS faculty. The Executive Committee is composed of the Chair, the Associate Chair, the Director of Graduate Studies, and the directors of departmental programs (Composition, Film, Literature, and Writing). The Department Chair is responsible for convening the committee and organizing its work.

##### **5. Graduate Admissions**

Function: Primary responsibility for graduate admissions and initial selection of Teaching Assistants and Teaching Fellows.

## **6. Graduate Procedures**

Function: Renewal of Teaching Assistants and Teaching Fellows, advising of PhD projects, nomination of candidates for predoctoral fellowships, oversight of degree requirements and progress toward degrees, establishment and implementation of termination policies, and recommendations of policies to the department concerning graduate programs. Graduate student members take full part in policy discussion and decisions, but do not participate in actions affecting other graduate students individually, and do not have access to other students' records. Normally, the GPC will meet once each month from September through the end of April to consider petitions for Directed Studies, PhD project proposals, extensions of statute of limitations, etc. Students who wish to bring a matter before the committee must provide the graduate administrator with all necessary documents at least two weeks prior to the next scheduled meeting of the committee.

## **7. Graduate Placement**

Function: To aid graduate students in preparation of curriculum vitae and in preparing for interviews, and calls attention to job opportunities.

## **8. Graduate Curriculum**

Function: The annual coordination and long-range planning of graduate course offerings. The Graduate Curriculum Committee is composed of the Director of Graduate Studies (Chair), directors of departmental programs (Literature, Composition, Film Studies, and Writing), and the Associate Chair. The Director of Graduate Studies shall be responsible for convening the committee and providing oversight for the graduate curriculum as a whole.

## **9. Library**

Function: Assess present holdings-periodicals, books, monographs, and microfilm. The committee also develops departmental policies concerning acquisitions, communicates acquisition priorities to the library, and coordinates faculty acquisition requests for research and teaching needs.

## **10. London Program**

Function: To oversee the administration of the University's study abroad program in London.

## **11. Personnel**

Function: Primary responsibility for screening, selecting, and interviewing candidates for faculty positions.

## **12. Pedagogy and Difference**

Function: To deal with issues of difference such as race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion, etc. in relation to teaching practices in the classroom. It also considers the concerns of undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty with regard to issues of difference in the classroom.

## **13. Planning and Budget**

Function: To aid in the preparation of the departmental budget each year and establish funding priorities and policies. The University Planning and Budgeting System require that the majority of the members of this committee must be elected.

## **14. Program Committees**

Functions: Oversight of the Programs in Composition, Film Studies, Literature, and Writing. The director of each program shall chair the committee for the program he or she directs. These committees consider proposals and recommendations from program subcommittees for new courses, changes in curriculum policy, etc. They prepare major questions regarding the curriculum for departmental consideration. Curriculum subcommittees of each program

committee may be appointed by program directors as the need may arise to discuss curricular issues raised by faculty and students. These subcommittees often prepare recommendations for program curriculum development and revision, including new courses, policies, certificates, etc.

**15. Support of the Major**

Function: To enhance and support the English major and its constituencies.

**16. Non Tenure Stream**

Function: To address policies and practices related to full-time and part-time non-tenure-stream faculty in the department.

## **ENGLISH DEPARTMENT NEW COURSE PROPOSAL**

Proposals for new courses need to be submitted to the appropriate program committee by DATE for the subsequent summer and fall terms and by DATE for the subsequent spring term. Along with your new course proposal submission, please include one copy of the PeopleSoft Course Catalog Update form and an abstract (all caps, limited to 10 lines with 64 characters per line, including spaces).

Courses that are expected to fill general education requirements need to be submitted to A&S Undergraduate Council and, if they are W-designated, to the College Writing Board. Be sure to follow the deadlines and formats for these submissions.

Please submit this cover sheet and the documentation identified below.

Title of proposed course \_\_\_\_\_  
Proposed course number \_\_\_\_\_  
Proposed number of credits \_\_\_\_\_  
Author(s) of proposal \_\_\_\_\_

Please attach to this cover sheet a description of the course and rationale for the course. In the document, be sure to include the following information:

- What are the course's purposes, contents, and methods?
- Who is the target audience for the course?
- Will the course serve a major, minor, or certificate program? If so, how? What learning objectives for a degree program or for the general education curriculum does the course support?
- Is the course being proposed to fulfill any general education requirements? (Remember that this approval must be sought separately from the departmental approval process.)
- Is the course being proposed for cross-listing in another department or program?
- Does the course have prerequisites?
- What is the expected size of the course?
- Are recitation sections or other supplementary forms of instruction required?
- Does the course require any special equipment or resources?
- How often is it expected that the course will be offered?
- Which current instructors are qualified to teach the course?
- What kinds of reading, writing, viewing, or other assignments will the course entail?

A sample syllabus for the course may also be attached.