

English Department Committees

The work of department committees is essential to the mission of the English Department. All tenured and tenure-track faculty members are expected to serve on at least one department committee and to serve at least occasionally on one of the committees that require a significant time commitment. Most committees are appointed annually by the chair, following nomination (including self-nomination) by tenured and tenure-track English Department faculty members. Exceptions to this rule are the Tenure and Promotion Committee, elected annually, and the Faculty Governance Committee, whose members are elected on staggered three-year terms. At or near the end of each academic year, the chair of each committee shall submit a report to the department chair summarizing the activities of the committee for that year. By April 30 these committee reports shall be posted to the password-protected section of the department website available to all department faculty members.

With the exception of the Tenure and Promotion Committee, the Graduate Admissions Committee, scholarship committees, and faculty search committees, department committee meetings are open to all faculty members in English. Faculty members who wish to attend a committee meeting should notify the committee chair 48 hours in advance.

While faculty members do have the right to attend and observe committee meetings, they do not have the right to speak, make motions, or vote. If the business of a committee involves an issue of a sensitive nature, the committee may decide to go into a “closed” or executive session and observing faculty members will be asked to leave.

I. General Education, Undergraduate Studies, Graduate, Tenure and Promotion, and Faculty Governance Committees

A. In addition to the Tenure and Promotion Committee and the Faculty Governance Committee, which are special cases in that both advise the chair and faculty, three department committees are of fundamental importance to the department as a whole: The **General Education, Undergraduate Studies, and Graduate Committees**. The directors of General Education, Undergraduate Studies, and the Graduate program serve as *ex officio* chairs of their respective committees. Neither they nor any other *ex officio* members vote on matters before the committees.

These committees shall follow certain basic procedures:

Meetings: These committees shall meet regularly, normally at least twice each semester (fall and spring). Minutes shall be kept, and committee decisions or recommendations affecting

department policy shall be communicated to the department as a whole (see below, “Communication”). Committee chairs shall not schedule meetings during members’ teaching times; if possible, members’ office hours should also be considered when scheduled meeting times.

Membership: These three committees consist of five members each. Committee members shall serve one three-year term before rotating off the committee though occasionally the chair may ask a committee member to serve an additional year if the chair deems it to be in the best interests of the department. Unless special circumstances necessitate doing otherwise, committee membership shall be assigned so as to ensure a staggered system of rotation, so that new members will serve alongside more experienced ones. Every effort shall be made to include faculty members from different areas of specialization in the department when assigning members to these committees. Faculty membership on the Graduate Committee is restricted to members of the graduate faculty. Advanced Ph.D. students may serve as non-voting members and participate in committee activities except those that involve personnel or other confidential matters. Student members of the committee can be nominated by the English Graduate Student Organization (EGSO). A student thus nominated shall then submit her or his *curriculum vitae* to the faculty members of the committee for their review. Members of the General Education Committee should regularly teach General Education classes.

Communication: Meetings of the General Education, Undergraduate Studies, and Graduate Committees shall be announced in advance to the department’s faculty at large. The directors of General Education, Undergraduate Studies, and the Graduate program shall also, in a timely fashion, post at the password-protected folder on the English Department’s website either the minutes of the meetings of their respective committees or summaries of the minutes when sensitive issues involving the privacy of faculty, students, or staff are discussed in committee. The password-protected folder is found at the following link: <http://www.mtsu.edu/english/forfaculty/faculty-matters>. In addition, the three directors shall email to the faculty at large the reports that they submit to the department chair at the end of each academic year summarizing the activities of their committees.

B. The Tenure and Promotion Committee is elected annually by the tenured and tenure-track English faculty at large. The policies and procedures governing the committee, as well as the department’s policies for promotion and tenure, are stated in the document “English Department Policies on Tenure and Promotion” found at the department’s website: <http://www.mtsu.edu/english/forfaculty/EnglishDepartmentPoliciesTandP07.pdf>.

The election of the Tenure and Promotion Committee shall take place in the spring semester

preceding the academic year when the committee shall serve, so that the committee members can anticipate this substantial commitment of time in planning for the fall semester and so that the committee can begin its work in a timely fashion.

C. The **Faculty Governance Committee** advises the department chair and the faculty at large about the department's governance structure and its policies and procedures. The department chair may charge the committee with reviewing new suggestions concerning the department's committee structure or policies or may ask the committee to review new policies mandated by the administration and to make recommendations regarding their implementation. The tenured and tenure-track faculty may also petition the committee to consider new recommendations independently of the department chair if so petitioned by 20% or more of the tenured and tenure-track faculty members.

Committee membership is limited to tenured and tenure-track faculty. Members serve three-year terms, staggered among the members to ensure some continuity of membership from year to year. New members are elected annually in the preceding spring semester, chosen by the tenured and tenure-track faculty at large. Members of the committee shall elect a chair from among themselves. The committee's policies and procedures regarding meetings, membership, and communication are the same as those defined above (I.A) for the General Education, Undergraduate Studies, and Graduate Committees.

The Faculty Governance Committee shall announce to the faculty when it will meet. The committee's recommendations must be presented to the tenured and tenure-track faculty at large at department meetings. The tenured and tenure-track faculty shall then vote whether or not to approve the committee's recommendations. Voting shall be conducted according to the policy for Department Voting Procedures approved by the department.

II. Other Committees Charged with Ongoing Business in the Department.

Examples include the **Advisement Committee**; the **ESL Committee**; the **GTA Observation and Award Committee**; the **Online Curriculum Committee**; the **Graduate Admissions Committee**; committees awarding scholarships and prizes, such as the **Peck Awards Committee**, the **Christine Vaughn Scholarship Committee**, and the **Virginia Derryberry Committee**; and the **Colloquium/Speakers Series Committee** and the **Virginia Peck Trust Fund Committee**.

Meetings: These committees may not necessarily need to meet regularly; for instance, most of the work of the Advisement Committee consists of advising students. Likewise most of the work of the Virginia Peck Trust Fund Committee (apart from the chair's duties) is conducted by email;

that is, the committee members review requests for funding as they are received by the committee chair. The Graduate Admissions Committee reviews applications twice a year, shortly after the deadlines for prospective students to apply for admission in the fall or spring semesters. Due to the diverse nature of the committees, each chair shall be free to determine the frequency and times of meetings to ensure that the work of the committee is done in a timely manner.

Membership: These committees shall consist of five members serving three-year terms with a staggered system of rotation, unless special circumstances necessitate doing otherwise. Advanced Ph.D. students may serve as non-voting members and participate in committee activities except those that involve personnel or other confidential matters. Student members of the committee can be nominated by the English Graduate Student Organization (EGSO). A student thus nominated shall then submit her or his *curriculum vitae* to the faculty members of the committee for their review.

Given that some of these committees involve special areas of expertise (e.g. the ESL Committee), it may be less necessary or desirable to include faculty members from different areas of specialization when assigning members to these committees than is normally the case.

Communication: Committee decisions or recommendations affecting department policy shall be posted online at the department's password-protected folder on the English Department's website: <http://www.mtsu.edu/english/forfaculty/faculty-matters>. In addition, committee minutes or summaries of minutes shall be submitted to the directors of divisions in the department immediately concerned with the committees' decisions.

The decisions of the Graduate Admissions Committee are communicated confidentially to the graduate program director. A summary reporting how many applicants there were for the M.A. and Ph.D. programs in the Fall and the Spring, how many were accepted into each program, and how many were recommended for assistantships in each program shall be disseminated to the tenured and tenure-track faculty via email. Student awards and the scheduling of colloquia and speakers shall also be announced to the department as a whole by email. Award committees shall send a summary report to the faculty as a whole via email indicating how many nominees or applicants there were, how many were selected for awards, and any changes to the application forms or changes affecting the management of the award program. A summary of the activities of the Virginia Peck Trust Fund Committee shall be sent to the department chair at the end of every academic year. It shall also be emailed to the department at large.

III. Search Committees.

When tenure-track, tenured, and visiting faculty are to be hired, the Dean requests the Chair to

appoint a search committee. Procedures governing search committees are determined by the university and conducted according to the policies of the university:

<http://www.mtsu.edu/provost/forms/hpflow.pdf>.

Tenured and tenure-track faculty will vote by secret ballot to endorse or not to endorse the search committee's recommendation. The forming of search committees for a new department chair is a different process, described in "Term Transition Policy for English Department Chairs."

IV. Full-Time Temporary Instructors and Department Committee Work.

In acknowledgement of their workload requirements, neither the university nor the Department of English require Full-Time Temporary Faculty (FTTs) to serve on any committees. Full-Time Temporary Faculty members who are nominated to serve on an appropriate committee in addition to their contract duties may do so. However, those who choose to do so should clearly understand that this is purely voluntary service and not part of their contracted duties.