

University of Washington  
College of Arts & Sciences  
Faculty Bylaws for the Department of Biology  
January 2026

### Mission

The Department of Biology is committed to advancing understanding of the living world across diverse systems and scales through scientific discovery and evidence-based, student-centered teaching. We focus on collaborative and interdisciplinary work, and engage with our broader community.

### Guiding Principles

We adopt the CAS set of guiding principles listed below:

- Engage from a place of trust
- Recognize and celebrate our differences
- Promote the common good
- Pursue social justice
- Foster community
- Support risk, learn from failure, applaud success
- Seek joy in our work
- Remember why we are here

## GOVERNANCE

### I. Regulations

A. Department members are governed by interdependent sets of regulations. In cases of conflicting regulations, the higher ranked ones supersede the lower ones (for example, the Faculty Code takes precedence over departmental bylaws). Under Section 23-43A (Academic Matters) and Section 23-43B (Personnel Matters), the Faculty Code delegates certain responsibilities to departments. These by-laws outline departmental governance and define those responsibilities.

1. Federal laws and regulations
2. State laws and regulations
3. UW policies and rules
4. The UW Faculty Code
5. UW College of Arts and Sciences policies and rules
6. Departmental bylaws

### II. Voting

- A. The voting membership of the department is defined by the [Faculty Code](#) [which, as of the approval of this document, consists of Professors (Tenure-Track), Teaching Professors and Research Professors of all ranks with primary or joint appointments in the Department of Biology].
- B. Matters subject to a departmental faculty vote are defined as:

1. Any changes to the departmental by-laws.
  2. Any changes related to degree requirements (not including changes to which classes count for which categories of requirements).
  3. Any academic personnel decisions that have not been delegated to a committee, as allowed by the faculty code. This might include:
    - i. Decisions to search for academic personnel;
    - ii. Any reappointments, e.g. of Adjunct or Affiliate faculty members;
    - iii. Any changes to the departmental search handbook.
  4. Any decisions related to teaching policy for faculty (not about specific individuals, but related to general expectations applying to broad categories of faculty).
  5. Faculty Promotions are voted on by faculty of specific ranks, as defined by the Faculty Code.
- C. For decisions subject to a departmental faculty vote, a motion is made at a faculty meeting by a voting faculty member and seconded by another such member. Voting is carried out anonymously and electronically, administered by the Assistant to the Chair or another delegate specified by the Chair, and typically allows 48 hours for members to read the wording of the motion and vote. In cases of extreme urgency, the Chair may shorten this delay to 24 hours. A quorum majority of votes cast (>50%) is considered sufficient for a motion to pass.
- D. Decisions not subject to faculty vote will be decided by the chair in consultation with the Executive Committee and any other relevant committees or individuals.
- E. Vote outcomes will be communicated no later than 1 week after the vote closes.

### III. Annual Merit Assessment

- A. The Academic Personnel Committee (APC) organizes an annual vote on department policies on merit and salary review, including processes for faculty recommendation on a) annual merit, b) additional merit, c) unit adjustments, and d) retention, in accordance with section 24-70 of the Faculty Code. The APC organizes annual merit reviews.
- B. Faculty submit yearly activity reports and CV
- C. Materials available to entire voting faculty
- D. Merit levels: meritorious, non-meritorious. In years where additional merit may be an option, APC will organize an elected committee to identify sustained extraordinary achievement.
- E. Assessment considers research, scientific leadership, teaching, student mentoring, service, and public engagement
- F. Faculty below Professor rank: reviewed by faculty superior to each rank, and any promotion cases reviewed by faculty superior to each rank in specific tracks (in keeping with the faculty code)

- G. Full Professors: reviewed by Chair based on input from full professors (in keeping with the faculty code and departmental policy)

#### IV. Department Chair

The chair of the department serves as its leader. The chair works with the faculty, staff and students, and uses departmental resources to fulfill the mission of the department, college and university. The term is typically 5 years, determined by the CAS administration.

#### V. Executive Committee

The Executive Committee consists of the Department Chair, the Departmental Administrator, and the Associate Chairs who lead the four main departmental committees: research; undergraduate program; graduate and postdoctoral program; and community access and empowerment. Each of these Committee Chairs is also identified as an Associate Chair of the Department.

The members of the Executive Committee are appointed by the Department Chair, usually in consultation with prior members of the Executive Committee. The Chair and Departmental Administrator are permanent members of the Executive Committee. Terms for Associate Chairs are for 2 or 3 years, with possibility of reappointment. Faculty members of the Executive Committee are at the rank of Associate Professor or Full Professor in either the Tenure or Teaching track. The Executive Committee typically meets weekly during the academic year and on an *ad-hoc* basis during the summer or if urgent matters arise.

#### VI. Functions of the Executive Committee

The Executive Committee plays an advisory role to the Department Chair. The Executive Committee keeps some form of record of its agenda items, discussions, and decisions (for example, through a Google Doc used for meeting agendas). Members of the Executive Committee help set the agenda for departmental meetings and retreats. The Executive Committee advises the Department Chair on departmental financial decisions, strategic planning and delegation, proposals on policy changes that may later be subject to faculty vote, and committee formation and membership. The Executive Committee works with the chair to assemble search committees for senior staff positions. In cases where the Chair is not available or has a conflict of interest, decision-making can be delegated from the Chair to the Executive Committee. Decisions of the Executive Committee are made only by consensus.

#### VII. Committees

- A. There are seven standing committees in the department:
1. Research. This committee oversees all research-related activities and resources within the department. Membership includes faculty members and other research personnel and may include the Facilities Manager(s);

the chair of this committee supervises some facilities and recharge center personnel.

2. Undergraduate Program. This committee oversees the large and complex undergraduate program in the department. It is responsible, in collaboration with the Department Chair, for deploying faculty members to teach across the curriculum and for planning faculty teaching expectations in a rolling two-year plan. It advises on any changes that may be needed in the curriculum. Membership includes faculty members and the Manager of Instructional Services; the chair of this committee supervises some advising and curriculum personnel.
  3. Graduate and Postdoctoral Program. This committee serves as the admissions committee for graduate students and monitors graduate student progress. It considers any needed changes to the graduate program manual, including expected milestones and the structure of General and Final examinations. It supports activities to build cohesion among the graduate students and postdocs. Membership includes faculty members, the Graduate Program Manager, and graduate student and post-doc representatives.
  4. Community Empowerment and Access Committee. This committee builds and maintains the structures needed to foster a supportive and welcoming departmental culture, constructive expression of ideas, and shared values. . Activities have included developing a code of conduct, producing a guide to conflict management and administering a climate survey at regular intervals. Membership includes faculty members and any staff members and students who wish to participate.
  5. Academic Personnel Committee. This committee handles merit, promotion and tenure matters, including appointment and reappointment and appointing the review team for each promotable faculty member. It shall consist of full professors in any track.
  6. Seminar. This committee establishes the seminar calendar for the academic year and plans for the next year. In addition, they promote seminars, communicate with hosts and help coordinate choosing speakers for endowed lectures. Membership includes faculty at the assistant professor level.
  7. Greenhouse Committee. This Committee makes decisions about the priorities of the greenhouse and growth chambers, making sure that research opportunities are easily available and that these facilities function as a recharge center. It also prioritizes facility maintenance and repair. Membership includes research faculty who utilize the greenhouse and growth chambers, and greenhouse personnel.
- B. Search Committees: for faculty searches, the chair, in consultation with the Executive Committee, appoints a search committee. Search committees will follow our Faculty Search Handbook.

- C. In addition to these standing committees, the chair may form additional committees as the need arises, in consultation with the Executive Committee.

#### VIII. Meetings of the Department

- A. Departmental meetings are scheduled weekly for 90 minutes during the academic year. The first portion of the meeting is open to all. The second portion is an executive session for personnel matters, attended only by members of the voting faculty, the Departmental Administrator, and the Assistant to the Chair. Meetings may be cancelled at the discretion of the Chair.
- B. The Department Chair presides over each meeting; if the Chair is absent, one of the Associate Chairs presides. The agenda is set by the Executive Committee as items arise; other departmental members can propose items for the agenda to members of the EC.
- C. Departmental meetings cannot be recorded.
- D. All meetings are held simultaneously in person and via Zoom or a similar videoconferencing platform because department members work at different locations.
- E. The agenda is distributed by email at least two days in advance of each meeting.
- F. Absentee voting is allowed; all voting is via anonymous electronic voting (see IIC).
- G. Proxy voting is not allowed.
- H. In urgent and unusual cases, the Chair may initiate electronic voting on a motion without a faculty meeting, and may call meetings outside of the weekly meeting.
- I. Minutes of the meetings will be approved by the chair and distributed no later than 1 month after the meeting

#### IX. Amendments and Additions to the Bylaws

- A. These bylaws will be reviewed by the voting faculty at least every five years, in the Autumn Quarter of years ending in 0 or 5. The voting faculty must either vote to re-affirm the bylaws in their current form or else to affirm any changes to the bylaws (as discussed below).
- B. Suggestions for amendments of the bylaws may be brought to the Executive Committee by three or more voting faculty members at any time for consideration for discussion and voting.
- C. Voting faculty members will typically be given at least two weeks' notice of a meeting to discuss and vote on proposed changes to the bylaws. In urgent and unusual cases, the Executive Committee can call a vote on a bylaw change with less than two weeks' time, but effort will be given to provide faculty as much time and discussion as is needed, and no vote may be called with less than a 24 hour response time.
- D. Proposals to amend the bylaws will be decided by majority vote (quorum) of the department faculty.
- E. Current bylaws will be displayed on the departmental intranet and relevant history will be saved by the Assistant to the Chair.

X. Institutional Record

- A. All policies and procedures adopted by the faculty shall be considered to be in effect unless the faculty vote to revise or eliminate them. When relevant, new policies and procedures should specify whether and how frequently they should be revisited.
- B. These bylaws and a collection of policies and procedures will be published on the department intranet.