

English Department Policies and Procedures For
Departmental Committees
Version 1.0

Department of English
Middle Tennessee State University

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1	Faculty Responsibilities.....	1
1.1.1	Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty.....	1
1.1.2	Instructors and Lecturers.....	1
1.2	Committee Membership.....	1
1.2.1	Ex Officio Members.....	2
1.3	Changes to Committee Membership.....	2
1.4	Access to Committee Meetings.....	2
1.5	Annual Reports.....	2
2.0	CURRICULAR COMMITTEES.....	3
2.1	General Considerations.....	3
2.1.1	Meetings.....	3
2.1.2	Curricular Committee Membership.....	3
2.1.3	Curricular Committee Communication.....	3
2.2	Graduate Committee.....	4
2.2.1	Graduate Committee Chair.....	4
2.2.2	Graduate Committee Membership.....	4
2.2.3	Graduate Student Representation.....	4
2.3	Undergraduate Studies Committee.....	4
2.4	General Education Committee.....	4
3.0	ELECTED COMMITTEES.....	5
3.1	Tenure and Promotion Committee.....	5
3.2	Faculty Governance Committee.....	5
3.2.1	Membership Considerations.....	5
3.2.2	Committee Policies and Procedures.....	5
3.2.3	Committee Recommendations.....	6
4.0	SEARCH COMMITTEES.....	7
4.1	Planning and Conduct of Campus Visits.....	7
4.2	Search Committee Recommendation Procedures.....	7
5.0	OTHER DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEES.....	9
5.1	Meetings.....	9
5.2	Membership.....	9
5.2.1	Graduate Student Representation.....	9
5.3	Communication.....	10
5.3.1	Award and Scholarship Announcements.....	10
5.3.2	Colloquia and Speaker Announcements.....	10
5.4	Guidance for Individual Committees.....	10
5.4.1	The Graduate Admissions Committee.....	10
5.4.2	Virginia Peck Trust Fund Committee.....	10
5.4.3	Consolidated Scholarship and Awards Committee.....	11
5.4.4	Creative Writing Scholarship Committee.....	11

RECORD OF CHANGES

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The work of department committees is essential to the mission of the English Department. This document sets forth the basic expectations for their composition and operations.

1.1 Faculty Responsibilities

1.1.1 Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty

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.

Per the English Department's *Policies on Tenure and Promotion*, each Assistant Professor is expected to serve on at least one of the Department's Curricular Committees (see Section 2.0) prior to applying for promotion to Associate Professor and the award of tenure.

1.1.2 Instructors and Lecturers

In recognition of their workload requirements, neither the University nor the Department of English requires Instructors or Lecturers to serve on any committees.

Instructors and Lecturers who are nominated to serve on an appropriate committee in addition to their contractual duties may do so if they wish. Any such service, however, is purely voluntary and not part of their contracted duties.

1.2 Committee Membership

Most committees are appointed by the Department Chair, following nomination (including self-nomination) by tenured and tenure-track English Department faculty members. The exceptions to this rule are the Department's elected committees. See Section 3.

Early in the Fall semester, the Department Chair will solicit updates from all committees regarding their current membership and composition. From that information, the Department Chair will draft and circulate to all Department faculty an up-to-date committee list for the upcoming academic year that details:

- Names of committee members
- Term of service for each committee member
- Appointment status (i.e. regular vs. *ex officio* for each committee member)
- Voting status for each member (i.e. voting versus non-voting)

If any changes to committee membership occur during the course of the academic year (see Section 1.3 below), the Department Chair will notify the Department faculty and circulate a revised committee list.

1.2.1 Ex Officio Members

The term *ex officio* signifies only that the committee member in question has been appointed to that committee by virtue of a role that she or he holds within the Department. It is independent from voting status.

1.3 Changes to Committee Membership

If a committee believes that a change to its membership (including but not limited to the addition or removal of regular members, the appointment or removal of *ex officio* members, and/or changes to the voting status of any members) is warranted, the committee's chairperson shall provide the Faculty Governance Committee with a written proposal that specifies the desired change and provides a clear rationale for the modification.

The Faculty Governance Committee will then forward the committee's desired voting change to the Department Faculty for a vote.

1.4 Access to Committee Meetings

Department committee meetings are open to all English Department faculty members, with the following exceptions:

- Tenure and Promotion Committee
- Graduate Admissions Committee
- Scholarship committees
- Faculty search committees

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.

1.5 Annual Reports

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. The Department Chair will ensure that these committee reports are posted to the password-protected section of the department website available to all department faculty members within a reasonable time after their submission.

2.0 CURRICULAR COMMITTEES

The following three committees are fundamentally important to the operation of the English Department, as they have jurisdiction over curricular matters:

- General Education Committee
- Undergraduate Studies
- Graduate Studies

2.1 General Considerations

2.1.1 Meetings

The Curricular 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 English Department as a whole.

The Curricular Committee chairs shall not schedule meetings during members' teaching times; if possible, members' office hours should also be considered when scheduling meeting times.

2.1.2 Curricular Committee Membership

Except for the roles of Curricular Committee Chairs, which are stipulated below, each Curricular Committee shall determine its own size and composition, including the number of and composition of *ex officio* members and the voting status of all its members. The Curricular Committee Chairs shall inform the Department Chair when any changes in their size and composition occur.

Curricular Committee members who are not in an *ex officio* status shall serve three-year terms. Occasionally, however, the Department 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, Curricular 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.

2.1.3 Curricular Committee Communication

Meetings of the Curricular Committees shall be announced in advance to the Department's faculty at large.

Each Curricular Committee Chair shall post in a timely fashion 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.

In addition, the Curricular Committee Chairs shall email to the Department 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.

2.2 Graduate Committee

2.2.1 Graduate Committee Chair

The Graduate Director shall serve as chair of the Graduate Committee in an *ex officio* status.

2.2.2 Graduate Committee Membership

Faculty membership on the Graduate Committee is restricted to members of the graduate faculty.

2.2.3 Graduate Student Representation

The Ph.D. student who serves as the elected president of the English Graduate Student Organization (EGSO) serves as an *ex officio*, non-voting member of the Graduate Committee. If the EGSO president is unable to attend meetings, another elected EGSO official may attend in her/his place.

2.3 Undergraduate Studies Committee

The Undergraduate Director shall serve as chair of the Undergraduate Studies Committee in an *ex officio* status.

2.4 General Education Committee

The Director(s) of General Education shall serve as Chair (or co-Chairs in the event of multiple Directors) of the General Education Committee.

Members of the General Education Committee should regularly teach General Education classes.

3.0 ELECTED COMMITTEES

The following two committees are elected by the tenured and tenure-track members of the department.

- Tenure and Promotion Committee
- Faculty Governance Committee

3.1 Tenure and Promotion Committee

The Tenure and Promotion (T&P) 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 contained in the *English Department Policies on Tenure and Promotion*.

The election of the T&P 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.

3.2 Faculty Governance Committee

The Faculty Governance Committee (FGC) 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 FGC 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 faculty may also petition the committee to consider new recommendations independently of the Department Chair if so petitioned by 20% or more of the Department's faculty members.

3.2.1 Membership Considerations

FGC 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.

3.2.2 Committee Policies and Procedures

The FGC's policies and procedures regarding meetings, membership, and communication are the same as those defined in Section 2.0 for the Curricular Committees.

The Faculty Governance Committee shall announce to the faculty when it will meet.

3.2.3 Committee Recommendations

The FGC's recommendations must be presented to the departmental faculty at large at department meetings. The faculty shall then vote according to the *English Department Voting Procedures* on whether or not to approve the FGC's recommendations.

4.0 SEARCH COMMITTEES

All faculty searches undertaken by the English Department will be conducted in accordance with University policies and procedures, while paying particular attention to issues relating to equity and compliance and records retention.

The procedures described in Sections 4.1 and 4.2 below apply primarily to searches conducted for tenured and/or tenure-track faculty. They will likely not apply to searches for Lecturers or other non-tenure track positions because such searches generally do not involve a campus visit. If, however, such a search does include a campus visit, then the procedures described below should be followed.

The procedures described below do not apply to the search for a new Department Chair, as that process is directed by the Office of the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, in consultation with the English Department Faculty.

4.1 Planning and Conduct of Campus Visits

Departmental policies and practices associated with conducting campus visits for candidates are described in the *English Department Guidelines for Soliciting Faculty Feedback on Faculty Search Candidates*.

4.2 Search Committee Recommendation Procedures

After a Search Committee makes its recommendation to the Department Chair, a general department meeting takes place in which the Department Chair summarizes the results of the feedback submitted by the faculty, the Search Committee's assessments of the candidates, and the recommendations that the Search Committee has made to the Department Chair.

The tenured and tenure-track faculty will then vote by secret ballot to either endorse or not endorse the Search Committee's recommendations.

The conduct of the meeting and the voting will differ from the Department's normal practices, which are specified in *English Department Voting Procedures*, in the following aspects:

- A quorum of tenured and tenure-track faculty does not need to be present at the meeting to conduct the vote.
- Faculty members who are not present at the meeting will have only 24 hours following the conclusion of the meeting to cast an *in absentia* vote via email to the Department's Executive Aide.
- Other than the ballots, no minutes or other written records of the meeting will be kept. Any faculty member who is not present at the meeting may speak with the Department Chair directly about the information that was presented.

After voting closes, the Department Chair will announce the results to the Department faculty via email.

The final decision regarding which candidate the Department will attempt to hire rests with the Department Chair. Thus, neither the Search Committee's recommendation nor the faculty's endorsement vote is binding. Nonetheless, the Department Chair should take both into account when making a selection. Moreover, in the event that the Department Chair is considering pursuing a course of action that would be at odds with either the Search Committee's recommendation and/or the endorsement vote, the Department Chair should first consult with the Search Committee Chair before making a final decision.

5.0 OTHER DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEES

This section addresses the other committees that provide service to the English Department, including (but not limited to) the

- Advisement Committee
- ESL Committee
- Graduate Admissions Committee
- GTA Observation and Award Committee
- Online Curriculum Committee
- Scholarships and prizes committees including
 - Consolidated Scholarship and Awards Committee (formerly the Christine Vaughan Scholarship Committee)
 - Peck Awards Committee
 - Virginia Derryberry Committee
- Colloquium/Speakers Series Committee
- Virginia Peck Trust Fund Committee
- Creative Writing Scholarship Committee

5.1 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.

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.

5.2 Membership

In general, these committees shall consist of five members serving three-year terms with a staggered system of rotation, unless special circumstances necessitate doing otherwise.

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.

5.2.1 Graduate Student Representation

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.

5.3 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.

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.

5.3.1 Award and Scholarship Announcements

Student awards and scholarships shall 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.

5.3.2 Colloquia and Speaker Announcements

The scheduling of colloquia and speakers shall also be announced to the department as a whole by email.

5.4 Guidance for Individual Committees

5.4.1 The Graduate Admissions Committee

The Graduate Admissions Committee (GAC) reviews applications twice a year, shortly after the deadlines for prospective students to apply for admission in the fall or spring semesters.

Prior to the GAC's initial review of applications in the fall semester, it will meet to agree upon evaluation standards and expectations.

The decisions of the GAC are communicated confidentially to the Graduate Program Director. A summary report of how many individuals applied 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.

5.4.2 Virginia Peck Trust Fund Committee

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.

5.4.3 Consolidated Scholarship and Awards Committee

The Consolidated Scholarship and Awards Committee (CSAC), formerly the Christine Vaughan Scholarship Committee, is responsible for administering the following scholarships and awards:

William Connelly Writing Award

The award celebrates the strongest writers in academic English.

Charlotte Akers-Gardner Memorial Scholarship

Awarded to an incoming freshman or transfer student who is majoring in English and carried a 3.5 (out of 4) GPA at their previous institution.

N.C. Beasley Endowed Scholarship

Awarded to a graduate of a Tennessee high school or a transfer student from a Tennessee junior / community college who is pursuing a degree in Secondary English Education, has been officially admitted into the teacher education program and is intent upon obtaining an initial teaching licensure and teaching at the PreK – 12 levels and has a minimum 3.0 grade point average on a 4.0 scale at the time of application.

Neil D. Frazier Writing Award

Awarded to an undergraduate or graduate student essay exploring the interrelationships of Christianity and the Arts.

Christine Vaughan Scholarship

Awarded to an outstanding English major with preference given to students from Coffee County, TN.

5.4.4 Creative Writing Scholarship Committee

The Creative Writing Scholarship Committee is responsible for the following scholarships:

- Pittard Creative Writing Scholarship
- Charles E. Ray Creative Writing Scholarship