

DEPARTMENT OF EARTH & PLANETARY SCIENCES DEPARTMENTAL BYLAWS

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The Bylaws of the Department of Earth & Planetary Sciences at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville contained in this document are supplemented with additional procedures and regulations given in the following documents:

- (1) Procedures for the Awarding of Discretionary Funds by the Discretionary Funds Committee
- (2) Graduate Student Manual – Rules for Supervision and Completion of Graduate Degrees in Geology
- (3) Handbook for Undergraduate Geology Majors – Rules for Completion of an Undergraduate Major or Minor in Geology

1. Formulation of (and Changes to) Bylaws and Other Procedures

Bylaws (and other procedures) can be instituted, amended, or modified by a majority vote of more than 50% of the tenure-track faculty members in the Department. The vote must occur at a Departmental faculty meeting.

Any faculty member can ask that a vote be delayed until the next faculty meeting, if sufficient advance notice of a particular topic was not given (known informally as the “Otto rule”).

2. Departmental Governance and Responsibilities

2.1 Department Head and Associate Head

The Head is appointed by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences on recommendation by a search committee, in accordance with the procedures of the College.

The Department Head has overall financial responsibility for Departmental accounts. The Head handles personnel and space allocation matters in consultation with the faculty as appropriate. The Head makes recommendations to the Dean concerning merit raises, and provides an explanation of the basis for raises to the

faculty. The Head oversees the operation of the Department Office.

The Associate Department Head has budget signature authority and assists the Head as needed. When the Department Head is absent, the Associate Department Head assumes the responsibilities of the Head, but operates within a previously agreed framework established by the Head in consultation with the Associate Head.

2.2 Department Committees

In most matters, the Department operates in a democratic fashion through its committee structure. The Department Head appoints members to committees including committee chairpersons/directors, although faculty members may volunteer for specific assignments. Committees are responsible for defining their own operating procedures, except where specifically defined by Department Bylaws or by the documents listed above. Except for routine matters or tasks specifically allocated to committees by the faculty that do not require feedback, the committees normally report and make recommendations to the full faculty. Final decisions in all academic matters rest with the faculty.

The Department has five standing committees. All faculty members are welcome to the meetings of departmental committees except for the cases identified below. Only committee members have voting privileges during passage of committee decisions and resolutions.

Undergraduate Program Committee (chaired by Director of Undergraduate Studies, DUGS) has jurisdiction over undergraduate major students and the undergraduate academic program. The Undergraduate Program Committee responsibilities include consideration and recommendations to the faculty about changes in undergraduate course requirements and curriculum. The committee is also responsible for advising undergraduate majors and minors in the Department. The DUGS has responsibility for updating and maintaining the Handbook for Undergraduate Geology Majors and departmental entries in the Undergraduate Catalog of the University.

The Committee membership is normally the DUGS and two or three other faculty members.

Graduate Program Committee (chaired by Director of Graduate Studies, DGS) has jurisdiction over graduate students and the graduate academic program, except where University rules give individual dissertation committees such control. It is the responsibility of the Graduate Program Committee to: (a) maintain communications with graduate students and consider requests for waivers; (b) decide whether individual thesis and dissertation committees are appropriate for the proposed project (the tenure-track faculty of the Department have final say in this matter in the case of disagreements); and (c) consider and recommend to the faculty changes in department-wide course requirements and curriculum for graduate degrees. The DGS has

responsibility for monitoring the academic progress of all graduate students, including maintenance of a sufficient GPA (Grade Point Average), timely approval of thesis topics and committees, and successful completion of thesis and dissertation proposals. The DGS has responsibility for updating and maintaining the Graduate Student Manual and departmental entries in the Graduate Catalog of the University.

Committee membership is the DGS and two or three other faculty members.

Graduate Admissions Committee makes recommendations to the faculty on which applicants should be admitted to the graduate program and offered financial aid. The Committee also handles requests for change of status (e.g. M.S. to Ph.D.) and extension of financial aid from current graduate students. The final decision(s) about admission and financial aid are decided by the faculty, unless time constraints require faster response. The Chairperson handles the processing of inquiries and applications to the graduate program and communicates with applicants. The Chairperson writes acceptance letters (co-signed by the Department Head) and manages the pool of funds for financial aid offers to new and continuing students.

Committee membership consists of the Chairperson and two or three other faculty members, although all faculty members are welcome to committee deliberations.

Discretionary Funds Committee approves expenditures as outlined in the Procedures for Awarding Discretionary Funds by the Discretionary Funds Committee. The committee may also be asked to consider and make recommendations to the faculty about changes in the procedures for awards. The Department Head may also use development funds, as necessary, to enable the Department to achieve its mission more successfully. When discussing a request involving a faculty member, that person is excused from committee deliberations. The Chairperson has responsibility for providing a report to the Head of approved expenditures for each year.

Membership of the Committee consists of the Chairperson and two other faculty members.

Adjunct Faculty Appointments/Faculty Recognition Committee reviews applications for adjunct faculty appointments and makes recommendations to the faculty, as well as nominating faculty members for appropriate internal and external awards.

Membership of the Committee consists of the Chairperson and two other faculty members.

3. Alumni Advisory Board

The Department uses a variety of processes to communicate with its former students. The most formal of these processes is the Alumni Advisory Board. The Board provides counsel to the Department in matters about the academic program, student opportunities, alumni communication, and development activities. The Board has a membership of up to ten alumni, plus the Department Head and the Associate Department Head. Other faculty members are welcome to participate in Board meetings and on occasion will be asked to do so by the Board. The Board has a Chairperson, who is preferably selected by the alumni board members, but can be appointed by the Department Head when needed. Members of the Advisory Board are normally invited to serve terms of three years by the Department Head in consultation with alumni and faculty. The Advisory Board normally meets at least once a year, but may meet more or less often as needed.

4. Faculty Appointments

Only tenure-track faculty members vote for hiring decisions concerning tenure-track faculty, although lecturers may participate in the discussions. All faculty members (including lecturers) vote on hiring decisions concerning lecturers. Adjunct faculty appointments are voted on by tenure-track faculty, after review and recommendation by the Adjunct Faculty Appointments Committee.

5. Procedures and Criteria for Faculty Retention, Tenure, and Promotion

Only tenured faculty members participate in discussions and voting for retention of probationary faculty and for tenure and promotion to Associate Professor, as specified by University and College regulations. Only full Professors participate in discussions and voting for promotion to Professor. The candidate for promotion is invited to propose external reviewers, but the final list of reviewers is selected by faculty of appropriate rank. Probationary faculty should have an appointed faculty mentor and should receive clear guidance on their progress towards tenure and promotion well in advance of the Departmental decision. For all these decisions, one faculty member is appointed to summarize, in writing, the faculty discussions and votes. The Department Head prepares an independent assessment. The Department Head, with considerable assistance from the candidate, is responsible for assembling the tenure or promotion file and submitting it to the College.

Criteria for promotion and for tenure involve meeting at least the requirements for “meets expectations” as described in section 6. The faculty will also take into account external reviews in making their recommendations. Promotion to Associate Professor and Professor have different obligations: Full Professors are expected to have attained more prominent reputations as researchers, greater effectiveness as teachers and mentors, and more active roles in service and outreach than Associate Professors. Criteria for retention of probationary faculty are essentially the same as for promotion to

Associate Professor, with allowances made for the time required to set up the necessary research facilities, to obtain external funding and attract graduate students, and to establish their research program. Allowances can also be made for the improvement of teaching skills and philosophy and course designs as their experience grows.

6. Expectations for Faculty Performance

Annual evaluations of faculty performance will be conducted by the Head. Each faculty member prepares and submits a statement of workload, using procedures specified by the College. Faculty members are evaluated as performing at rank (meets expectations), exceeds expectations, needs improvement, or unsatisfactory, as specified in the Faculty Handbook. Faculty performance in teaching, research, and service and outreach are evaluated with the following expectations:

6.1 Teaching

Research-active faculty members normally teach three courses per year, unless otherwise negotiated with the Head. Faculty members are generally expected to participate in courses at the introductory, undergraduate, and graduate levels, and to mentor graduate students. Course content is expected to be current and appropriate for the course level. Grading and evaluation techniques must be appropriate for the students' knowledge and skill levels. Teaching methods are expected to be effective, and faculty members are expected to treat students with respect and to serve as models of professionalism.

Exceptional performance may be indicated by recognition of exceptional teaching quality by peer reviews, awards, or other means, by development of new courses, or by effective participation in programs for improvement of pedagogy. Unsatisfactory performance may be indicated by content that is out of date, by disrespect of students, or by ineffective teaching methods. Teaching performance is evaluated periodically by peer committees, as described in the Appendix.

6.2 Research

Faculty members are expected to participate in research activities, resulting in at least two publications per year in professional journals or other reviewed outlets. Each faculty member should either have ongoing external grant funding to support his or her research, and/or be actively seeking funding each year (occasional success is expected). Faculty members are expected to supervise the research of graduate students. The faculty member's research program should have long-term goals and recognition in the scientific community. Principal Investigators of grants are expected to manage their funding in a professional manner. Exceptional performance may be indicated by recognition from scientific organizations in the form of awards or fellowships, by managing a large, productive group of graduate students and/or postdocs continuously funded by competitive grants, and by placement of graduates in

competitive research or academic positions. Unsatisfactory performance results from failure to maintain an active research program, to publish results of the research, or to seek outside funding for research.

6.3 Service and Outreach

Faculty members are expected to participate fully in the governance and life of the department, including performing assigned committee functions and peer teaching reviews, and making informed decisions about faculty appointments, and promotion and tenure. Attendance is expected at faculty meetings, department seminars, and department social events whenever possible.

Faculty members are expected to engage in outreach and service activities where such opportunities exist. The appropriate level of outreach efforts depends on faculty experience, opportunities, and expertise. Outreach activities may include K-12 programs to enrich and improve science education, presentations to community groups, or providing information to media to improve awareness of science in general. Faculty members are expected to serve the scientific community through reviews of manuscripts for scientific journals and proposals to funding agencies, and to serve on councils, advisory committees, and funding panels. Service to the College and University is encouraged, as opportunities arise. Exceptional service and outreach involves assuming department responsibilities well beyond the norm, or outreach that significantly raises the profile of the individual and the Department among the public, the scientific community, and/or the University at large. Unsatisfactory service and outreach is defined by failure to participate in assigned department service activities, or outreach that does not reflect well on the individual or Department.

7. Faculty Evaluation of Department Head's Performance

The performance of the Department Head is evaluated annually by the faculty as a whole. The Head should provide the same workload documentation as do faculty members, as well as a brief statement of administrative goals, accomplishments, and challenges. After discussion, the faculty prepares a brief written summary of the Head's performance, which is then submitted to the Dean.

8. Faculty Meetings

Faculty meetings are normally held once per month during the academic year, although the Department Head may schedule meetings more or less frequently as needs arise. All faculty, including lecturers, are expected to attend, except when excused for professional obligations. Undergraduate and graduate student representatives are also invited, but will be asked to leave when personnel matters are

discussed. The agenda will normally be published in advance.

APPENDIX:

Procedures for Department Teaching Reviews

The approach to review of teaching should be multi-faceted, including inputs from the faculty member being reviewed, peers, and students. Teaching assessment and evaluation should minimize burdens for faculty, administrators, and students. This process applies to all faculty members, where the distinction between probationary and tenured faculty will be in the frequency of assessments.

Self Assessment

Self assessment allows the faculty member to reflect on teaching, both for his or her benefit and to facilitate constructive dialogue about teaching with others. Self assessments of teaching must be done prior to consideration for tenure and any promotion.

A minimum output from this process would be a document about the person's teaching philosophy and may include, but not be limited to, self-assessment results from previous reviews, teaching goals, methods for achieving these goals, and plans for achieving teaching excellence. The document may be supported by a teaching portfolio that illustrates implementations or successes of the philosophy, documents activities such as short courses that improved teaching skills, considers strengths and areas for improvement, and possibly other aspects of teaching.

Peer Assessment

Peer assessment provides the faculty member with useful feedback from their peers which identifies strengths and areas for improvement in teaching. A peer teaching review should be conducted for a tenured faculty member approximately every five years. A probationary faculty member should receive a peer review every two years. Where special circumstances arise, a faculty member has the right to request reconvening of a peer review team or formation of a new peer review team in the interval between scheduled peer reviews.

The peer review team consists of three faculty members. At least two of these members, including the chair, are tenured. One member is selected by the faculty member under review, one by the Department Head, and the third is agreed upon between the two.

The peer review team should offer feedback that: (1) considers whether the courses of the faculty member have appropriate content and offer students sufficient opportunity to acquire appropriate skills; (2) considers whether the grading system and evaluation/assessment tools are consistent with course content and student skill development; and (3) examines the teaching methods of the faculty member for

effectiveness. Feedback is facilitated by peer review team meetings with the faculty member to discuss teaching before, after and otherwise as needed or requested during the review process. Feedback will be based on (1) examination of materials (e.g. handouts, tests, web pages, etc.); and (2) observation in the classroom or instructional setting for at least one course being taught during the semester of the peer assessment. Each team member should visit at least three class meetings. At the end of the semester, the peer review team produces a written report that is discussed with the faculty member being reviewed, and presents strengths and areas for improvement for the teaching of the faculty member.

Student Reviews

Student questionnaires are to be administered each semester for each class with more than the minimum number of students as defined by the University. However, results from small classes should be used cautiously because of the variability in results introduced by small samples.

Summary Evaluation by Department Head

At the completion of a peer review, the Head prepares a written summary of teaching, taking into account the peer review, student reviews, and the self assessment. This summary review becomes part of the permanent record.

Procedures for Dealing with Needs Improvement and Unsatisfactory

If a faculty member receives a teaching summary evaluation rating of “Needs Improvement” or “Unsatisfactory”, he or she must present a corrective plan to the Department Head. The plan should be constructed to implement changes in content, evaluation techniques, and teaching methods as needed. At the next appropriate semester, the Department Head appoints a new peer review committee in consultation with the faculty member. The new team receives copies of the previous summary review and the plan of the faculty member to improve their teaching. The purpose of the new peer review team is to determine whether changes have been implemented and whether the changes raise the teaching of the faculty member to “Performing at Rank”.