

# **Bylaws of the Department of Biology and Biochemistry**

## **University of Houston**

### **Approved by faculty vote fall 2025**

#### **Section I. The Faculty**

##### **A. Membership**

1. Voting Faculty shall consist of all Tenured and Tenure-track Faculty, promotion-eligible non-tenure track Instructional Faculty with three years of continuous service, and promotion-eligible non-tenure track Research Faculty with three years of continuous service, who are full-time University employees and devote at least 50 percent of their time to duties within the Department.
2. Instructional Faculty are full-time non-tenure track University employees who primarily have instructional duties within the Department. They shall typically hold a Ph.D., M.D. or equivalent degree and may be assigned ranks of instructional assistant professor, instructional associate professor, or instructional professor. They are generally paid from state funds. Instructional Faculty may apply for research and/or instructional grants if they obtain the approval of their department, college, and division of research.
3. Research Faculty are full-time promotion-eligible non-tenure track University employees who primarily have research duties within the Department. They shall typically have a Ph.D., M.D. or equivalent degree and may be assigned the rank of research assistant professor, research associate professor, or research professor. They are generally paid from research grants or other external funds and usually do not have formal teaching responsibilities. Research Faculty may serve as Principal Investigator for external or internal research grants and serve as co-advisors on thesis and dissertation committees.
4. Research scientists and senior research scientists are non-promotion eligible non-tenure track faculty positions that are generally paid from research grants or other external funds and normally do not have teaching responsibilities.
5. Joint Faculty are tenured or tenure-track faculty with primary appointments in other University of Houston departments. Requests for joint faculty appointments shall be approved by the Department Chair, in concurrence with the policy leader of the home Division. Joint faculty contribute to and participate in Departmental activities. Joint faculty generally do not have a voting right, although they may be accorded voting privileges by consent of the existing Voting Faculty and Department Chair. Joint Faculty are allowed to chair thesis and dissertation committees.

6. Visiting faculty are tenured or tenure-track faculty at other institutions but are at the University of Houston on a temporary basis and may contribute to and participate in Departmental activities. Visiting faculty do not have voting privileges.
7. Adjunct Faculty shall hold a Ph.D., M.D. or equivalent degree and are appointed by Department Chair primarily based on Departmental needs. They will typically be non-University employees and do not have voting privileges. They may serve on thesis or dissertation committees but may not chair such committees.
8. Lecturers and instructors shall typically have a Ph.D., M.D. or equivalent degree. They will have exclusively instructional duties and may be part-time. They will report to The Instructional Division policy leader. Lecturers and instructors will not have voting privileges.
9. Appointment of a Professor to Emeritus status shall be approved by the Chair. Nominations for Emeritus status may come from either the Chair or the Faculty. Professors Emeriti will continue to be members of the Department but will not have voting privileges. Emeritus Faculty may serve as Principal Investigator on external or internal research grants and serve as members and/or co-advisors on thesis and dissertation committees, but they may not chair thesis and dissertation committees. They may also serve on Departmental committees but not the Promotion and Tenure Committee or the Policy Committee.
10. New Faculty searches shall be conducted according to the guidelines established by the University of Houston. A Search Committee appropriate to the open position will be appointed by the Chair to conduct each authorized Faculty search. The committee will consist of Voting Faculty of any rank and may, if appropriate, include members of other University Departments. The Committee, in conjunction with the Chair, will coordinate advertising, review applications, select candidates for interviews, and conduct the interview process for candidates. All Search Committee members will vote on the candidates.
11. A favorable recommendation for a Voting Faculty appointment shall require a majority vote of the Search Committee and concurrence by the Chair.
12. Research Faculty, Instructional Faculty, lecturers and instructors will be appointed on an annual basis or, if qualified on a multi-year contract through a continuing employment agreement, by the Chair according to rules of the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics and the University.

## **Section II. Officers and Administration**

### **A. Department Chair**

1. **The Chair** shall be appointed according to the Bylaws of the College of Natural Science and Mathematics. Voting Faculty shall be polled for their choice of Chair as provided by the College Bylaws.

2. The Chair shall provide academic and administrative leadership for the Department, preside over Departmental Meetings, perform such duties as assigned by the University or the Dean of the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, supervise the operation of the Department, represent the Department in College and University affairs, and inform the Faculty of events affecting the Department or welfare of the Faculty.

### **B. Department Vice-Chair**

1. **The Vice-Chair** shall be appointed by the Chair and shall carry out such duties as assigned by the Chair. The Vice-Chair will serve as Acting Chair of the Department at any time the Chair is out of town, unavailable, or incapacitated and unable to administer the affairs of the Department.

### **C. Associate Chairs**

1. **Associate Chair for Graduate Affairs** is appointed by the Chair and shall supervise the placement and progress of the graduate student population and ensure that graduate programs and policies are in alignment with departmental and university learning objectives. This individual will appoint graduate student TA positions and oversee the recommendation of graduate students for departmental and university scholarships and awards. The Associate Chair for Graduate Affairs shall serve as the administrative head of the Department if both the Chair and Vice-chair are absent.

2. **The Associate Chair for Undergraduate Affairs** is appointed by the Chair and shall supervise Departmental efforts in undergraduate curriculum and student success, and shall oversee the administration and resolution of student grievances or allegations of student misconduct.

## **Section III. Divisions**

A. The Department shall be divided into four Divisions that include Faculty of similar research/scholarly areas and interests. The Divisions are: Biochemistry, Cell and Molecular Biology (CMB), Ecology and Evolution (E&E), and Instruction. Faculty may belong to more than one Division, although they shall have a primary Division for administrative purposes.

B. Each Division shall be administered by a Division policy leader who shall serve 2-year terms. The Division policy leader is selected by the Chair after an election by the division faculty. The Division policy leader must have a primary appointment in the Division that he or she leads. The Division policy leader shall serve as liaison between the Division and the Chair and shall oversee administration of matters specific to that Division.

- C. The Division is responsible for developing the graduate curriculum for students in that discipline.
- D. Faculty teaching responsibilities shall be assigned by the Chair in conjunction with the Associate Chair for Undergraduate Affairs and the Division Policy Leaders.
- E. Each Tenured and Tenure-track Faculty member shall select a primary Division. Appointment of new Tenured and Tenure-track Faculty to a Division requires the consent of the Division. Faculty may also request membership in a second Division with the consent of the membership of that Division.
- F. Research Faculty may have appointments in one of the Divisions with the consent of the membership of that Division.
- G. The creation of a new Division shall be approved by a two-thirds majority of the Voting Faculty.

#### **Section IV. Committees**

##### **A. Standing Committees**

1. **The Policy Committee** shall be chaired by the Chair and consists of the Vice and Associate Chairs, all Division leaders, one Clinical or Research Faculty member elected by its constituency for a two-year term, and an At-Large member, elected by the Voting Faculty for a two-year term. The At-Large member can come from any segment of the Voting Faculty. The Policy Committee will assist and advise the Chair in the administration of the Department, including overall planning and development of the Department, areas for new Faculty hiring, Faculty salary increments, and other Departmental business.

The Policy Committee will conduct annual reviews of all Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty (only Tenured and Tenure-Track members of the Policy Committee will participate in the review of Tenure and Tenure-Track faculty), and will appoint subcommittees with additional ad-hoc members as necessary to conduct annual reviews of Non-Tenure Track Faculty. The subcommittee for Instructional Faculty will be chaired by the Instructional Division policy leader and will include the Associate Chair for Undergraduate Affairs and one ad-hoc Instructional Division faculty member. The subcommittee for Research Faculty will be chaired by a member of the Policy Committee appointed by the Chair and will include at least two Tenure-Track Faculty (counting the member appointed by the Chair to lead this group) and at least one Research Faculty member, for a minimum of three members. Research Faculty members may be appointed from other departments in the College if suitable candidates do not exist within the Department.

The Policy Committee may also make recommendations to the Chair about space allocations and Faculty and staff work schedules. This Committee will serve to assist and advise the Chair in all matters not specifically assigned to other Committees.

2. **The Promotions and Tenure Committee** shall be chaired by the Vice-Chair of the Department or a Tenured Faculty member appointed by the Chair of the Department and shall consist of two tenured Faculty members from each division, with the committee chair representing one of these, and one

Research Faculty member. If suitable Research Faculty members do not exist within the Department, they may come from other departments within the College. All committee members will serve two-year terms. The Promotions and Tenure Committee shall recommend Faculty promotions and tenure based on the evaluative material specified by the College and University. The committee shall also conduct mandatory progress reviews of non-tenured Faculty. Tenure and promotion decisions are voted on by members of the Committee who are senior in rank to the candidate, although all members may participate in the discussions. Sub-sets of the Committee will meet to discuss each track of Faculty. Subject to the above-described seniority restrictions, Tenured Faculty members can discuss and vote on all decisions; Instructional Faculty members shall only discuss and vote on Instructional Faculty members; Research Faculty members shall only discuss and vote on Research Faculty members.

**3. The Undergraduate Curriculum Committee**, chaired by the Associate Chair for Undergraduate Affairs, will be responsible for undergraduate degree plans, development of long-range undergraduate curriculum plans, designing new undergraduate curricula, creation of new courses, and supervision of undergraduate Departmental courses. The Committee will be composed of at least two members from each Division. Matters regarding Graduate or advanced Undergraduate curriculum will typically be initiated at the Division level, but changes must be approved by the Curriculum Committee.

**4. The Graduate Program Committee** will be chaired by the Associate Chair for Graduate Affairs and the committee members are composed of Division policy leaders from the three research divisions (Biochemistry, CMB, and E&E) and the chair of the Graduate Admissions Committee. This committee will review graduate program requirements and curricula and recommend changes to ensure that departmental graduate programs remain at the forefront of graduate education.

**5. The Graduate Admissions Committee.** The department chair will appoint a Voting Faculty member to chair this committee. The committee will be responsible for graduate recruitment and will recommend action on graduate applications and appointments. The Committee will be composed of at least two Voting Faculty members from each Division that is responsible for graduate student training. Changes to graduate program admission requirements will be proposed by the Graduate Committee and subject to the consent of the Faculty.

B. Other Committees shall be appointed as deemed necessary by the Chair.

C. Nominations for membership on each committee may be made by the Voting Faculty of each division or the Chair. An election by the Voting Faculty shall be held when there is more than one nominee for a seat on a committee. Instructional and Research Faculty members may serve on any committee that falls within their areas of professional responsibility. Joint Faculty may serve on any of the above committees except the Promotion and Tenure Committee. Membership on committees shall be for a 2-year term. Faculty may serve unlimited subsequent terms.

D. In order to provide for Faculty leadership development the Chair will encourage and as appropriate nominate each Voting Faculty member who has been at the University at least three years to participate in and/or chair Departmental, College and University committees.

E. Open Departmental positions on College Committees will be selected by a vote of the entire Voting Faculty.

## **Section V. Meetings**

A. A departmental faculty meeting should be held as necessary, but no less than once per semester. Meetings may be called by the Chair or by at least four Voting Faculty upon written request to the Department Chair. A quorum (simple majority of Voting Faculty in residence) must be present in order to conduct business.

B. Voting Faculty members unable to attend a meeting may vote in advance on a matter under consideration by submission of a written vote to the Chair.

C. Secret ballots shall be used if requested by any Faculty member present.

D. Consent of the Faculty shall mean approval by a simple majority of a quorum of the Voting Faculty at a departmental Faculty meeting or by a simple majority of votes cast in a written or electronic ballot, with at least one-third of the Voting Faculty voting.

## **Section VI. Promotions, Tenure, Dismissal**

A. Eligibility for promotion and/or tenure will be determined according to the current Faculty Handbook and the Manual of the Board of Regents. Evaluation and review shall follow the written policies of the Department and the College.

B. Provision for termination or dismissal of any Faculty member shall be in accordance with University guidelines as outlined in the Faculty Handbook.

## **Section VII. Relationship to Other Governing Rules and Regulations**

Nothing in these bylaws should be construed to supersede provisions of the Statutes of the University of Houston as described in the Faculty Handbook and other materials provided by the Office of the Provost or the bylaws of the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics.

## **Section VIII. Amending the Bylaws**

Amendments to these Bylaws shall be submitted in writing to either the Policy Committee or the Chair and shall be approved by two-thirds majority vote at a Faculty meeting at which a quorum of Voting Faculty are present or by a mail or electronic ballot, with proposed changes distributed at least two weeks in advance of the vote with approval by two-thirds majority vote with at least one-third of the Voting Faculty voting.