

DEPARTMENTAL CHARTER

Department of Philosophy and Religion Studies
University of North Texas
Adopted March 8, 1978
with Revision Through February 25, 2008

I. General: The Department of Philosophy and Religion Studies Charter is complementary to the procedures set forth in "Guidelines for Faculty Participation" (Appendix E of the Faculty Handbook) from which authority for this charter is derived.

In accordance with decisions of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in 1969, 1985, and 1992, the purpose of the Department of Philosophy and Religion Studies is to provide for students pursuing (1) the Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy, (2) the Interdisciplinary Minor in Religion Studies, and (3) the Master of Arts in Philosophy with a Concentration in Environmental Ethics. This mission emphasizes scholarly publication and public service to the state, nation, and international community primarily in support of the undergraduate program in religion studies and the graduate program in environmental ethics. In addition, the department is committed to supporting the service needs of other departments and interdisciplinary programs both at the undergraduate and graduate levels throughout the University to the degree that resources permit.

The Faculty Handbook generally sets forth the organization, policies, procedures and traditions of the University of North Texas. Each member of the Department of Philosophy and Religion Studies is expected to have a working knowledge of that document. The Departmental Charter is not intended to amend, contradict, or supersede the general spirit and intent of Faculty Handbook policies and guidelines, but to interpret and to supplement those policies and guidelines as appropriate for the unique needs and circumstances of the Department.

II. The Chair: It is the task of the chair to fulfill the chief executive officer's role as delineated in the Faculty Handbook. In his administrative capacity it is his task, with the advice and counsel of the Department or appropriate committees, to carry out the administrative and educational policies of the Department and the University.

In transmitting his recommendations to the dean, the chair shall inform the dean if a majority of the voting members of the faculty are of a contrary opinion.

The chair will provide for the faculty members an annual review and evaluation of Departmental performance, goals, policies, programs, etc., in the light of changing circumstances and conditions affecting the University and Department.

The chair shall function as an ex officio member of all committees except the Grievance Committee.

III. Departmental Committees

A. The Executive Committee: The Executive Committee shall consist of three elected members and the chair. All full-time tenured members of the Department are eligible for membership. Nominations are to be made at the final faculty meeting of the year; each faculty member shall have three votes (no more than one vote can be given per nominee); those nominees receiving the three highest vote totals will be elected, provided that they have achieved at least a simple majority, in the case of ties or pluralities, run-off elections shall be immediately held. Term of office will be for one year.

The Executive Committee provides advice and counsel to the chair on matters of Departmental policy and administration. In addition, the Executive Committee shall as necessary fulfill the duties pursuant to recruitment and selection of either full- or part-time faculty members. Guided by the short and long run goals of the Department, this Committee should carefully prepare a job description for a prospective faculty member. In recruiting full-time (assistant through full professor) members, prospective members shall be ranked by all Departmental faculty in order of preference.

B. Personnel Affairs Committee: The full-time (assistant through full professor) Departmental faculty shall function as a committee of the whole for the purposes of annual faculty evaluation. (See IV, E for the annual faculty evaluation policy and procedures.)

For purposes of promotion and tenure recommendation, a Personnel Affairs Committee shall be elected, consisting of three tenured members. Election shall follow the procedure and policy set forth in III, A above; this Committee will have a one-year term of office. This Committee will also submit to the chair an annual evaluation of the progress toward tenure being made by any probationary faculty member.

C. Curriculum Committee: The Curriculum Committee shall consist of two elected members and the chair. Election shall follow the procedure and policy set forth in III, A above. This Committee will initiate and supervise Departmental initiatives, which affect the Departmental program of study and courses of study (both undergraduate and graduate.) This committee will have a one-year term of office.

D. Grievance Committee: This will be an ad hoc committee consisting of three members. The chair shall nominate one member, the faculty member presenting the grievance shall nominate one member, and these two shall nominate a third member to serve as chair of the Committee. The members of this Committee need not be from the Philosophy faculty. Majority approval by the faculty is necessary to seat the nominees. The Committee shall attempt to ameliorate or otherwise resolve the grievance.

E. Graduate Committee: The Graduate Committee shall consist of two elected members and the chair. Election shall follow the procedure and policy set forth in III, A above. This committee will serve as the admissions committee for incoming graduate students, award teaching assistantships and fellowships, award any special scholarships and fellowships that may be available, and handle all matters related to the graduate program that may arise other than curriculum and policy matters requiring the attention of the department serving as a committee of the whole.

IV. Departmental Policy

A. Faculty Meetings: Regular faculty meetings of the faculty must be held at least once per semester (exclusive of the two summer semesters.) A meeting may be called by the chair, or upon request of one-third (not less than two) of the full-time (lecturer through full professor) members of the Department. Minutes of the meeting shall be kept; corrected minutes, including minority reports and exceptions, shall be distributed to all members of the Department, and forwarded to the dean, and the academic vice-president.

All full-time (lecturer through full professor) members shall be eligible to vote with the following exception: those members who are on temporary or terminal contracts can vote on structural matters (e.g., charter, promotion, and tenure, etc.) only by the approval of two-thirds of the faculty. Any vote

may be by secret ballot at the request of a faculty member. All Committee elections will be by secret ballot. The Departmental Charter may be amended by majority vote.

B. Summer School Assignments: All full-time (assistant through full professor) faculty members will be eligible for summer teaching. However, summer teaching assignments are a reward for meritorious contribution to the Department goals, not a privilege or right. Thus, the annual faculty evaluation shall be carefully considered in making summer teaching assignments.

C. Travel Funds: All full-time (assistant through full professor) faculty members will be eligible for a pro-rata share of travel funds. Travel funds shall be allocated on the following priority basis:

1. Paper presentations before professional groups. This is the highest priority, and it is desirable that all funds be allocated to this category. No funds shall be allocated to any other category during the first semester. At the beginning of the second semester, Departmental members with further claim to funds under this category (i.e., beyond their pro-rata share) can make application for same to the chair.
2. Panel membership at professional meetings, respondent to a paper, travel to fulfill duties as an officer in a professional society, or travel to attend seminars, etc. (On an ad hoc basis, funds may be available from the Dean of Arts and Sciences for cases of exceptional merit.)

D. Policy on Special Problems (PHIL 490-91): PHIL 490-91, Special Problems, will be offered only under two circumstances:

1. In order to accommodate legitimate scheduling difficulties which would otherwise preclude a student from graduation. Majors who have not consulted with the Department chair, Undergraduate, or Graduate Advisor on at least a yearly basis will not be granted an exception to the regular degree requirements.
2. In order to accommodate advanced students (at least senior level standing) with legitimate needs for independent study. The minimal requirement for a Special Problems course include:
 - a. Submission of a reading list and plan of study prior to registration.
 - b. Submissions of a provisional draft of the term paper at least five weeks prior to the conclusion of the semester (failure to comply with this requirement will result in an automatic "Incomplete".)
 - c. Submission of a corrected and/or revised draft of a term paper by the conclusion of the semester.
 - d. Bi-weekly consultation with your instructor (at least seven meetings during the semester.)

E. Faculty Evaluation Policy: Each faculty member will be evaluated annually on their work since the last evaluation using a three-year period and a calendar year from January 1 to December 31. Each faculty member shall prepare a Uniform Vita and Biographical Data Sheet (see attached.) This information, along with the Faculty Evaluation Form (see attached) shall be circulated among all full-time (assistant through full professor) members of the Department. Prior to the annual evaluation, faculty members may elect to invite colleagues into their classroom. Such visitations are solely for the purpose of assisting faculty members in evaluating teaching and classroom performance of their colleagues. Faculty should honor the request or colleagues to visit their classroom.

Faculty members will rate every other faculty member, and turn in their ratings to the Department chair. Such ratings will be kept confidential by the chair. However, the chair will prepare a Departmental profile on each faculty member, plus an overall Departmental ranking (e.g., first, third, fifth.) Faculty members will be entitled to see their own profile and know their own ranking within the Department.

Departmental members may argue their case at a faculty meeting if they feel that the ratings do not accurately reflect the quality of their work. Thus, the full-time (assistant through full professor) faculty of the Department function as a committee of the whole on matters of faculty evaluation (in lieu of an elected personnel affairs committee.)

Criteria for Tenure and Promotion

The Department of Philosophy and Religion Studies at the University of North Texas recognizes that the tenure and promotion process itself embodies a wide range of philosophic questions and assumptions--epistemological, political, and ethical. The nature and use of knowledge are themselves changing today; our challenge is to identify standards for tenure and promotion which are both rigorous and flexible in nature, and which match the diverse nature of our disciplines and the world at large.

Tenure and promotion in the Department involve evaluation across four areas: research and scholarship, teaching, service, and collegiality. Broadly speaking, research is of primary importance, teaching somewhat less, and service less still. While important, collegiality counts as the least of the four criteria, once the mid-term (third-year) evaluation has occurred.¹

Research and scholarship are broadly understood as the creation of new knowledge, including the synergistic recovery and/or synthesis of existing knowledge, disseminated through various media such as print, film, electronic publication, and substantive web design. Teaching is broadly understood as the transmission of knowledge to and the cultivation of research and scholarship skills in students. Service is broadly understood as contributions to the enabling infrastructure for the creation, dissemination, and transmission of knowledge, including faculty self-governance at the departmental, collegiate, and university levels; service to regional, national, and international professional societies; service to the infrastructure for the dissemination of knowledge, such as to publishers of books and journals; and service to various lay communities. Collegiality is broadly understood to consist in facilitating and not hindering the research/scholarship, teaching, and service of other members of the academic community, broadly understood to include the department, college, university, and profession.

Promotion to Associate Professor

Research and Scholarship

The Department considers a wide variety of accomplishments to contribute to the bid for tenure, including but not limited to single-authored books, co-authored books, edited or co-edited volumes, peer-reviewed articles and book chapters, journal editing, translations, establishing an academic center, audio and video productions, web pages with significant scholarly content, and other new media—herein after referred to as “work produced.” Generally speaking, the Department seeks to promote

¹ The College of Arts and Sciences forms for both the mid-term evaluation and the evaluation of candidates for promotion to tenure include the following check-off regarding collegiality: “So far as can be determined, the above faculty member does/does not understand the nature of membership in a community of scholars, adheres to high standards of integrity and professional ethics, has the ability and desire to work as a member of a group while retaining all rights of individual expression, and feels a sense of responsibility for the well-being of the University of North Texas and a commitment to work for the accomplishment of its goals.”

interdisciplinary collaborations of all types, and will weigh interdisciplinary work produced in any of the above areas equally with intra-disciplinary work produced in the disciplines of philosophy and religion studies. Progress toward such accomplishments as these will be examined at the mid-term (three-year) evaluation and untenured faculty will be advised accordingly.

Recognizing that research and scholarship today take a wide variety of forms, the Department has developed an evaluation system that converts all such activity into a common numerical measure. Given the deficiencies of converting qualities into quantities, the Department will use this evaluation system with discretion, with the Chair and Departmental PAC retaining the prerogative to interpret its results.

Candidates for tenure will therefore be encouraged to seek clarification from the Chair and the PAC concerning appropriate numbers of works produced. Keeping in mind that quality can trump quantity, as regards publications or other media for the dissemination of new knowledge the applicant for promotion to Associate Professor with tenure should average one to two refereed papers or chapters in books per year or the equivalent thereof, for a total of nine over the UNT six-year probationary period. Work produced at other institutions will also be considered, but the emphasis will be placed upon work accomplished while at UNT. Candidates must demonstrate a sustained trend of scholarly achievements toward establishing a national reputation in their field.

The publication of a single-authored book will be deemed the equivalent of seven articles. Promotion and tenure will depend upon the Department's appraisal of the quality and quantity of the work produced as it relates to the faculty member's research interests. Participation in refereed conferences and as an invited speaker will also be considered in the tenure review process, as will substantive scholarly contributions to the creating of documentaries, web pages, and other new media.

With a view to the Departmental focus on interdisciplinary activity, the Department expects that candidates for tenure and promotion will also pursue sponsored research with agencies such as the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, and the National Endowment for the Humanities and/or other funding sources, public or private as appropriate. Finally, the Department recognizes and will take into account the fact that candidates for tenure differ; a candidate, for example, who joined the Department shortly after graduate school may not be as advanced in his or her research and scholarship as another, who may have been employed for several years at another institution of higher learning. The Department takes particularly seriously its responsibility to mentor candidates who fall into the former category.

Recommendations for promotion and/or tenure before the sixth year of employment at UNT will be restricted to exceptional cases.

Teaching

The statistical teaching performance of the faculty member should be around or above the Departmental average. There should also be favorable written student evaluations. Both kinds of evaluation will be viewed in conjunction with the faculty member's grading policies and outcomes, to insure that high ratings are not influenced by grade inflation. In the event that the faculty member receives low marks as a teacher from student evaluations, the faculty member may request that other faculty visit his or her classes as an additional means of determining the quality of his or her teaching.

Service

During the probationary period, Departmental and university service will be kept to a minimum, to permit the faculty member adequate time to develop research/scholarship and teaching skills. Because the Department's graduate program is focused on the connections between philosophic reflection or the study of religion and the larger world, and may for that reason involve the faculty member in significant service activities, such activities may, when deemed appropriate by the Chair and the PAC, count as the

equivalent of part or all of the research/scholarship requirements for tenure and promotion to Associate Professor. Such activities might include, for example, significant involvement in journal editing, and large interdisciplinary projects aimed at applying philosophy within the context of other scholarly, scientific, and professional disciplines.

Promotion to Professor

Candidates for full Professor must demonstrate proficiency in research and scholarship, teaching, and service, and must also demonstrate commitment to the university's community of scholars.

Achievement in all areas must be accompanied by an emphasis on research and teaching which is proportionately greater than that necessary for promotion to Associate Professor. In no cases will excellence in research be construed as a substitute for the demonstration of adequate teaching performance. In no cases will excellence in teaching or service be construed as a substitute for proficiency in research and scholarship.

The faculty member is expected to have continued to meet and exceed the standards required for tenure and promotion to Associate Professor. The faculty member is expected to have published a single-authored book or its equivalent in the form of other media for the dissemination of knowledge. Substitutes may include an average of two or more refereed papers or chapters in books per year or its equivalent, two or more edited books, a significant book-length translation with appropriate scholarly interpretation and apparatus, significant activity in journal editing, the creation of documentaries, interdisciplinary projects in philosophy or religion studies, works of fiction with significant philosophical content, and the creation of web pages with significant intellectual academic content. Regular participation in conferences, workshops, and other scholarly meetings, as well as invited lectures to other colleges and universities, is expected as indications of the faculty member's regional and national reputation and of his or her contribution to research and scholarship.

The faculty member should have participated effectively in Departmental and university service, including, for example, Departmental and university committees, terms as undergraduate or graduate advisor and supervisor of teaching assistants and teaching fellows, or other comparable activities as may from time to time be required by the department or university. Significant participation in regional, national, and international organizations related to the faculty member's specialty will also be favorably considered.

F. Missed Classes: Faculty members should attempt to secure a teaching replacement, or otherwise arrange for an organized class, for any section they will be unable to meet due to travel, illness, etc. In no case except emergency or sudden illness should the students be given a "walk."

G. University Courses: Such courses can be taught only with the approval of the chair and the Executive Committee; a detailed proposal should be submitted to the chair; if approved, then further action can be taken by the faculty member to instate the course.

All such courses will be taught by members of the Department on an "approval basis" (i.e., approval will be granted semester by semester). Approval will be granted subject to availability of funds for replacement sections and other Departmental needs.

The Department will retain control over the title of the course and its content.

IV. Department Policy

H. Evaluation of Instructional Effectiveness: Assessment of the undergraduate program shall include student participation in a capstone seminar, exit interviews by the undergraduate advisor, and periodic surveys of former graduates. Assessment of the graduate program shall include oral examinations and/or thesis defense, exit interviews by the graduate advisor, and periodic surveys of former graduates. The undergraduate and graduate advisors shall refer results to the appropriate committees, normally the executive committee, curriculum committee, or the graduate committee, for deliberation and recommendations to the department, serving as a committee of the whole, for policy changes.