

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.)

Tenure and Promotion to Associate Professor

The faculty member should demonstrate proficiency primarily in research and teaching and to a lesser degree service. He or she should also demonstrate the commitment to participate with others in the department and the university as a member of the university's community of scholars.

The statistical teaching performance of the faculty member should be average to above average for the department. There should also be favorable written student evaluations. Both kinds of evaluation will be viewed within the context of the grading of the students to insure that high ratings are not influenced by grade inflation. In the event that the faculty member receives low marks as a teacher in terms of student evaluations, the faculty member may request that other faculty visit their classes as an additional means of determining the quality of the faculty member's teaching.

As a minimum, the faculty member should average one refereed paper or chapter in a book per year or its equivalent. The publication of a single-authored book, which may be based on the faculty member's dissertation, shall be deemed adequate evidence of research for promotion to associate professor and for tenure. Without the publication of a book of significant quality, promotion and tenure shall depend upon the department's appraisal of the quality and quantity of articles published and of other scholarly or professional activities that may be specifically related to the faculty member's research interests. Participation in refereed conferences and as an invited speaker shall also be considered favorably.

During the probationary period, departmental and university service shall be kept to a minimum to permit the faculty member adequate time to develop research and teaching skills. Because the department's graduate program is focused on applied philosophy, which may involve the faculty member in significant service activities, such activity may when deemed appropriate by the chair and the PAC count as the equivalent of part or, in very rare cases, all of the research requirements for tenure and promotion to associate professor. Examples are significant involvement in journal editing and large interdisciplinary projects aimed at applying philosophy in the context of other scholarly, scientific, and professional disciplines.

Promotion to Professor

In addition to meeting the requirements for associate professor, the faculty member must demonstrate proficiency in research, teaching, and service and also demonstrate commitment to the university's community of scholars. Achievement in all areas must be balanced with greater emphasis on research and teaching. In no cases shall excellence in research be construed as a substitute for the demonstration of adequate teaching performance.

The faculty member is expected to have continued to meet or exceed the standards required for tenure and promotion to associate professor.

The faculty member is expected to have averaged one or more refereed papers or chapters in books per year or its equivalent. Substitutes may include edited books, significant activity in journal editing, interdisciplinary applied philosophy projects, and works of fiction with significant philosophical 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 his or her contribution to philosophical research.

The faculty member should have participated effectively in departmental and university service, including, for example, departmental and university committees and 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 shall 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.