

Physics and Astronomy Bylaws

(Adopted 31 May 2023)

1. Introduction

These bylaws are the operational procedures used by the department faculty to carry out their collective academic responsibilities. The department faculty includes tenure-line faculty, non-budgetary joint faculty, teaching-line faculty, research-line faculty, adjunct faculty and emeritus faculty. Their participation and voting rights are itemized below. The bylaws will be made readily available to the faculty on departmental web page [<https://physics.northwestern.edu/>]. No departmental bylaw can supersede the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of individual faculty members, or the authority of the dean and department chair, as governed by Northwestern University policies that include:

- Northwestern Faculty Handbook:
- The WCAS Chairperson's Handbook
- Research faculty policies:

2. Departmental Faculty Meetings

- A. Regular faculty meetings are called, scheduled, announced and led by the department chair. The meeting announcement will clearly indicate if only a subset of the faculty should attend.
- B. A special faculty meeting will be called by the chair about 9 months before the completion of the chair's term of service to consider the recommendations of a faculty committee formed by the executive committee to recommend who should be the next chair. The chair recommendation committee will solicit and consider the input of each faculty member, will discuss this task and possible service with chair candidates, and will present options as motions to be discussed and voted upon in the special faculty meeting. Candidates who are included in a recommendation will not attend this faculty meeting unless specifically invited by the chair recommendation committee as part of the process. The chairperson of the chair recommendation committee will preside for the special faculty meeting. (Note: the dean chooses the department chair; the department can only make a recommendation.)
- C. All departmental faculty are expected to attend the portions of faculty meetings which deal with matters upon which they are entitled to vote (outlined below). The university requires the department chair to list the reasons for excused absences from votes on tenure-line hiring, reappointment, and promotion in a departmental letter discussed below.
- D. All departmental faculty are invited to participate in the portion of faculty meetings that deal with new faculty hires and new courtesy appointments, even if they do not have voting rights. The chair has discretion to limit meeting attendance by type and rank in exceptional circumstances.

- E. Faculty votes can be conducted if a quorum consisting of at least half of the faculty eligible for expected votes are participating.
- F. At a minimum, minutes containing the agenda, the faculty members in attendance, the wording of motions voted on, and the vote totals will be promptly posted for ready access by faculty eligible to attend the meeting.

3. Departmental Voting Responsibilities and Rights

- A. **Budgetary Tenure-line Faculty:** Tenured professors, tenured and untenured associate professors, and untenured assistant professors, including joint budgetary appointments with another Northwestern department or another institution. Votes count equally rather than being weighted by the budgetary fraction. All budgetary tenure-line faculty vote on all non-personnel issues. They may be asked to to serve in departmental roles and on committees.

The tenure-line voting responsibilities and rights are specified by the WCAS Chairperson's Handbook. They include:

- (a) Tenured faculty vote on whether to recommend tenure to the dean. (Associate professors without tenure can participate in discussions of tenure for assistant and associate professors but cannot vote.)
 - (b) Tenure-line faculty vote on all new tenure-line and courtesy hires (see below). An additional vote of the tenured faculty is then required to recommend tenure for a new hire.
 - (c) Tenure-line faculty vote on tenure-line and adjunct reappointments below and equal to their rank, and upon promotions below and up to their rank.
 - (d) Tenure-line faculty vote on teaching-line faculty appointments, reappointments, and promotions.
 - (e) Tenure-line faculty vote on research faculty appointments, reappointments, and promotions.
 - (f) Emeritus tenure-line faculty are not eligible to vote.
- B. **Teaching-line Faculty:** Assistant professors of instruction, associate professors of instruction, and professors of instruction vote on all non-personnel issues. They may also be asked to serve in departmental roles and on committees.
 - (a) Teaching-line faculty vote on the hiring of all new teaching faculty.
 - (b) Associate professors and professors of instruction vote on reappointments below and equal to their rank, and upon promotions below and to their rank.
 - (c) Emeritus teaching faculty are not eligible to vote.
 - C. **Non-Budgetary Tenure-line Faculty:** These "courtesy appointments" are to tenure-line Northwestern faculty with a budgetary department that takes responsibility for their reappointment, tenure, and promotions. Normally these appointments are for 3 years with the possibility of renewals for 5 year terms. Appointees may be asked to serve on relevant committees.

- (a) Such appointments are made when this clearly strengthens our department or university.
- (b) Appointees can attend the same faculty meetings as departmental faculty of the same rank, but without voting rights.

D. **Adjunct Faculty:** These “courtesy appointments” (with no budgetary component) are to faculty and faculty-level researchers with no budgetary appointment at Northwestern. They are awarded only to those the department judges have the desire and demonstrated ability to enhance our department. Normally these appointments are for 3 years with the possibility of renewals for 5 year terms.

- (a) Traditionally, adjunct appointments have gone to Fermilab and Argonne research staff of comparable rank, but could be awarded to faculty and research staff from other institutions.
- (b) In the case that a departmental faculty member leaves Northwestern, an adjunct appointment can be conveyed at the discretion of the chair to facilitate the winding down of research and mentoring commitments.
- (c) Adjunct faculty can attend the same faculty meetings as departmental faculty of the same rank, but without voting rights.
- (d) Normally a collaborating department faculty member will share responsibility for graduate students working with adjunct faculty members.
- (e) Faculty receiving short appointments that address pressing teaching needs, sometimes referred to as adjunct faculty, do not participate in faculty meetings.

E. **Research-line Faculty** are professional investigators who support the Northwestern research mission by assisting the department and university centers in achieving research goals. They may be asked to serve on relevant departmental committees.

- (a) Research faculty are invited to participate in faculty meetings with the tenure-line faculty of their same rank.
- (b) Northwestern policy prevents them from participating in departmental governance, so they have no voting rights.

4. Departmental Voting Procedures

A. **Amending the bylaws:** The bylaws can be revised and amended by a 2/3 majority vote of the faculty voting at a meeting that is subsequent to the one where the revision is first introduced as a motion.

B. Non-personnel Issues

- (a) A non-personnel issue involves no hiring, promotion, reappointment, or tenure of a specific individual.
- (b) Motions regarding non-personnel issues will be voted upon during scheduled faculty meetings by the faculty participating in the meetings.
- (c) Votes will be tallied by a show of hands unless an eligible voter requests a confidential ballot.

- (d) Motions requiring a yes/no vote, or a choice among two options, will be approved by a simple majority of votes cast.
- (e) Motions requiring a choice among three or more options require that one option achieves a simple majority of the votes cast. Failing this, the option receiving the fewest votes will be removed, and the voting will be repeated. This process continues until one choice receives a simple majority of the votes cast.

C. Personnel Issues: Tenure-line, Teaching-line, and Courtesy Appointments

- (a) A personnel issue refers to the hiring, reappointment, tenuring, and promotion of a specific individual.
- (b) A faculty committee will be appointed to evaluate each case, including required items listed in the Northwestern Chairperson's Handbook.
- (c) The requirements for letters of reference from widely recognized authorities vary.
 - i. External reference letters are not required for reappointments.
 - ii. For tenure decisions, senior hires, and senior promotions (budgetary appointments), the department normally expects 5 or 6 letters. (The university requires 3 to 6 letters.) Not more than half of the writers are to be suggestions of the candidate and they should not be PhD advisers or close collaborators.
 - iii. For tenure-line assistant professor hires, 3 letters will suffice and letters from a PhD adviser or close collaborator may be included.
 - iv. Non-budgetary courtesy appointments to tenure-line faculty from other departments require a statement on the importance of the appointment to the university and the department, and what the candidate will contribute. Letters of reference are required only if these have been recently solicited for a new hire.
 - v. For teaching-line faculty hires, the department normally expects 3 or 4 letters of reference from writers able to judge the teaching skill of a candidate. No letters are required for the promotion of teaching-line faculty.
 - vi. For new adjunct faculty appointments, at least 3 letters of reference should be provided to the department. These can be solicited by the candidate's home institution for a new hire during the past year, or the department can decide to solicit letters. For a promotion, letters are not required unless the faculty committee decides otherwise.
- (d) Courtesy appointments are considered only after a widely advertised research seminar or preferably a department colloquium (recorded and made available to faculty) demonstrates the overlap with the department. The department chair can make an exception for an exceptional case. Also required is a candidate's statement about why the appointment is important, and what the candidate is willing to contribute to the department.
- (e) The faculty committee presents cases and recommended motions to the executive committee of the department. (The wording of standard motions are in an appendix.)
- (f) The faculty committee then presents the cases and motions in a scheduled and announced meeting of the faculty eligible to participate in discussions of the case, and reports the vote of the executive committee. The department chair must ensure that there is ample time for discussion in the faculty meeting.
- (g) For budgetary tenure-line hires, teaching-line hires, and all tenure decisions, the case and motions must be revisited at least briefly in a subsequent faculty meeting to move

forward. (This provides time for the faculty committee to address concerns and add to the dossier, for informal faculty discussions, and allows faculty legitimately unable to attend the first meeting to contribute to the discussion.) For reappointments, promotions with no tenure decisions, and courtesy appointments, the delay to a following meeting is not required.

- (h) After each motion is discussed, the motion will be read and the faculty will vote on “This motion should advance to a confidential electronic ballot.” A “yes” vote of 2/3 of those eligible to vote in the meeting is required to send the motion to a confidential electronic ballot.
- (i) Confidential electronic voting will be open for at least 5 days following the second faculty meeting unless a shorter period is deemed necessary and announced by the chair. A 2/3 positive vote of the faculty eligible to vote is the threshold set by the department for the motion to pass.
- (j) The university requires that the departmental letter sent to the dean to summarize the case and recommendations must include:
 - i. Complete and exact vote totals (votes in favor, against, abstentions).
 - ii. Names of eligible voting members who voted and the names of those who did not vote, with the reason for their not voting (on leave, travel, illness, etc.).
 - iii. Abstentions are counted as part of the total ballots cast.
 - iv. Vote totals and discussion summary. (Note: we are also asked to describe any straw vote and result that is taken before the final vote).
- (k) The chair informs faculty being considered for reappointment, tenure, or promotion of the departmental recommendation.

D. Personnel Issues: Renewal of Courtesy Appointments

A request to renew a courtesy appointment must include a brief statement that includes why the reappointment is desired, along with the contributions that have and will be made to the department. A faculty meeting discussion and a two thirds majority vote in an electronic ballot can suffice to renew the appointment.

E. Personnel Issues: Research Faculty

- (a) A research faculty member will normally have a tenure-line faculty mentor who is responsible for presenting the case for hiring, reappointment, or promotion. The case made available to the faculty must include:
 - A minimum of 3 letters of reference from authorities who are as widely recognized as is possible.
 - A summary of the important research role that the research faculty member will play in advancing the research objectives of the department.
 - A hiring motion in standard form (see appendix) upon which the faculty can vote.
 - Unless deemed otherwise by the chair, a faculty meeting discussion is not required.
- (b) Confidential electronic voting will be open to the tenure-line faculty for at least 5 days following the presentation of the case to the faculty, unless a shorter period is deemed necessary and announced by the chair. A 2/3 positive vote of the faculty eligible to vote is required for the motion to pass.
- (c) The chair and faculty mentor will inform the candidate of the departmental recommendation.

5. Appendix: Standard Motions (to be Adapted as Needed)

- A. *“The Department of Physics and Astronomy recommends that [name] be appointed as Assistant Professor of Physics and Astronomy.”*
- B. *“If [name1] declines, the Department of Physics and Astronomy recommends that [name2] be appointed as an Assistant Professor of Physics and Astronomy.”*
- C. *“The Department of Physics and Astronomy recommends that [name] be promoted to Associate Professor of Physics and Astronomy with tenure.”*
- D. *“The Department of Physics and Astronomy recommends that [name] be appointed as a Research Assistant Professor of Physics and Astronomy.”*