

Department of English

Governance Booklet

Revised November 2023

Departmental Decision-Making Procedures

The Academic Coordinator will take minutes at all department meetings. The Coordinator and Chair will go over the minutes after the meeting and then circulate them. At that point the minutes will be the Chair's responsibility, so faculty members should contact the Chair quickly (within a week) if their recollection differs from what is stated in the minutes. If there is no disagreement about the minutes they will become part of the departmental record. If agreements on policy changes are included in the minutes those policies will automatically go into effect.

In order to ensure that the whole department is properly involved in the making of decisions, it is essential that clear and transparent procedures are in place. The goal is to mark our decisions clearly *as* decisions, so that there will be no confusion about how and when we reached a decision. Our procedures will reflect the fact that consensus is our ideal (to be achieved through negotiation and a willingness to compromise).

"Consensus" refers to a general sense of agreement that may not be perfect unanimity but is a *working* consensus—a willingness on the part of everyone to go forward with the proposal even if there may still be a few differing opinions. We will follow this process to move forward on proposals:

1. We attempt to achieve consensus through thorough discussion. If there is consensus at the meeting there will in general be no need for a vote. If the decision is significant, we will take the time to collect absentee votes using the procedure below. There must be a quorum of 12 for consensus.
2. If there isn't consensus at the meeting but there is a feeling that discussion has been full and thorough, we will take a vote.
3. If the vote is 2/3 in favour (or higher), the motion will pass, [where voting members are regular teaching faculty with contracts of at least one year in ENGL.] Faculty should make a good faith effort to attend the meeting in order that there truly can be an effort to achieve consensus. If a faculty member cannot attend, s/he will be able to send an email vote within 24 hours of the meeting. A 2/3 majority of the total number of votes collected by this time will carry the proposal.
4. For particularly sensitive decisions, such as hiring decisions, a silent vote will follow discussion.

Amendments to Proposals: Procedure

We have adopted Robert's Rules to deal with amendments to proposals. The procedure is as follows. We discuss the amendment and its effects on the initial proposal. We then vote on the amendment, either electronically or during the meeting in person, depending on the sensitivity of the issue. Under Robert's Rules, the amendment needs to receive a straight majority of votes (not 2/3) to pass. If it passes, the amendment will be adopted and the amended proposal will be ready for a vote--unless we require at that point more discussion. At this point we return to our usual voting structure of 2/3 majority to pass.

Hiring Practices

Rationale

The following guidelines are designed to introduce transparency and accountability into departmental procedures for hiring. The goal is to establish guidelines that are predictable, equitable, and transparent in terms of their underlying logic. The goal, therefore, is not just to manage hiring in a way that is in fact fair, but in a way that is also *seen and experienced* as fair by all concerned. We are not concerned here with tenure-track hiring, which we assume would involve a hiring committee and then the participation of the whole department in discussion of the candidates. We are concerned here with hiring at a smaller level for singleton classes, J-term, etc.

The kinds of hiring we need to consider are divided into three groups: J-term; adjunct hiring from outside the department; distribution of "extra" classes or sections within the department. These procedures must be followed in all instances of hiring for the hiring decision to be valid.

J-Term

We have agreed as a department to a three person ad hoc hiring committee to review and rank the proposals by visiting faculty for J-term courses. The committee will review the materials and then convey the ranking to the rest of the faculty for their information. The group may request syllabi from applicants in addition to the application materials on file. Meanwhile, the dossiers would be available for everyone in the department to consult and comment on, so that anyone who wished to be part of the process could jump in at any time. We will then send our ranking to the Dean of Curriculum, and leave the final determination to the College Curriculum Committee.

"Extra" Classes/Singletons

This policy regards any "extra" classes that the department needs. If such a class comes up (an extra 170 or 103, say), the chair will first consider the availability of current special appointment faculty on ongoing appointments within the department. If no one among this group is available, the chair will then consult colleagues and the Dean of Faculty to consider other possibilities from outside the department (see below).

In the unlikely event that there happened to be more than one person within the department available and wishing to take on the extra course, the chair will take steps to make sure that the distribution of such classes is fair and equitable. In such cases the chair will consult the following criteria: suitability of the faculty member's training and/or research for teaching the class that was needed; the length and depth of the faculty member's work in, and service to, the department. In certain cases, it may be fairest to consider a system of rotation, in which case the chair will consult with the faculty members concerned to work out an equitable solution. The solution for that particular year would be recorded in an agreed upon manner to avoid confusion and conflicting memories. Having considered all these circumstances, the chair will make a recommendation concerning which faculty member will pick up the "extra" class, write up a rationale including all relevant facts, and communicate this to senior faculty, including those in both ENGL and CRWR. In the case of a CRWR singleton such as CRWR 170, the chair will first consult with the director of the CRWR program. Senior faculty must then approve the proposed distribution of singletons by vote.

Outside Hiring for Singletons

If there is a need to consider hiring someone on special appointment from outside the department, we will use the ad hoc hiring committee (established for J-term and other related matters) to review the applicants and make recommendations to the department.

Advertisements for such singletons will be posted and distributed on the college website (http://www.middlebury.edu/academics/administration/prospective_faculty/employment). At that point the chair will bring the relevant materials to a department meeting for an inclusive discussion of which applicant best fits the needs of the department. This procedure will still be in place even if there is only one candidate for the position. Special appointments from outside the department must take into account the needs of existing faculty, as stipulated above.

Contract Renewals

When Special Appointment contracts are up for renewal, the chair will inform senior faculty of her/his plan for the renewal. At a minimum, the chair will inform senior faculty by email of the plan to request renewals for current contracts. If there are to be any requests for changes to these contracts, the chair will inform the senior faculty of those changes, and if necessary call a meeting to discuss them. The goal here, as above, is to ensure that fairness (according to our established guidelines) prevails. Proposed changes to current contracts will need to be approved by vote of the senior faculty (ENGL and CRWR) before being submitted to EAC.

The chair will meet with faculty on term positions twice per year to discuss issues of concern, preparation for review, teaching distribution, any concerns about scheduling, etc.

EAC Position Requests

All requests to the EAC for positions, whether tenure-track or special appointment contracts (including 1-3-year positions), must be approved by departmental vote before being submitted.

Departmental Hiring Procedures for Tenure Track and 3-year Term Positions

- I. Upon receiving approval from the VPAA to conduct a search for the position, the department will meet to discuss the search, choose the search committee, reaffirm diversity commitments, and decide upon a rubric for the search process.
 - A. The committee will consist of 3-5 members, in addition to the “outside” member appointed by the VPAA. We will try to achieve some balance in terms of tenured/untentured colleagues as well as a range of academic interests/specializations.
 - B. In searches for CRWR positions, at least one member will be from the literature faculty.
 - C. In searches for ENGL positions, at least one member will be from the CRWR faculty.
 - D. It is understood to be College policy (as of 2020) that colleagues who are retiring and/or being replaced by the search in question should not participate in the hiring process. They may go to candidate lectures, however, or meet with campus visit candidates to answer questions, etc., but they should not have a vote in the deliberations or sit on the search committee.
- II. The search committee will have access to, and will review, all application materials for each candidate on Interfolio, and narrow the pool to 20-40 qualified candidates.
- III. The search committee will then select 8-12 candidates to interview via Skype or other technology.
 - A. *Any department colleague* willing to read the 20-40 dossiers may submit comments to the search committee about candidates during this process.
- IV. The search committee will conduct the remote interviews, with other colleagues invited to be silent observers. It is against College policy to record interviews.
- V. After the interviews have been completed, the search committee will hold an open meeting for ENGL/CRWR faculty to select and rank the top 4-6 candidates, whose dossiers will be forwarded to the VPAA.
 - A. In fairness to all the candidates, only those colleagues who have read the 8-12 dossiers of the finalists and viewed their remote interviews (as silent observers or as part of the search committee) will be allowed to participate in the ranking.
 - B. These colleagues will rank the final group of 4-6 to produce the top 3 (2 for term positions) candidates, our recommendation to the VPAA on who will get on-campus interviews. The committee will also pre-select the 4th and 5th (or 3rd and 4th for term positions) candidates, using the same diversity protocols and departmental rubric, to avoid the necessity of subsequent debate should we later need to dip deeper into the hiring pool.
 - C. **All** ENGL and CRWR colleagues, as well as members of the department’s Student Advisory Committee, will interview those candidates who are selected for on-campus interviews.
- VI. After the on-campus interviews are completed, the full department will meet to decide which candidate will receive the job offer. At this meeting, it is customary for the members of the search committee to present each candidate to the department, weighing strengths and weaknesses as impartially as possible. An anonymous vote, using the sequential voting rules below, will follow discussion.
- VII. Each member of the department will have an equal vote. In fairness to the candidates, colleagues should vote only if they have:
 - a. Attended the lectures (or view recordings)
 - b. Attended the teaching demonstrations (or view recordings)
 - c. Read all relevant dossier material, including writing samples
 - d. Met with the candidate individually or in a small group (if at all possible)

Voting Procedures

- I. After the on-campus interviews are completed, the full department will meet to decide which candidate will receive the job offer. There will be several rounds of voting; before each round of voting the department will meet to discuss candidates and choices. Votes are anonymous and are sent to the department coordinator.
- II. Please note: the voting procedures listed below are for Tenure-Track positions. When the position is a term position, all numbers are reduced by one. So for example, in the first round of voting there will be 3 potential choices: 2 candidates and “None of the above.” Also please note that in situations where a 4th candidate is brought in and the department agrees to re-vote on the original three in addition to the 4th candidate, all numbers will be increased by one.
- III. Vote #1: Colleagues must rank the options in order of preference. In a tenure track search, there will be 4 potential choices: Candidates A, B, C and a vote for None of the Above. Ranking will be in numerical order with #1 being the top choice and so on down to #4 being the least favorite. Colleagues must rank all 4 choices or their ballot cannot be counted. The three top choices (those three which receive the lowest number of points) move on to Vote #2; the bottom is eliminated. In the event that the third- and fourth-ranked options were tied, another vote between those two options would be held to see which is eliminated.
- IV. Vote #2: The top 3 choices (which may include None of the Above as well as candidates) from Vote #1 are re-ranked by the same method as above. In this round, we eliminate one additional choice and the top two choices move on to Vote #3. [This step was added to clarify the fact that the ranked voting system progressively eliminates candidates from the bottom up and to do so more gradually. Our previous system eliminated the bottom two; this moves us to a more one-by-one elimination system.] The results of this ranked vote round must be preserved, in case an offer is made to a candidate who does not accept and the department wishes to return to the pool.
- V. Vote #3 is between the two top choices of Vote #2. This vote is decided by a simple majority. If the winner of Vote #3 is a person, we go on to Vote #4. If the winner of Vote #3 is None of the Above, we request to bring in an additional candidate. Because it is very rare for the administration to permit departments to invite an additional candidate and still keep the original candidates in play, we must clarify *in advance* if it is the will of the department to declare the first candidates off the table or if we wish to be allowed to reconsider the original pool along with the additional candidate. If the administration says ‘yes,’ we bring in the additional candidate and either re-vote beginning at Vote #1 or move on to Vote #4. If the administration says ‘no,’ we meet to discuss whether we wish to a) suspend the search or b) re-consider candidates. If necessary, we take a simple majority vote to decide whether to suspend the search or to re-consider the original candidates.
- VI. Vote #4 (was #3): If the top-vote-getter of Vote #2 is a person, that person is placed before the department for an up-or-down vote. If that person gathers at least three-fifths of the votes, the process ends in an offer. If that person does not get 3/5 of the votes, the department meets to discuss the possibility of compromise or re-voting before suspending the search.
- VII. In the event that an offer made to the first-choice candidate is rejected, the department will return to the second choice if that choice was a person. That candidate will then be voted on according to Vote #4 rules, above.
- VIII. Even in the case of a joint position with another program or department, ENGL will follow its own procedures for hiring, as described above.

Reviews

- I. Tenured/Tenure-Track Faculty
 - A. When asked to contribute a letter for a review, faculty should carefully consult the relevant sections of the Faculty Handbook concerning colleague letters (C. 3. 2. a.-g.). Specifically, letters should address only matters germane to the review, that is: teaching, research, and service to the college and department. As per the Handbook rules, in addition to writing an individual letter, the Chair must also write a departmental letter that includes relevant anonymized portions of the colleague letters. As a department we have agreed that this departmental letter must be circulated among senior contributing colleagues prior to submission to the Dean of Faculty's office. In order to give the chair time to consider any suggested amendments, the individual colleague letters should be submitted to the chair two weeks before the final deadline for submission.
- II. Contract Faculty
 - A. When asked to contribute a letter for a contract colleague's review, faculty should carefully consult the relevant sections of the Faculty Handbook concerning colleague letters (C. 3. 3. f.). Our departmental practice, approved by the administration, has been for the colleague under review to nominate, in consultation with the Chair, TWO senior colleagues to participate in their review (in addition to the Chair). As per the Handbook rules, in addition to writing an individual letter, the Chair must also write a departmental letter that includes relevant anonymized portions of these two colleague letters. As a department we have agreed that this departmental letter must be circulated among the senior contributing colleagues prior to submission to the Dean of Faculty's office. In order to give the chair time to consider any suggested amendments, the individual colleague letters should be submitted to the chair two weeks before the final deadline for submission.
- III. Following a review, the chair will meet with the colleague under review to discuss the process of the review from the candidate's and the departmental perspective. As a department chair is not privy to specifics from the Dean of the Faculty or the Reappointments Committee following a successful review, the candidate will have the opportunity to raise concerns or issues about the review process and result. Per the College Handbook, this meeting will also be a forum in which "To discuss with the candidate [their] progress in teaching and scholarship from the perspective of the department, with reference to the VPAA/DoF's summary of the post-review meeting between the candidate and the Reappointments Committee.

Departmental Subcommittees

Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee will include at least one or two senior faculty along with at least one or two junior or contract faculty members for a total of THREE members.

Membership of this committee will be determined by vote of the English Department Voting Faculty. Faculty members may recuse themselves before the vote if they do not wish to serve.

While the AC has no power to enforce any particular reading of departmental rules upon the Chair or the department at large, its mandate is nonetheless to respond to member concerns about possible violations of our rules. Its overarching function, therefore, is to facilitate conversation about best procedural practices in the interests of ensuring that the department follows its own agreed-upon governance structures. The committee works a) independently of the chair and b) in an advisory capacity to the chair; c) answering ultimately to the department as a whole. Thus, the final arbiter of any true ambiguity as to interpretation of the governance will be the department as a whole.

Procedures:

1. The Chair may contact the AC to discuss or clarify some policy issue as it relates to the governance. If there is true ambiguity, the matter will be referred to the department for clarification and decision.
2. Any department member may approach the AC if they are concerned about a possible violation of our rules. In this case, the AC will discuss the matter with the faculty member to make sure that there is no misunderstanding about the relevant governance rule. The committee will then investigate the matter by contacting the Chair and any relevant department members.
3. If the department member approaching the AC requests anonymity, the AC will maintain that anonymity to the best of its ability.
4. The AC will then weigh in with its best understanding of the relevant rule and advise the Chair accordingly. If there is disagreement about how a particular rule obtains in a particular instance, the matter will be referred to the department for discussion and decision.

Curriculum Committee

The Curriculum Committee was initially convened in response to our external review, as a vehicle for generating proposals for revising our curriculum. But this committee also serves the broader agenda of creating greater transparency in our departmental functioning, and it seems wise to formalize and agree on its role going forward. Thus far the committee has had a couple of functions outside of its main task of formulating curricular proposals for discussion:

1. Consult with and advise the chair about the teaching plan. This involves one meeting with the chair once a draft of the teaching plan is in place, and allows colleagues to participate in the task of determining fair distribution of classes among faculty. It is also an

occasion for colleagues to help the chair make sure that the teaching plan adequately covers curricular needs, avoids unfortunate doubling up of very similar classes, etc.

2. Advise the chair on new courses from outside the department that will be cross-listed with ENGL (see below). The chair will circulate descriptions of these classes to make sure colleagues on the committee think the cross-listing designation is legitimate.
3. The curriculum committee will also have the task of determining which classes should receive the "Race, Empire, Colonialism" departmental designation.

Formation of the committee. In its original (current) form the committee was made up entirely of volunteers, but there was also some effort to make sure that it represented different constituencies and areas of specialization within the department. This seems ideal, but will of course depend on availability of personnel. There should be a staggered, rotating membership of the committee - so that there is some consistency as well as new perspectives from year to year.

Cross-listing. Courses taught by faculty jointly appointed in ENGL may count towards departmental **requirements** pending approval by the departmental curriculum committee [like any course that satisfies the reqs]. Courses taught by faculty outside the department will need to go through the cross-list application process already established [see below].* If accepted for cross-list, these courses will count as **electives** only.

Those seeking to cross-list courses with the English Department must fill out the department's Form for Cross-listing, which will be reviewed by the Curriculum Committee. The Curriculum Committee shall then come to a decision with the Chair. If the Curriculum Committee cannot decide its position by majority vote, or if there is disagreement between the Chair and the Curriculum Committee, the matter disagreed upon shall be decided by a simple-majority departmental vote.

Approval of a course for cross-listing does not mean that the course will be "grandfathered" in and continue to be cross-listed. Approval by both the Curriculum Committee and the Chair is always required for continued cross-listing, however many times a course has been cross-listed in the past. Accordingly, the Curriculum Committee and Chair will review all previously cross-listed courses before every iteration, and may recommend the withdrawal of previously approved cross-listed courses if they no longer substantially enhance the curriculum or if they compete unnecessarily with English Department courses. Individual faculty members in the English Department may also ask the Curriculum Committee and Chair to withdraw or alter the tags on previously cross-listed courses. If the Curriculum Committee and Chair do not approve such changes, the requesting faculty member shall be granted, upon further request, a simple majority departmental vote, which shall decide the issue.

J-term Ad Hoc Hiring Committee

The committee will review J-Term applications and then convey the ranking to the rest of the faculty for their information. The final determination will be left to the College Curriculum Committee (see page 4). Additionally, if there is a need to consider hiring someone on special appointment from outside the department, the committee will review the applicants and make recommendations to the department (see page 5).

Mentoring Committee

The department will convene a Mentoring Committee made up of two tenured colleagues (one from ENGL and one from CRWR if possible). “These colleagues will make themselves available to Junior and Term faculty colleagues at least once per semester to discuss questions that might arise regarding departmental policies, review concerns, and any other matters of concern. These meetings are optional on the part of the Junior/Term faculty, who are also of course free to reach out to other senior colleagues as desired.

Other Departmental Business

Honors Policy

Departmental honors will be awarded to those students who achieve a departmental GPA of 3.85 and who complete a Senior Thesis (ENGL 0700 or CRWR 0701) in the fall or spring of the senior year. Completing a Thesis does not guarantee a student will receive honors. (See the ENGL website for more information on the Honors Thesis guidelines.) In determining the numerical average of course grades, all courses designated ENGL or CRWR will be counted, as will all other courses that fulfill requirements for the major (including those taken abroad or at other institutions). Joint majors are eligible to receive honors. In determining joint honors, all courses that fulfill requirements for both majors will be counted.

Student Advisory Council

Broadly speaking, the group will bring student concerns to the department, and advise the ENGL faculty on the student perspective regarding any and all aspects of the major.

The council is comprised of three seats, one for each class (sophomore, junior, and senior), which are open to any ENGL major. Student volunteers are chosen based on two criteria, in order of priority:

1. The council must include one member of each class.
2. Volunteers are selected on a first-come, first-serve basis.

A call for new members will occur each year in January, and the new term will begin in February. This schedule gives sophomores in particular a chance to orient themselves in the major before joining.

Use of ENGL Funds

The department agreed to sponsor one major ENGL critical speaker each year with enrichment funds. This is partly a community building venture, and so the lecture will be accompanied with a dinner to which faculty and students will be invited.

