

# **BYLAWS**

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MICHIGAN STATE  
UNIVERSITY

## **DEPARTMENT OF EARTH & ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES**

Spring 2026

Revised for clarity and updated policy 2/5/26  
RPT Procedures and documentation revised per faculty meeting 2/13/19  
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## **PREAMBLE**

The ensuing bylaws have been drawn up by the faculty of the Department to aid in the smooth running of its affairs and to ensure that fair and open procedures are followed.

The success of any unit depends mainly upon the personal integrity of its members and their commitment to its goals. The Bylaws cannot substitute for this.

It is important that these rules be subject to review periodically to ensure that they are in keeping with the University's and our own interest.

## **Mission and Vision Statements (Adopted 6/2019)**

### **Mission**

Guided by MSU's land grant mission through an Earth Science lens, we will discover new knowledge, apply fundamental research insights to societal problems, and train the next generation of citizens, scholars, and policy makers.

### **Vision**

MSU's Earth and Environmental Sciences Department engages in internationally recognized research and develops the next generation of leaders that can understand Earth's past, examine the present environment, and find solutions for grand challenges facing society today and in the future.

# DEPARTMENT OF EARTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

## BYLAWS

### 1. Faculty

#### 1.1 Composition of the Faculty

1.1.1 The Faculty of the Department shall consist of all academic specialists, tenure-stream, fixed-term, honorary, and adjunct faculty, having an appointment (including joint appointments), within the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, as defined in the Bylaws for Academic Governance.

#### 1.2 Composition of the Voting Faculty

1.2.1 The Voting Faculty shall consist of all fixed-term faculty and academic specialists whose primary appointment is in the Department and all regular (tenure stream) faculty with >0% appointments in the Department. A subset of the Voting Faculty will be eligible to vote in renewal, promotion, and tenure (RPT) matters, as defined in section 1.6.

1.2.2 On intra-departmental matters, the Voting Faculty may extend voting privileges for specified issues, for any defined individual or group by a two-thirds vote, as defined in the Bylaws for Academic Governance.

#### 1.3 Faculty Hiring and Appointments

1.3.1 The Department will follow college and university policies regarding faculty hiring and appointment processes.

1.3.2 When the Department is given permission to conduct a faculty search, the Chair will appoint a search committee in consultation with FAC.

1.3.3 The Search Committee charge will be presented to the faculty for approval or modification before the search committee's work begins.

1.3.4 The Search Committee will conduct the search and interview process, including participation and input from EES faculty, students, and staff.

1.3.5 The Search Committee will present a recommendation to the faculty at a regular or special faculty meeting. The faculty will vote to either approve or modify the committee's recommendation.

1.3.6 The Chair will communicate the faculty recommendation to the Dean (or their representative). If the Chair makes alternative recommendations to the Dean regarding hiring/appointment, those recommendations will be communicated to the faculty.

1.3.7 The Department Chair will work with the Dean (or their representative) to negotiate with the candidate(s) and complete the hiring/appointment process.

#### 1.4 Orientation of Newly Appointed Faculty

- 1.4.1 In order to assist each new non-tenured faculty member in developing a firm foundation for success within the department, the Department shall provide a faculty mentor for each new non-tenured faculty member. The Chairperson will work with the new faculty member to identify two or more appropriate mentors, who are available and willing to serve in the role. Both the mentor and Chair will provide the information needed to become acclimated within the department and be available to provide counsel with regard to matters of academic concern.

#### 1.5 Annual Evaluation of Faculty

1.5.1 Formal faculty evaluation procedures will be established by the Department within the context of College and University policies.

- 1.5.1.1 These procedures will be reviewed each year by the Faculty Advisory Committee (see section 5.3).

- 1.5.1.1.1 The Faculty Advisory Committee will solicit input from the faculty concerning changes to the evaluation procedures.

- 1.5.1.2 Using the established faculty evaluation procedures, the Faculty Advisory Committee will make recommendations to the Chair regarding performance levels for faculty that may be used to award merit raises. The Chair is responsible for the final evaluation and distributing any merit raises.

- 1.5.1.3 Each faculty member will be given the opportunity to review their evaluation and salary with the Department Chair.

#### 1.6 Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure (RPT) Review of Faculty Members

##### 1.6.1 Responsibilities of the Chairperson for the unit in the RPT process

- 1.6.1.1 Ensure that all university, college, and departmental procedures, guidelines, and timetables are followed in each RPT case under consideration.

- 1.6.1.2 Inform each RPT candidate and all appropriate unit faculty (see 1.9.2 below) of all relevant procedures and deadlines in a timely fashion.

- 1.6.1.3 Make the official unit recommendation to the Dean of the College of Natural Science for or against the RPT action under consideration by the designated deadline. This recommendation must report the vote tally of the eligible faculty for or against reappointment, promotion, and/or tenure.

- 1.6.1.4 In the event that the Chairperson's recommendation is not in conformity with the faculty vote, the Chairperson shall make this fact known to the Dean and give reasons for the different recommendations.

- 1.6.1.5 Inform the RPT candidate of the faculty vote and the Chair's recommendation to the college as soon as these items are forwarded to the Dean of the College of Natural Science.
  - 1.6.2 Responsibilities of the Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure (RPT) Standing Committee are defined in section 5.6.
  - 1.6.3 For all faculty RPT considerations, an ad hoc committee of eligible faculty (described below) will evaluate the dossier materials, discuss the faculty member's record in a closed faculty meeting, and vote on a recommendation by secret ballot.
    - 1.6.3.1 When a reappointment or promotion recommendation is to be made with regard to a faculty member, the ad hoc committee will be composed of all ~~tenured~~—Voting Faculty of higher rank than the faculty member under consideration.
    - 1.6.3.2 When a recommendation is to be made with regard to the awarding of tenure, the ad hoc committee will be composed of all tenured Voting Faculty.
  - 1.6.4 The Department will use the policies, procedures, and criteria established and maintained by the University and the College of Natural Sciences as the primary procedure for making RPT decisions.
  - 1.6.5 An RPT dossier will be assembled by the faculty member, in consultation with the RPT Standing Committee and Chair. The RPT dossier will be made available to the ad hoc committee of eligible Voting Faculty at least one week before the vote.
  - 1.6.6 The Chairperson of the Department may consult with current and former students concerning the faculty member's teaching and ability to guide research.
  - 1.6.7 The faculty member being considered for renewal, promotion, or tenure can request an opportunity to meet and confer with the ad hoc committee of eligible faculty before a decision is made in their case.
  - 1.6.8 Members of the ad hoc committee who wish to meet individually with the Department Chairperson may do so.
  - 1.6.9 The Chairperson shall obtain a secret ballot from each voting eligible member of the ad hoc committee who participates in the meeting as to whether or not the faculty member recommends the RPT action being considered.
- 1.7 Rights and Responsibilities of Faculty
    - 1.7.1 All tenure-stream faculty members (including jointly appointed) have the responsibilities of teaching courses within the Department, advising students, participating in the academic governance of the Department, and conducting and publishing original research in Earth and Environmental Sciences. They have the right to adequate facilities, supplies, and support services to pursue these objectives. They have an additional responsibility to seek outside funding in support of their research programs. They may teach both undergraduate and graduate courses and serve as chairpersons of graduate student guidance committees. They also have the

responsibility of managing and maintaining the research and teaching equipment and collections of the Department.

- 1.7.2 Academic Specialists, adjunct, fixed-term, research, and honorary faculty may use the facilities of the Department. They have the right to identify themselves with the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences in correspondence, publications, and in seeking outside research support. They may serve as voting representatives of the Department on graduate student guidance committees, serve as ~~ex officio (non-voting)~~ members of department academic governance committees and are invited to attend all department faculty meetings. Upon the invitation of the Department Chairperson, they may teach either undergraduate or graduate courses. They may also Chair graduate student guidance committees, when approved by the Graduate School.

## 2. Chairperson

- 2.1 The duties, responsibilities and authority of the Chairperson are specified by the University Faculty Bylaws. The Chairperson, as the chief executive officer of the Department, has the final responsibility for the authority in administrative decisions of the Department. However, the Chair must seek out and dutifully consider the counsel of the faculty on personnel and program matters of the Department through the channels established by the Departmental Bylaws. If the Chairperson overrules a decision of a standing or ad hoc committee, the Chair must explain the rationale for their decision.

The Bylaws for Academic Governance (2.1.2.1.) adopts the principle that the..."Chairperson has a special obligation to build a department strong in scholarship and teaching capacity, and outreach." This must be accomplished by optimum utilization of the human and material resources of the Department through cooperative interactions of the Chairperson with the committee structure and individual faculty members. It is imperative for this purpose that the Chairperson devote special attention to communications within the Department, preferably on a regular and formal basis.

- 2.2 The Chairperson shall preside at departmental meetings and arrange the order of the agenda of the meetings with the Office Supervisor.
- 2.3 Where the Chair is not a regular member, the Chairperson will be an ex officio member of all standing and ad hoc committees of the Department.
- 2.4 The Chairperson shall have a vote in departmental matters.
- 2.5 The Chairperson, or a designee, shall generally be present at meetings of an academic governance body.
- 2.6 The Chairperson shall conduct an annual review with each member of the tenure system faculty and all fixed-term faculty members, in consultation with the Advisory Committee (see section 1.5). The Chairperson shall be familiar with all relevant university and college policies concerning faculty performance and evaluation and space allocation. Written documentation of the meeting shall be given to the faculty member and kept on file.
- 2.7 The term of office and selection procedures for the Chairperson shall be as follows:
  - 2.7.1 The term of office of the Chairperson shall normally be five years.
  - 2.7.2 Initial appointment: the faculty advisory committee must schedule a meeting with the dean to review CNS policies and formulate specific procedures for selection of the

chairperson. The voting faculty shall have shared responsibility with the CNS dean to determine procedures for selecting the chairperson.

2.7.3 Review. The Chairperson shall be subject to a periodic review at an interval of five years. The Faculty Advisory Committee must schedule a meeting with the dean to review CNS policies and formulate specific procedures for the periodic review of the Chairperson. The faculty shall have shared responsibility with the CNS dean to determine procedures for review of the Chairperson.

### 3. Associate Chairperson

3.1 The Chairperson, after consultation with the Faculty Advisory Committee, may appoint an Associate Chairperson.

3.1.1 The duties of the Associate Chairperson shall include assisting the Chairperson in the administrative affairs of the Department. The authority and responsibility of the Associate Chairperson shall be determined by the Chairperson.

3.1.2 Normally, the Associate Chairperson shall serve as Chairperson during the Chairperson's absence. In the absence of both, the Chairperson shall appoint a temporary Chairperson.

3.1.3 The faculty shall be informed of who is serving as Associate Chair and their assigned duties.

3.1.4 The Associate Chairperson shall serve at the discretion of the Chairperson.

### 4. Faculty Procedures

#### 4.1 Departmental Meetings

4.1.1 The rules contained in Robert's "Pocket Manual of Rules of Order" shall determine the parliamentary practice of meetings in which voting is conducted on substantive matters unless otherwise specified within these bylaws.

4.1.2 Departmental meetings will be held a minimum of twice per semester, excluding the summer semester.

4.1.3 Other faculty meetings may be called by the Chairperson. Any committee or faculty member wishing to call a meeting may do so by securing the approval of the majority of the Faculty Advisory Committee.

4.1.4 Notice of the regular departmental meetings will be made in writing and placed in each faculty member's mailbox or circulated by e-mail at least three days in advance with an agenda of the substantive topics. Committees or individual faculty members may place items on the agenda through the Chairperson and/or the Office Supervisor. Substantive items not on the agenda can be discussed only when agreed to by majority vote at the meeting.

4.1.5 Departmental meetings should be held at a time when no faculty member is scheduled for a class. Every effort must be made to hold departmental meetings when at least two-thirds of the Voting Faculty are available for the meeting.

- 4.1.6 A quorum shall consist of one-half of the Voting Faculty unless otherwise specified.
- 4.1.7 Motions will pass by majority vote of those present unless otherwise specified. Meetings called by the Chairperson where an agenda has been issued are regular meetings. All other meetings are special meetings. At special meetings a two-thirds vote of those present is required to pass a motion.
- 4.1.8 Votes shall be cast by secret ballot.
- 4.1.9 Proposed amendments to the Department Bylaws must be circulated at least four weeks before the meetings at which they are presented. Approval of amendments requires a two-thirds vote of the faculty.
- 4.1.10 The purpose of departmental meetings shall be:
  - 4.1.10.1 To receive committee reports and act on committee recommendations.
  - 4.1.10.2 To discuss or make decisions on other procedures and programs of the Department.
  - 4.1.10.3 To communicate timely information from individual faculty members, committees, and the Chairperson.
  - 4.1.10.4 To nominate and/or elect faculty members to college and university committees when appropriate.
  - 4.1.10.5 To permit non-faculty to speak to the faculty with permission of the Chairperson or any two members of the voting faculty.
- 4.2 Agenda and Minutes
  - 4.2.1 The Department Administrator or their representative shall serve as secretary at the departmental meetings to record attendance and keep minutes.
  - 4.2.2 The minutes of each meeting will be circulated to faculty members.
  - 4.2.3 Faculty members wishing to place items on the agenda should submit them to the Chairperson.
  - 4.2.4 The Department Administrator will provide each faculty member with an up-to-date set of the Departmental Bylaws, general regulations of the Department and committee assignments.
- 4.3 Academic, administrative, or service assignments outside the Department that require a modification of a faculty member's other duties must be approved by the Chair. The staff shall be informed of these assignments regularly by the Chairperson or the Department Administrator.
- 4.4 Grievance Procedures
  - 4.4.1 The Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences follows college and university grievance policies. Faculty or academic staff member who feels aggrieved are encouraged to seek an informal resolution at the unit, department, or college level before filing a formal grievance.

4.4.2 Faculty or academic staff wishing to pursue an informal resolution may contact the department Chairperson or the chair of the Faculty Advisory Committee.

## 5. Committees

### 5.1 General Procedures

- 5.1.1 There shall be five standing committees; namely the Faculty Advisory Committee, Undergraduate Affairs Committee, Graduate Affairs Committee, Speaker Committee, and Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure Committee.
- 5.1.2 The mode of all committees is advisory to the Department Chairperson with respect to major policy decisions affecting the Department.
- 5.1.3 Committees shall submit recommendations concerning major policy to the faculty for their approval.
- 5.1.4 Committees need not act on all matters as a committee of the whole. It is expected that much of the committee's work will be done in subcommittees.
- 5.1.5 All committees are encouraged to develop and document formal procedures, where appropriate, for carrying out their charges.
- 5.1.6 Any standing committee may establish such subcommittees as they deem necessary. The subcommittee Chairperson and members are appointed by the standing committee chairperson from among the standing committee members.
- 5.1.7 All committees are encouraged to call on faculty, students and administrators who have special expertise on matters under consideration, including those who may provide unique perspectives based on their experiences.

### 5.2 Committee Membership

- 5.2.1 The Undergraduate and Graduate Affairs committees shall each consist of three faculty members and one student members (one undergraduate on the Undergraduate Affairs committee and one graduate student on the Graduate Affairs committee). All committee members, faculty and students, shall be voting members except as noted in 5.6.4. Committees may, at their discretion, elect to have ex officio (non-voting) members added to the committee.
- 5.2.2 Membership on specific committees shall reflect, in so far as possible, the interests and capabilities of faculty members. The Department Chairperson, after considering nominations submitted by the Faculty Advisory Committee shall establish committee assignments and appoint committee chairpersons. The committee assignments shall be submitted to the faculty for approval or modification at a meeting during the latter half of the spring semester.
- 5.2.3 Undergraduate student members of committees shall be elected by those undergraduate students majoring in a program administered by the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences; graduate student members of committees shall be elected by those graduate students whose graduate Guidance Committee Chair is a member of the faculty of the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences.

- 5.2.4 The undergraduate students majoring in a program administered by the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, or whose graduate Guidance Committee Chair is a member of the faculty of the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences shall elect students to the Student Advisory Committee. The Student Advisory Committee may counsel the Department Chairperson on any matter of concern to the students in the Department.
- 5.2.5 Except for the Faculty Advisory Committee, there is no fixed term limit for faculty members on Committees. In making committee assignments an attempt will be made to maintain continuity but also to bring in new members. Student members shall serve for one academic year.
- 5.2.6 No faculty member may serve on more than two standing committees.
- 5.2.7 The Department Chairperson, in consultation with the Faculty Advisory Committee, may appoint ad hoc committees. Such appointments are subject to review by the Faculty Advisory Committee.
  - 5.2.7.1 Membership and duties of ad hoc committees shall be established at the time of their appointment. At the discretion of the Department Chairperson, students and staff may serve on appropriate ad hoc committees.
  - 5.2.7.2 Ad hoc committees expire at the end of the academic year if not otherwise specified.
- 5.3 Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC)
  - 5.3.1 The Faculty Advisory Committee may counsel the Department Chairperson on any matter concerning the Department.
  - 5.3.2 The Faculty Advisory Committee shall counsel the Department Chairperson in the staffing of committees per 5.2.2.
  - 5.3.3 The FAC will consist of three members, each elected by majority vote of the Voting Faculty. They shall be elected for a three-year term commencing August 16. Terms of office shall be staggered so that one member is elected each year. No member shall serve two successive terms. If a member of the Faculty Advisory Committee is unable to complete a portion of their term of office (of at least one school semester or more), an election will be held to secure a temporary replacement for that time interval.
  - 5.3.4 The terminal year member of the Faculty Advisory Committee shall act as Chairperson of the Committee.
- 5.4 Undergraduate Affairs Committee.
  - 5.4.1 The Undergraduate Affairs Committee shall be responsible for undergraduate curriculum (course and program) development, approval, and implementation
  - 5.4.2 The Undergraduate Affairs Committee will periodically review, update, and publish course descriptions
  - 5.4.3 The Undergraduate Affairs Committee will coordinate and select undergraduate awardees

- 5.4.4 The Undergraduate Affairs Committee will coordinate recruitment to undergraduate degree programs
- 5.4.5 The Undergraduate Affairs Committee is responsible for coordinating advising and transfer equivalences with the undergraduate director, as needed
- 5.4.6 The Undergraduate Director shall be a full member of the Undergraduate Affairs Committee

## 5.5 Graduate Affairs Committee

- 5.5.1 The Graduate Affairs Committee shall be responsible for graduate admissions and funding recommendations to the Chair
- 5.5.2 The Graduate Affairs Committee shall be responsible for temporary graduate advising
- 5.5.3 The Graduate Affairs Committee shall be responsible for graduate curriculum (course and program) development, approval, and implementation
- 5.5.4 The Graduate Affairs Committee shall be responsible for evaluating teaching assistants
- 5.5.5 The Graduate Affairs Committee shall be responsible for periodically reviewing the academic performance of all graduate students
- 5.5.6 The Graduate Affairs Committee will promote departmental graduate programs
- 5.5.7 The Graduate Director shall be a full member of (and chair of) the Graduate Affairs Committee
- 5.6.7 The Graduate Affairs Committee shall publish and periodically review and distribute a handbook of information for graduate students which shall contain the procedures established for the M.S. and Ph.D. degree.
- 5.5.8 The student members of the Graduate Affairs Committee shall be excluded from the final discussion or determination involving another student in the matter of recommendations for fellowships or assistantships, admission to graduate work, retention, or change of status. The student members may offer testimony, but may not have access to confidential student records or discussion pertaining to these records.

## 5.6 Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure (RPT) Committee

- 5.6.1 An RPT Committee of two tenured full Professors will be appointed by the Chair on the recommendation of the Faculty Advisory Committee.
- 5.6.2 Additional members may be added at the discretion of the Chairperson after consultation with the Faculty Advisory Committee. Faculty whose rank or tenure status is below the case being discussed will be recused from the discussion.
- 5.6.3 The RPT Standing Committee shall be consulted by, and will assist, the Chairperson, with the preparation of the unit-level and Chairperson's summaries of the candidate's research, instruction, and service

5.6.4 The RPT Committee shall work with faculty to construct dossiers following College recommended practices.

## 5.7 Speaker Committee

5.7.1 With the input of department faculty, students, and research staff, the Speaker Committee shall recruit a slate of speakers for the academic year and coordinate visit logistics with the faculty/student host(s) and the support office staff person.

## 6. Alumni Advisory Board

- 6.1 Purpose - The Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences recognizes the fact that alumni are able and often willing to continue to participate in our department. Departmental affiliation should not end with the granting of a degree. We see the Alumni Advisory Board as fulfilling several important roles. The Board can facilitate communication between the Department and Alumni. It can offer advice concerning economic and employment trends and how these trends may affect our research and teaching. The Board may assist the Department in identification and solicitation of external support. Finally, the Board may be a very effective advocate of the Department to the Administration.
- 6.2 Organization - The Alumni Advisory Board will be composed of at least five members. The members will be appointed for a five-year term by the Chairperson, with letters of recognition from the Dean of the College of Natural Science. Individuals who are not alumni but who have expressed a particular interest in the future of the Department may be members of the Board. The internal organization of the Board shall be decided upon by the members.
- 6.3 Annual Meeting - Board members will convene annually in the Fall at Michigan State University. The meeting should include the opportunity to meet with faculty and students; meetings with the Faculty Advisory Committee, Chairperson and Dean; and a business meeting of the Board.