

Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences Bylaws (Version 01/12/2026)

University of Rochester

I. Introduction

The Bylaws of the Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences spell out rules for faculty governance and the conduct of Department business not covered in the University Faculty Handbook, the College Rules and Regulations, the Arts & Sciences Faculty Guidebook, and the University Standards of Student Conduct. If a provision of the bylaws conflicts with any of those documents, those documents will take precedence.

II. Changing Bylaws

Any voting-eligible faculty member of the Department shall have the power to propose amendments to these bylaws. Proposed amendments or changes to the bylaws will first be circulated to all voting-eligible faculty, after which they will be brought to a departmental meeting to allow for discussion.

Bylaws will be reviewed on a regular schedule to ensure they remain up-to-date, relevant, and compliant with Arts & Sciences and University regulations, and continue to serve the needs of the department. Review of bylaws will minimally occur every two years, but may occur more often as needed.

III. Departmental Membership

Members of the Department (both voting members and nonvoting members) are defined to include the following:

Tenure-track Faculty. Full-time appointments composed of tenure-track and tenured faculty members whose salary is at least 45% allocated to the Department. Ranks are Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Professor.

Full-time Instructional-track Faculty. Full-time appointments composed of non-tenure-eligible, instructional faculty who also contribute to service in the Department or University. Currently designated ranks in the School of Arts & Sciences are Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Professor.

Teaching-track Faculty. Full-time appointments composed of non-tenure-eligible, teaching faculty with appointments of at least one year who are not appointed on the instructional track and hold functional titles such as lecturer and senior lecturer in the School of Arts & Sciences.

Research Faculty. Full-time appointments composed of non-tenure-eligible, research faculty with multiple-year appointments, at the ranks of Research Assistant Professor, Research Associate Professor, and Research Professor.

Emeritus Faculty. Members of the Department who have retired and have been granted emeritus

status by the university.

Adjunct Lecturers. Full-time or part-time faculty who teach for a limited period on an *ad hoc* basis.

Visiting Faculty. Full-time or part-time short-term appointments of faculty members from other departments within the university or from other institutions of higher education.

Secondary Appointments. Full-time faculty members from other departments or units in the University who have been confirmed by the Department and Dean as no-pay affiliates. Faculty with secondary appointments are expected to have research or teaching interests that overlap with the Department. Renewal is required every three years.

Graduate students. Students enrolled in the department's PhD program.

Staff. Members of the administrative staff overseeing departmental management and governance, including the heads of academic affairs, finance, and operation, as well as support staff such as lab managers.

IV. Voting

The Department values input from all members. For voting purposes, each voting member counts as one vote, even if the member has a fractional appointment in the Department. All procedures regarding voting on faculty appointments, promotions, and tenure refer only to the departmental voting process.

Unless otherwise noted, voting-eligible faculty include all tenure-track faculty and full-time instructional-track faculty.

Unless stated otherwise, the quorum requirement is met when 75% of voting-eligible faculty have cast a vote (either in-person or virtually). The number of cast votes will determine required vote numbers for majorities and two-thirds or higher super-majorities (as long as quorum is met).

Quorum requirements exclude those with a) declared COIs, those on b) maternity leave, c) medical leave, and d) those known to be in medical care during the period of the vote. Members in group b)-d) are allowed to vote. Members of a)-d) are not counted for quorum requirements (and vote counts) if they do not respond within the period of the vote, i.e., they lower the total of eligible voters from which the quorum threshold is calculated (and do not enter majority threshold calculations).

Hiring, tenure, and promotion votes have mandatory participation except for groups a)-d).

Voting procedures. All personnel votes (hiring, promotion, and tenure) are conducted by secret ballot. Other matters may not require a secret ballot. However, any voting member may request a secret ballot for any reason for any vote, and that request will be honored.

Non-binary polls will be conducted via ranked-order voting.

Changing the by-laws. There shall be at least two weeks between the circulation of the amendment and the voting deadline. The requirement for changes to the by-laws is at least a two-thirds majority.

Hiring and promotion of tenure-track faculty. Only tenure-track faculty members are eligible to vote on **hiring** decisions. Tenure-track faculty are eligible to vote even if the person to be hired is at a rank above the voting faculty member. For example, tenure-track assistant professors may vote on a hiring decision for a prospective full professor. For **tenure and promotion** to associate professor, only tenure-track associate and full professors may vote. For promotion to full professor, only full professors may vote. The requirement for hiring decisions is at least a two-thirds majority. The requirement for advancing promotion cases is at least a two-thirds majority.

Hiring and promotion of instructional-track faculty. All tenure-track faculty and instructional-track faculty are eligible to vote on a hiring decision for an instructional-track faculty member, even if the person to be hired is at a rank above the voting faculty member. For example, an assistant professor of instruction may vote on a hiring decision for a prospective professor of instruction. For promotion to associate professor of instruction, all tenure-track faculty and instructional-track faculty at the level of associate professor of instruction or higher may vote. For promotion to professor of instruction, all tenure-track faculty (regardless of rank) may vote, but only instructional-track faculty at the level of professor of instruction may vote. The requirement for hiring decisions is at least a two-thirds majority. The requirement for advancing promotion cases is at least a two-thirds majority.

Appointments of visiting faculty (who will be visiting for 6 months or longer). The nominator(s) provides the Chair and Executive Committee with a copy of the prospective visiting scholar's CV, along with a letter of support describing the goals and potential benefits of the proposed visit. The Chair and Executive Committee will examine the candidate's CV and the nominator(s)' support letter and then bring nominations to a vote by the faculty. Scholars with shorter visits (< 6 months), as well as visiting postdoctoral fellows and graduate students, require only approval of the Chair. Note, international visiting scholars at all levels require additional coordination and approvals beyond the department, and the Chair must sign off on all visiting scholars of any length. The requirement for decisions on visiting faculty appointments of six or more months is at least a two-thirds majority.

Secondary appointments. The CV of an individual nominated as a secondary appointment will first be reviewed by the Chair and Executive Committee. Nominations should include a letter from the nominating individual(s) outlining current and potential future contributions to the department. The Chair will make a recommendation to the Department faculty who will examine the candidate's CV and the nominating support letter, and then the department will vote on whether to invite the individual to present a research talk to the Department. Following the talk, the Department will vote on granting a secondary appointment. The requirement for invitation and approval is a two-thirds majority. Secondary appointments will be reviewed and confirmed by vote every 3 years.

V. Confidentiality

The confidentiality of all matters discussed at departmental meetings, as well as votes, must be strictly observed. In matters of personnel, no aspects of the issues under consideration nor the discussion of them should be communicated beyond the appropriate pool of voters. The ability to speak freely and argue our points for clarity is essential. Spreading decontextualized details about our discussions beyond the department can harm this ability.

VI. Department Structure

The Department of Brain and Cognitive Science governs itself through administrative leadership and committees.

Department Chair. Appointed by the A&S Dean in consultation with the Department. The Chair is expected to work in collaboration with standing committees and consult with them on a regular basis. The Chair shall serve as an *ex officio*, non-voting member of selective standing committees.

Associate Chair. Appointed by the Chair. The Associate Chair is expected to work in collaboration with the Chair.

Committees. Much of the Department's work is completed in standing committees (small, ongoing bodies with two or more members) and *ad hoc* committees (small groups of two or more members, which cease to exist once their responsibilities have been discharged). Appointments to committees are made by the Chair, with the goal of representation across content areas. Chairs of committees will be appointed by the Department Chair. Collectively committees serve to distribute the workload of running the department, and more broadly, to provide a means of transferring the knowledge and skills required to govern the department to future leadership. Thus, it is imperative that all committees maintain a living written document of aims, procedures, and important dates.

Committees will advance action items for a review by the Chair and faculty vote after an internal vote has been taken within the committee. The format and structure of votes will be determined by individual committees. Each member of the *standing* committees receives one (1) vote, including graduate students serving on committees.

In addition to the standing committees listed below, the Chair may also appoint additional *ad hoc* committees as needs arise (e.g., search committees; reappointment, promotion, and tenure committee).

Each committee chair will be expected to report on its activities at departmental meetings. Minutes should be taken at all committee meetings and archived. Committees are expected to meet as often as needed to perform their responsibilities.

Committees are encouraged to seek input from the broader department (faculty, staff, and students), but only committee members should be present in meetings in which specific action

items are voted on. In developing action items, committee chairs may seek feedback from the Chair and Executive Committee. Communications between committee chairs and departmental leadership should be considered confidential and will not be shared unless agreed upon.

Standing committees are:

Executive Committee:

The purpose of the Executive Committee is to serve as an advisory body to the Chair, provide input on the departmental agenda and policy implementation, and function as the Committee on Committees. The Executive Committee is appointed by the Chair and by default includes the Associate Chair.

Mentorship Committee:

The purpose of the Mentorship Committee is to enhance mentorship in the Department and to provide advice and help resolve conflicts that have arisen between members of the Department. The committee will be selected annually by all members of the Department following the procedure outlined in the Mentorship Handbook.

The committee is also charged with providing an annual evaluation of the current Mentorship Agreement that is required for Ph.D. students and postdoctoral fellows as outlined in the Mentorship Handbook. This evaluation should include recommendations (if any) of revisions to the Agreement to be brought to the Department as a whole.

Admissions Committee:

The purpose of the Admissions Committee is to oversee the process of graduate admissions in the Department. This process will include working with the College on issues related to graduate admissions, reviewing and suggesting revisions to materials used to solicit applications from potential graduate students, providing initial evaluations of applicants, and organizing any recruitment activities involved with the graduate program. Members of this committee will be chosen by Chair from faculty who plan to recruit graduate students in the coming year.

BCS Community Support Committee (BCSC):

The purpose of the BCSC committee is to design and implement initiatives to promote the cohesiveness, enrichment, constructive discourse, autonomy, productivity, and engagement of all departmental members, as well as serving as an interface with the larger community both within and outside of the University of Rochester. A key goal is to ensure that students, staff, and faculty feel supported and connected with each other and the broader community. The committee establishes and attends to priorities as they emerge in the Department. The content of these priorities may change year-to-year. Faculty and graduate students chair the committee jointly in collaborative fashion. The faculty Chair of the committee is appointed by the Chair of the Department; the student Chair of the committee is to be elected by their peers (see Appendix for specifics).

Departmental Advancement & Visibility Committee:

The committee is composed of at least three faculty members. The purpose of this committee is to increase the breadth and depth of exposure to new and important science via colloquium invitations and talks. Procedures and policies for selecting outside speakers is under the purview of the committee. An additional purpose of the committee is to enhance the visibility of the Department within the University, the local community, and the larger scientific community.

VII. Departmental Meetings

Departmental meetings will occur monthly during the academic year. Additional meetings may be called by the Chair as necessary. Departmental meetings may contain both open and closed sessions. Open sessions may be attended by all faculty, staff members, and graduate student representatives (selected by vote by the graduate student body as a whole). Staff and graduate students are strongly encouraged to provide input on relevant matters.

Closed sessions will include only the members of the faculty who are eligible to vote on the issues that are under discussion. Accommodations for visitors will be made on an “as needed” basis. Visitors should be approved by the Chair. One staff member will take minutes, which will be archived. An agenda will be provided. Each committee chair is expected to present updates at every meeting.

VIII. Department Policy on Public Statements about Community and World Events

The core function of our department is to generate knowledge through research and disseminate knowledge through instruction, training, and publication. Issuing departmental statements about community, national, or world events risks running counter to this mission for reasons including (but not limited) to:

- Because departmental statements presuppose all members of our community share the same opinion, they are not representative.
- Releasing public statements requires prioritizing some events over others and, as a result, disregards perspectives of departmental members.
- Issuing unanimously endorsed public statements for all the events that are important to the members of our department is an impossible task that detracts our core function.

To promote our core science functions and mission, departmental statements about community, national, or world events will therefore require a unanimous vote after discussion in a faculty meeting.