

University of Houston-Downtown Faculty Senate Constitution

Original Adoption: 1978

Amended Fall 1998

Amended Spring 2010

Amended Spring 2014

The members of the faculty of the University of Houston-Downtown established this Constitution to provide an instrument for cooperative action in attending to such professional goals as the members may select.

Article One: Membership

Article Two: Officers

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ARTICLE ONE: MEMBERSHIP

Section One—Senate Membership

The Faculty Senate shall consist of a president-elect, a president, a past president, a secretary, and elected representatives from all academic departments of the university.

Section Two—Faculty Assembly

All university employees holding rank as full-time faculty [lecturers, tenured/tenure-track], excluding those on leave and those with administrative duties above the level of department chair, shall be eligible to serve in the Faculty Senate., and shall constitute the Faculty Assembly.

Section Three—Representation

To be eligible for election to a Senator position, nominees must have been members of the faculty assembly for at least two long semesters prior to the time of the election.

Each academic department of each degree granting college shall elect at least one representative from among the tenured/tenure-track faculty to the Senate. Departments with more than 10 tenured/tenure-track faculty members eligible to serve in the Senate shall elect one additional representative for every additional 10 tenured/tenure-track faculty members, or major fraction thereof, in the department at the time of the election. If a department is allotted more than one Senator, at least one of those Senators must be a tenured faculty member.

Each college is eligible to elect one Lecturer to serve as a representative for the Lecturers in their college. If no Lecturer chooses to run for Faculty Senate in a college, the seat will remain vacant until the next election. There is no previous appointment requirement for a college's Lecturer nominee.

Section Four—Terms of Office

The term of office for each representative shall be two years.

No representative may serve more than two consecutive terms.

Terms of office shall run from August 15 through August 14, except for the first iteration of this term cycle, when the senator terms will begin on May 1.

In the event of a vacancy prior to the normal expiration of a term, a special election shall be held within thirty days to fill the unexpired term.

The terms shall be overlapping, with one-half of the representatives being elected each year. Initial terms of office of one year or of two years shall be determined by lot. As departments add or lose Senator positions due to total faculty count, the Senate President will dictate term lengths of 1 or 2 years for new elections as needed to maintain the overlapping term mandate.

Senators may run for re-election.

In the event that a senator misses three meetings in a single semester, the President of the Senate will send a notice of that fact to the senator's department for distribution to the department faculty.

Section Five—Senator Elections

Each department shall elect by secret ballot the number of representatives to which it is entitled. The Committee on Credentials and Elections shall establish guidelines for department elections.

If the department has a tenured faculty member currently serving as a Senator, then the departmental nominees for a new or replacement position may be tenured or tenure-track. However, if a department that is allotted more than 1 senator does not have a tenured representative (or it is the sole tenured representative who is being replaced), the nominees are limited to tenured faculty only.

Elections of representatives must be conducted prior to April 15.

Section Six—Removal of Senators

A senator may be removed from office by a secret written ballot vote of two-thirds [2/3] of the faculty assembly members of the department which the senator represents.

To initiate a removal vote, a faculty assembly member from the senator's own department must send a written request to the senate President who will then notify the Committee on Credentials and Elections to conduct the vote for removal and certify the results no later than 3 weeks after the request was submitted.

If the senator in question is on the Committee on Credentials and Elections, that senator shall be temporarily excused from the committee.

Section Seven—Voting Rights

All faculty members may attend and participate in discussions at the regular meetings, though only members of the Faculty Senate may propose motions and vote.

Section Eight—Other Representatives

Components of the university other than academic departments may be authorized by the regular Senate membership to elect nonvoting representatives to the Senate. Any component of the university desiring such representation may petition the Faculty Senate for authorization to elect a non-voting representative. Authorization requires a two-thirds vote of the Senate.

ARTICLE TWO: OFFICERS

Section One—Officers and Voting Rights

The faculty senate shall have a president-elect, a president, a past president, and a secretary.

The president-elect, the past president and the secretary shall be regular voting members of the Senate, but the president shall vote only to break a tie.

Section Two—Officer Elections

Senate officers shall be elected at large through secret ballots distributed by campus mail or secure, anonymous electronic means to all members of the Faculty Assembly.

Elections shall be held prior to April 1.

If a member of the Senate representing a department is elected to a Senate office, that Senate position shall become vacant.

The election will be run by the Committee on Credentials and Elections as follows and in accordance with any other general election practice identified in this constitution:

1. The Committee on Credentials and Elections shall circulate to all members of the Faculty Assembly a ballot listing no more than three nominees for each office.
2. Faculty members who wish to run for Senate office but who were not nominated by the Committee on Committees may have their names listed on the ballot by submitting to the Committee on Credentials and Elections a petition signed by at least ten percent [10%] of the membership of the Faculty Assembly,
3. If no candidate for Senate office receives a majority of the votes cast, a run-off election between the two candidates receiving the greatest number of votes shall be held within ten days.
4. If an election yields a winner with a victory margin of less than one percent [1%] of the total votes cast, a recount must be conducted within one week.
5. The President and President-elect must be tenured members of the faculty assembly at the time of the election.

In the first year of the new president-elect structure, both a president and president-elect must be elected. Thereafter, only a president-elect must be elected annually.

Section Three—Terms of Office

Terms of all officers shall begin August 15 except in the first year transition to the new structure when the terms must begin on May 1.

Persons elected to the president-elect position shall be expected to serve 3 years, with one year as president-elect, one year as president, and one year as past-president.

A president-elect must be elected every year.

The secretary position is a two-year position, to be elected in every even-numbered year.

No person may hold the same office for two consecutive terms.

Each president, president-elect, and secretary shall receive one course release per long semester.

Section Four—Vacancies

If the office of the president becomes vacant, the president-elect shall become president, serving in that capacity to complete the unfinished term as well as the following year.

In the event of a vacancy prior to the normal expiration of a term of the president-elect or the secretary, a special election shall be held within thirty days to fill the unexpired term.

In the event that there is a vacancy in the office of the past president, that vacancy will not be filled.

Section Five—President

The functions of the president are to:

1. Preside over meetings of the Faculty Senate,
2. Make regular Senate meeting agendas available to the faculty assembly at least 1 week prior to each Senate meeting,
3. Report official Senate action to the President of the university and other appropriate administrative authorities,
4. Ensure that all provisions of the Constitution are executed,
5. Transmit from the president and provost information on matters of general interest to the faculty,
6. Serve as representative to the University Faculties Executive Council,
7. Represent the Faculty Senate on appropriate university and/or UH-System Committees and before external community or governmental bodies,
8. Call special meetings of the senate or faculty assembly when appropriate and required by the constitution.

Section Six—President-Elect

The functions of the president-elect are to:

1. Preside over meetings of the Faculty Senate in the absence of the president,
2. Serve as chairperson of the Committee on Committees,
3. Assist the Faculty Senate president,
4. Serve as representative to the University Faculties Executive Council,
5. Represent the Faculty Senate on appropriate university and/or UH-System Committees and before external community or governmental bodies,
6. Supervise the administration of the faculty climate survey in the spring of every odd-numbered year,
7. Serve in any capacity designated for the Faculty Senate Vice President in any university precedent or policy.

Section Seven—Secretary

The functions of the secretary are to:

1. Compile and maintain a complete set of minutes of the meetings of the Senate and of the Faculty Assembly,
2. Make the minutes of regular meetings available to members of the Senate and Faculty Assembly, preferably at least 4 days prior to the next Senate meeting,
3. Keep a record of members present at each meeting,
4. Maintain the financial records of the Senate,
5. Conduct all Senate correspondence,
6. Represent the Faculty Senate on appropriate university and/or UH-System Committees and before external community or governmental bodies.

Section Eight—Past President

1. Assist the Senate President as needed.

Section Nine—Removal of Officers

Senate officers may be removed from office by a sixty percent [60%] vote of the Faculty Assembly.

A vote for removal is called after a two-thirds [2/3] vote of the Faculty Senate membership or after a petition signed by one-third of all Faculty Assembly members. The Faculty Assembly petition must be presented to and certified by the Committee on Credentials and Elections.

The Committee on Credentials and Elections must conduct the recall vote within 10 days of the Faculty Senate vote or of the certification of the Faculty Assembly petition.

ARTICLE THREE: MEETINGS

Section One—Meetings and Agendas

The Faculty Senate shall normally meet twice every month during the fall and spring academic semesters on the first and third Tuesdays of the month.

The date of any of these meetings may be changed by a two-thirds [2/3] vote of the Senate.

The University President, or designated representative, is invited to sit with the Senate in its regular meetings. An agenda of business to be considered by the Senate shall be posted publicly and distributed to the faculty assembly at least one week prior to each regular meeting.

Section Two—Quorum

Sixty percent [60%] of the total Senate membership shall constitute a quorum.

Section Three—Meeting Conduct

All meetings of the Senate and its committees shall be conducted according to the edition of Robert's Rules of Order identified by the Senate Executive Committee unless otherwise stipulated by a two-thirds [2/3] vote of the members present.

Section Four—Faculty Assembly

A meeting of the Faculty Assembly shall be called at least once a year by the Faculty Senate president and a formal report made to the Assembly on the activities of the Senate.

The presiding officer of the Senate shall serve as presiding officer of Assembly meetings.

The secretary of the Senate shall serve as secretary for the Assembly meetings.

A quorum at Assembly meetings shall be a majority of the Assembly membership.

At Assembly meetings in which a quorum is present at the time of the vote, resolutions may be passed in the name of the faculty by a majority vote of all members present or may be referred to the Committee on Credentials and Elections to be voted on through a referendum.

At Assembly meetings in which a quorum is not present, resolutions may be proposed by a majority vote of all members present and must then be referred to the Committee on Credentials and Elections to be voted on through a referendum.

The Senate president must call a special Assembly meeting when requested to do so by a petition signed by twenty-five percent [25%] of the Assembly members or a majority vote of the Faculty Senate.

ARTICLE FOUR: COMMITTEES OF THE FACULTY SENATE

Section One—Standing Committees

The following committees shall be standing committees of the Faculty Senate: Executive Committee, Committee on Committees, Committee on Credentials and Elections.

The Faculty Senate may appoint such committees as are necessary for reviewing policies and policy changes and for conducting research and/or investigation on topics that are of concern to the faculty.

No department will have more than one member on any committee.

Section Two—Executive Committee

The Executive Committee shall consist of the president-elect, the president, the immediate past president, the secretary and three Senate members-at-large elected by the Senate.

The members elected by the Senate shall serve one-year terms but may be reelected. In electing the members-at-large, the Senate should strive for representation across all academic colleges.

Functions of the executive committee are to

1. Prepare and distribute an agenda prior to each Senate meeting,
2. Act for the Senate on routine business and in the implementation of policies and procedures,
3. Receive and file all committee reports,
4. Meet with University leadership to discuss issues of general interest to the faculty and institution,
5. Nominate and appoint faculty members to serve on university and/or UH-System committees or task forces whenever the Committee on Committees is not available to make nominations and the Faculty Senate is not available to appoint representatives.

Section Three—Committee on Credentials and Elections

The Committee on Credentials and Elections shall consist of the Senate President-elect, who shall serve as chair, and one member from each department. Members shall serve for two-year terms, overlapping as needed to retain continuity, with half of the members serving a one-year term during the first year of implementation.

Functions of the committee are to

1. Nominate to the Senate for a vote, faculty members for all standing Senate Committees;
2. Nominate and conduct the election of Faculty Senate officers according to the guidelines in Article 2, Section 2;
3. Nominate to the Senate [or to the Senate Executive Committee] for a vote, faculty members to serve as faculty representatives on the committees or task forces of the university or system including the Faculty Affairs Committee, Academic Policy Committee, and University Curriculum Committee;
4. Solicit committee nominations from the faculty;
5. Conduct other elections ordered by the Senate by secure and anonymous balloting processes;
6. Inform the Senate President, by February 1 of each year, of the number of representatives that each department is entitled to elect to the upcoming session of the Senate;
7. Investigate and report to the Senate all questions pertaining to elections. Final decisions on such questions shall be made by the Senate Executive committee;
8. Decide questions concerning an individual's eligibility for membership in the Faculty Senate and inform the Senate President of the decision;
9. Establish guidelines for the election of departmental representative to the Senate.

The Committee on Credentials and Elections will ensure that no more than three nominees for any one position are presented to the Senate for a vote, applying such criteria as the committee deems necessary.

The Committee on Credentials and Elections is responsible for handling elections for the positions below, in addition to any other assigned by policy, the constitution, or the Senate:

1. Senator positions
2. Senate officer positions
3. Grievance Committee (according to PS 10.A.02)
4. Academic Affairs Council
5. General Education Committee
6. University Planning Council

ARTICLE FIVE: UNIVERSITY STANDING POLICY COMMITTEES

Section One—Definitions

The following committees are designated as University Standing Policy Committees in PS 01.A.03 Section 2.5, the Academic Shared Governance Policy, dated 10/16/95, and by the Faculty Senate.

The University Standing Policy Committees include Faculty Affairs Committee [PS 01.A.03, §2.5.1], Academic Policies Committee [PS 01.A.03, §2.5.2], Curriculum Committee [PS 01.A.03, §2.5.3] University Standing Policy Committees are responsible for developing and /or reviewing all university policies that directly affect the academic environment.

The Committee on Committees nominates faculty representatives for University Policy Committees. The Faculty Senate then elects the faculty representatives to the university standing policy committees.

Section Two—Representation and Terms

University Standing Policy Committees shall have equal representation from the academic colleges whenever possible and no department should be represented by more than one person on any policy committee.

Terms of committee members shall run from August 15 to August 14.

At the first meeting of each academic year, each policy committee shall elect a chairperson and a secretary whose primary function is to keep a record of committee actions.

Section Three—Faculty Affairs Committee

The Faculty Affairs Committee is responsible for the review and recommendation of policies pertaining to faculty related issues and any matters affecting the professional lives of faculty. The committee is concerned with such faculty-related issues as rank and tenure, promotions, faculty benefits, course loads, faculty leaves, grievances, and academic freedoms and responsibility.

Section Four—Academic Policies Committee

The Academic Policies Committee is responsible for the review and recommendation of policies pertaining to academic standards, practices and regulations.

Section Five—Curriculum Committee

The Curriculum Committee is responsible for the review and recommendation of policies pertaining to the development and approval of new courses, new degree programs and other curriculum changes and requirements.

Section Six—Selection of Representatives

Faculty representatives to other university committees and councils may be selected through standard Committee on Committees' procedures or other alternative procedures as agreed to by the Faculty Senate or by election when appropriate.

The Faculty Senate Executive Committee is responsible for working with the President's office and the Vice President of Academic Affairs/Provost's office to identify all university committees on which faculty representatives will serve.

Section Seven—University Councils

Faculty representatives serve on the following councils and on any other councils that may be constituted in the university by virtue of their being nominated to the Credentials and Elections Committee and their election by the faculty assembly members in their academic colleges.

1. University Planning Council
2. University Marketing Council
3. University Academic Affairs Council [PS 01.A.03 Section 2.7.1]

ARTICLE SIX: AMENDING PROCEDURE

Section One—Approval by Senate

Amendments to this constitution may be presented by any senator at any meeting of the Faculty Senate and shall be voted on at the next regular meeting, provided that there be at least one week between the two meetings. If two-thirds [2/3] of the Senate membership supports a proposed amendment, the amendment shall be presented to the Faculty Assembly for a vote.

Section Two—Approval by Assembly

Between fifteen and thirty days after the Senate approves an amendment, the Committee on Credentials and Elections shall submit by campus mail or secure and anonymous electronic means the amendment(s) and ballots to the Faculty Assembly. Ratification of proposed amendments shall require the support of a two thirds [2/3] of those voting in the election.

The Constitution was adopted in 1978.

Attachment: PS 01.A.03, Academic Shared Governance Policy, dated 10/16/95