

University of Washington College of Arts & Sciences

Bylaws of the Department of Linguistics

Approved by the Department on November 25, 2024

I. Mission

Linguistics is the study of language as a natural phenomenon. It focuses on the structure of language, the social context of language variation, perception of sounds and signs, language acquisition, brain processing of language and automated processing of language by computers.

As language is an exclusively and intrinsically human characteristic, research on the structure, acquisition, and use of language cuts to the heart of human cognition and the social world, linking linguistics to psychology, anthropology, information science, and many other disciplines.

The mission of the Department of Linguistics is to educate students and the public on the structure and use of language, and on the significance of invariant characteristics and systematic variation in languages, both spoken and signed. Our goals include researching these areas and training students to become independent and creative linguists themselves.

In addition, the Department of Linguistics fosters the study and preservation of indigenous languages and sign languages through teaching and research. We believe that the diversity of perspectives on the phenomenon of human language provided by expertise in and life experience with different linguistic varieties is critical to the advancement of the field and accordingly we are committed to increasing the diversity of both our department and the field at large.

II. History

In the late 1950s an Interdisciplinary Committee on Linguistics determined that a department should be established. Several linguists across campus eventually came together at the University of Washington to constitute the Department of Linguistics, whose inaugural year was 1962-1963. Initially staffed by several joint-appointed and adjunct faculty members, by 1970 the department had grown in rank and reputation. The academic offerings included traditional American Structuralism, historical Indo-European, Amerindian languages, and the developing theoretical disciplines of Generative syntax and phonology. The first doctorate was awarded in 1966, with four more the following year. The 1970s and 1980s saw the steady growth of the Department and a deepening of its offerings in the core areas of grammatical theory. There were four full-time faculty members in 1970 and eight by 1990. Their primary specializations were either syntax or phonology and, after 1975, formal semantics. But from the 1990s on, the composition of the Department steadily broadened and now also includes phonetics, sociolinguistics, computational linguistics, American Sign Language, language acquisition, neuro- and psycholinguistics. In 2005 the department launched the Professional Master's in Computational Linguistics Program (CLMS) in conjunction with UW Educational Outreach (now known as Continuum College).

III. Guiding Principles

We adopt the CAS set of guiding principles listed below:

- Engage from a place of trust
- Recognize and celebrate our differences
- Promote the common good
- Pursue social justice
- Foster community
- Support risk, learn from failure, applaud success
- Seek joy in our work
- Remember why we are here

IV. Regulations

Department members are governed by six interdependent sets of regulations. In cases of conflicting regulations, the higher ranked ones supercede the lower ones (for example, the Faculty Code takes precedence over departmental bylaws)

1. Federal and State laws and regulations
2. The Faculty Code
3. UW policies and rules
4. College policies and rules
5. Departmental bylaws
6. Departmental handbook

V. Voting

The voting members of the department are all tenure track and teaching track faculty who are not currently on leave. Voting on departmental policy and personnel matters happens either in person during faculty meetings or electronically.

[Voting procedures | College of Arts and Sciences - Administrative Gateway \(washington.edu\)](#)

- All voting members of the department faculty vote on recommendations for a new appointment - at any rank, including new emeritus appointments.
- Recommendations for reappointment, renewal, or salary increase - at any rank - are voted on by those voting members who are superior in academic rank to the person under consideration.

- For specifics, please see the [AHR Promotion and Tenure Voting Matrix](#).

The department uses majority voting on hires, promotions, reappointments, and amendments to the bylaws, and plurality voting on other matters. In cases of inconclusive votes, a discussion will be held (either at a faculty meeting or via email), followed by a second vote.

For hires of new permanent (teaching and tenure-track) faculty, the search committee may present a recommendation to voting faculty. After a discussion at a faculty meeting, the voting takes place in two stages. In the first stage, all voting faculty rank the finalists. In the second stage, all voting faculty vote whether to recommend the hire of the top candidate(s).

VI. Committees

The Department of Linguistics does not currently have an executive committee. Each year, at the last faculty meeting of the year, we elect department members into the following standing committees for the following year. We encourage faculty members to volunteer and/or self-nominate.

The standing committees, their composition and terms are as follows:

Committee Name	Members	Term
General Linguistics Graduate Admissions Committee	1 GPC plus 2 faculty members	1 year
CLMS Admissions Committee	at least 2 CompLing faculty members	1 year
Budget Committee	Department Chair, Associate Chair, Administrator	5 years
Diversity Committee	2 faculty members (including GPC chairing the graduate admissions committee), a staff member, graduate student representative	2 years
ASL Curriculum Committee	ASL faculty	TBD
Course Scheduling Committee	Department chair, 1 staff member, 1-2 faculty members	TBD
Linguistic Fund (LF) Committee	1-2 last recipients of the LF award	1 year
Graduate Excellence Committee	1-2 faculty members, none of them chair of the students' committees	1 year
UG Curriculum Committee	2 faculty members	5 years
Graduate Curriculum Committee	GPCs	5 years
Term Appointments and Hires Committee	2-3 faculty members (including one CompLing faculty member)	5 years

Ad Hoc Committees, with terms as needed:

Open House Committee

Promotion Committees

Faculty Search Committees

ASL BA Exploration Committee

Job Workshop Committee

Self-study 10 year review committee

Social Committee

Others as needed

VII. Position Responsibilities and Terms

Note: Please consult the departmental handbook, for descriptions of non-elected/no-fixed term staff positions (Administrator, Graduate Program Manager, Program Coordinator, Graduate Program Administrator, CLMS System Administrator, Senior Computing Specialist)

Department Chair

The chair of the department serves as its leader and administrative head. The chair sets the tone for the department, works with the faculty, staff and students, and uses departmental resources to fulfill the mission of the department, college and university.

Term: typically 5 years

Associate Chair

The associate chair assists the Department Chair as needed (e.g., by serving as Acting Chair, assisting in writing reports, putting together promotion cases, helping to prepare self-study materials), manages the departmental newsletter, manages the Linguistics Fund award, and serves on the Budget Committee. The associate chair is appointed by the chair.

Term: max 5 years, determined in consultation with the chair.

CLMS Faculty Director

The CLMS Faculty Director is responsible for the running of the Computational Linguistics Master of Science program, overseeing curriculum as well as extracurricular features of the program and serving as default advisor for CLMS students until they are assigned a specific advisor. The CLMS Faculty Director works closely with the Department Chair on matters related to program staffing.

Term: Determined by the CLMS faculty in consultation with the Department Chair.

ASL Program Director

The ASL Language Minor Program Director responds to inquiries, evaluates and places ASL students in appropriate ASL course levels, plans ASL class-teacher schedules, coordinates weekly ASL Faculty meetings for curriculum development, provides grammar and culture consultation on ASL and Deaf culture to the department research faculty and students and acts as an advisor/sponsor for the UW National ASL Honors Society chapter. Leading a committee and coordinating a national search for new ASL positions are important responsibilities. The director maintains the program records and data with ASL and Deaf culture book and video collection inventories, AU ASL 101 waitlist and ASL Minor Studies brochure guide. Outreach and Service to the Deaf and ASL teacher community are conducted, such as representing at Deaf Nation

Expo and acting as a proctor for ASL Proficiency Interview via Gallaudet University for the Puget Sound area.

Term: To be determined by ASL faculty in consultation with the Department Chair.

Graduate Program Coordinators

The Graduate Program Coordinators advise incoming PhD students (on such matters as course selection) until they pick their own advisor. The GPCs also answer e-mails from current and prospective PhD students, keep track of the academic progress of PhD students, and check that requirements have been satisfied before a student takes their General Exam or defends their dissertation. Other duties include chairing the departmental introductions meeting in early Autumn quarter and chairing the graduate admissions committee.

Term: max 5 years, determined in consultation with the Department Chair

RA Coordinator

RA coordinator duties include assigning both graduate and undergraduate RAs to faculty or graduate student supervisors at the beginning of every quarter. With respect to department-funded graduate student RAs, this involves assigning them to (a) faculty supervisor(s) and determining the division of their time over the course of the quarter. With respect to undergraduate RAs, this involves managing the Linguistics Undergraduate Research Apprentice Program (LURAP). This involves soliciting project proposals from faculty and graduate students; posting available projects for undergraduate students to see; soliciting applications to the program from undergraduate students; assigning undergraduate students to projects; managing UG enrollments to 499A; and organizing periodic celebratory events.

Term: typically 5 years, determined in consultation with the chair

TA Coordinator

The TA coordinator plans, organizes, and runs the annual 2-day LING TA Training workshop for all new and continuing LING TAs the week before classes start each fall. In conjunction and in consultation with the Chair, the TA coordinator makes ASE assignments every quarter for all graduate students who are guaranteed funding. Beyond this, the TA coordinator conducts the classroom teaching observations required of all new LING TAs in each of their first two quarters of teaching and generally acts as the point of contact for any questions or concerns pertaining to teaching or any other issues relating to the TA classroom.

Term: typically 5 years, determined in consultation with the chair

Colloquium Liaison

The Colloquium Liaison plans and coordinates the yearly colloquium speaker series, along with the vice presidents of the Linguistics Society of the University of Washington (LSUW). Prior to the beginning of the academic year, these individuals solicit nominations for speakers and set up a departmental vote. Next, they schedule talks, coordinate interpreters, introduce speakers, organize refreshments, set up meetings between students and speakers, and organize the dinner for out-of-town speakers.

Term: 1 year

VIII. Meetings of the Department

Faculty meetings are official department meetings where faculty members, staff and graduate students (through a graduate student representative) are informed about and discuss issues related to department functions. The voting faculty also vote on department business and policy. The meetings are required for faculty members and may be attended remotely if needed. The meeting agenda is distributed to faculty members via email and posted on the departmental calendar a week before the meeting.

Faculty meetings are called by the Department Chair. The meetings are scheduled a year in advance, in accordance with the Washington Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA). The default schedule is two meetings per quarter during the academic year, plus one additional meeting in Spring for merit.

IX. Amendments and Additions to the Bylaws

The department bylaws will be reviewed and approved by a faculty vote every five years.

Voting members may propose amendments to the bylaws, which will be discussed at the faculty meeting and voted upon. The amendments require the majority vote. The amendments, along with the dates they were approved, will be listed at the bottom of the bylaws.

X. Institutional Record

The approved bylaws will be posted on the department's website. All the policies and procedures in the bylaws are considered in effect absent a faculty vote to revise or eliminate a specific policy or procedure. Other policies and procedures are included in the departmental handbook. In cases of conflict, the bylaws supersede the handbook.