

Chapter 2. Appointment and Duties of the Head of the Academic Unit

Note: In the following text, the word "chair" is used in its generic sense to identify the heads of academic units, and the word "department" is employed in the same sense. "Appropriate Dean" refers to the divisional dean to which a particular department reports (i.e., Dean of the Faculty, Dean of Medicine and Biological Sciences, Dean of Engineering, Dean of Public Health, or Dean of International and Public Affairs).

The heads of academic units (chairs of departments; directors of programs and centers) are appointed by the Provost, usually for a term of three years (five years in the Division of Biology and Medicine, and in the School for Public Health), upon the recommendation of the appropriate dean. The chair appointment may be renewed for a second term.

The responsibilities of the chairs of academic units include performing all the administrative tasks that a unit requires of its chief officer, and for ensuring that the highest of academic standards are maintained. As the unit's chief academic and administrative officer, the Chair is responsible both to the faculty of the unit and to the University. The Chair is responsible for interpreting University policies to the members of the academic unit, while also representing the individual and group concerns of faculty members to the Administration, and for administering the University's policies and procedures with respect to graduate and undergraduate students, and employees. Particular responsibilities of the Chair are articulated throughout this Handbook and are summarized at the end of this chapter.

Each academic unit determines its own internal procedures and organization, within such general rules and guidelines as have been established for the University as a whole. The Chair is expected to preside at department meetings (which should be held as often as necessary, but at a minimum, once a month) and to appoint department officers and committees as needed (e.g., a concentration adviser, a graduate representative, a curriculum committee, a secretary to record minutes of meetings, and so forth). The Chair is responsible for ensuring that all departmental records and correspondence are maintained, and for establishing and maintaining smooth operating procedures for the conduct of the unit's business.

Members of departments generally raise any formal administrative matters with the Chair. When it seems appropriate, however, direct communication between any member of the department and any officer of the Administration is encouraged, although the Administration expects that chairs will be kept fully informed by both the faculty and the appropriate senior officers on formal administrative matters.

Appeals by students or faculty of a department chair's decisions can be made to the appropriate dean.

Undergraduate students should make such appeals first to the Dean of the College, medical students to the Dean of

Medicine and Biological Sciences, and graduate students to the Dean of the Graduate School. For formal grievances, there are established procedures which are distinct from the way that informal appeals are treated. The University's grievance procedures are described in the Faculty Rules and Regulations.

If the Chair is to be absent from the campus for an extended period, an acting chair should be designated by the Chair, with the concurrence of the appropriate dean, to serve until the Chair's return.

2.1 Administering Departmental Faculty: Teaching, Research and Service

The Chair supervises the procedures for recruiting, interviewing and appointing new faculty members, and is also responsible for the development of departmental recommendations for the faculty (except, of course, themselves) regarding reappointments, promotions, tenure, and renewal of contracts, and requests for leaves of absence. The Chair recommends changes of salaries of all departmental faculty to the appropriate Dean as part of the departmental budget procedures, receives and evaluates for the department all requests for leaves and transmits these to the Dean with recommendations for action. The Chair is responsible for annual evaluations of the work and status of the members of the department, for protecting their interests as both individuals and as professional scholar-teachers and for helping promote their professional development; in sum, for maintaining and enhancing the quality of the faculty. The Chair should be alert to any and all personnel problems, and should keep the office of the Dean informed of progress in working to resolve them.

Chairs are expected to advance the interests of their faculty by promoting University recognition of faculty achievements and by being open to questions, suggestions, concerns and complaints of both faculty and students. Chairs should be responsible for short- and long-range planning for their departments, should keep themselves informed on changing trends within their disciplines, and should be ready to argue departmental priorities as persuasively as possible.

Evaluation of the performance of all departmental faculty is part of the Chair's responsibility, and a summary written evaluation is required annually to substantiate recommendations on salary changes for all faculty to the Dean. The Chair is expected, upon request, to discuss the evaluation with the faculty member concerned, to provide them with a summary of the contents of the evaluation and also to provide an opportunity to discuss both past performance and plans for addressing problems that have been identified.

Separate from the salary review, and of particular importance is the annual review by the department of the work and status of its untenured members. The purpose of the annual review is, in general, to assess individually the performance of the junior faculty in teaching, research, and service to the University. For these faculty members, the

annual review should also be a chance for each of them to discuss their future prospects in the department, and about the process that will be followed in considering them for promotion or tenure. Should junior faculty be deficient in any aspects of scholarly development in research, teaching, and service, as defined by departmental standards and criteria for reappointment, promotion or tenure, this is the forum for the Chair to communicate such concerns officially and for the record.

2.2 Meetings of Chairs of Academic Units

Chairs of academic units meet regularly as a group with the Provost and other members of the senior administration to discuss matters of University concern. The Provost chairs these meetings. Additional meetings may be called at the discretion of the Provost, or upon the recommendation of other members of the agenda committee.

An agenda committee prepares the agenda in advance of each regularly scheduled meeting of unit chairs. Chairs of academic units who wish to suggest items for the agenda of a forthcoming meeting should contact a member of this agenda committee. Support for the meetings of unit chairs and of the agenda committee is provided by the Office of the Provost in University Hall.

2.3 Supervision of the Departmental Curriculum

While the specific content and methods of courses in the curriculum are primarily the responsibility of the instructors in those courses, within appropriate limits defined by the discipline and the unit, the Chair is responsible for oversight of the department's curriculum as a whole. After approving proposals made for new courses, or proposals for changes in the department's concentration, the Chair should forward such proposals/recommendations to the College Curriculum Council (CCC) in the case of undergraduate courses or the undergraduate concentration, or to the Graduate Council for graduate courses. [Follow this link for guidelines and forms for new undergraduate or graduate courses.](#)

The assignment of teaching duties and scheduling of classes in accordance with University course-scheduling principles and in a fair and equitable manner within the department are also the responsibility of the Chair.

The Chair has responsibilities toward all students in the department, especially concentrators and graduate students. Many of these responsibilities are frequently delegated to the concentration advisor and graduate representative, but the Chair may be called upon to adjudicate disputes between students and faculty members. The Chair should also attempt to view the department and its curricular offerings from the students' perspectives, as well as from those of the faculty, and if necessary to mediate between them.

The head of an academic unit:

- Countersigns (and endorses if appropriate) proposals for departmental and extra-departmental courses and independent studies (GISP and IS courses) by faculty and teaching associates of the department. ([Follow this link for information about GISP and IS forms.](#))
- Presents proposals for concentrations to the CCC Executive Committee for screening. Interdepartmental proposals must have the endorsement of all department chairs involved. Interdisciplinary concentrations are under the supervision of faculty committees appointed by the Provost (or in special cases, by the President) and are authorized to present concentration proposals, supervise concentrators, and propose courses.
- Oversees curricular planning in the department, to ensure that students are well-served by course offerings and that enrollments align with the allocation of teaching resources.
- Oversees the submission of course information to Courses@Brown and proposals for new courses to the CCC and the Graduate Council.
- Coordinates the review of undergraduate programs in the department with the designated CCC sub-committee, when the CCC so requests.
- Effects, upon the invitation of the Graduate Council, the department's participation in the review of its graduate programs, collaborating with the Graduate Council's appointed sub-committee.
- Coordinates (and endorses when appropriate) faculty submission of UFund proposals for the development of the undergraduate curriculum.

2.4 Budgeting and Staffing

The Chair is the chief fiscal officer of the department, and is responsible for preparing budget proposals and presenting them to the appropriate divisional dean. Once the budget has been approved, the Chair must oversee requests for modifications of it when necessary. Some of this responsibility may be delegated, but ultimately it is the Chair who is responsible for the department budget. They must have a general understanding of the overall financial condition of the University and be willing to interpret it to the members of the department; the Chair must also define and articulate to the administration the goals and ambitions of the department.

In practical terms, this means department chairs must budget realistically, present the budget request to the Dean for approval, and administer the budget prudently throughout the fiscal year. Budgetary responsibilities therefore fall into two categories: 1) planning and preparation, and 2) maintenance and control. These functions overlap during the course of the year; while chairs control the current budget year, they are also planning for the next fiscal year.

2.4.1 Planning

The office of the appropriate divisional dean works with chairs regarding the budget and planning needs of the department. There is of course frequent communication about particular budgetary or financial issues, but by the early spring of each year the formal process of setting the budget for the following year takes place. The process includes evaluating requests for leaves of absence, assessing the need for temporary teaching funds, reviewing the operational budget, setting salaries, and so on. In the spring, departments may request to undertake regular faculty searches in the subsequent academic year.

2.4.2 Maintenance and Control of the Budget

Although the Chair is responsible for the department's budgetary integrity, the daily or monthly accounting and bookkeeping function is often delegated. To facilitate monitoring, however, it is recommended that department chairs institute a systematic way of verifying all monthly charges against their budgets. Department staff should access and review the appropriate reports in Workday as needed and consult with the chair on deviations from budget-approved spending.

Chairs are urged to budget as realistically as they can because of the restricted amount of contingency money available to satisfy emergency additions to the budget. When a chair makes such a request, it should be realized that the Dean may be unable to approve it.

2.4.3. Guidelines Concerning Expenditures from all Institutional Funds to Support Faculty Research

Guidelines provide guidance for determining which expenses may be charged to all faculty research support funds. The purpose of this policy is to ensure sound business practices, timely and accurate recording of expenses, and compliance with tax regulations under the Internal Revenue Code. To read the guidelines and policy in full, go to this [link](#).

2.5 Summary: Role of Department Chair

The overarching leadership responsibility of the Chair is, working in collaboration with faculty colleagues, to develop a strong, coherent vision for the development and growth of the department. This vision must be communicated clearly to the administration, students, prospective students and alumni. In leading the department to achieve the unit's vision and goals, the department Chair is expected to:

- Strengthen faculty in new and emerging areas or in critical traditional areas where departmental strength is lacking.
- Provide general oversight of the activities of the department and the functioning of its education program.
- Promote the welfare of the department faculty and staff and foster a cooperative and collegial departmental atmosphere.
- Serve as the primary channel of communication between the department and the University's administration.

Among the specific responsibilities of the Chair are the following:

- Call regular department meetings, preside at these, and ensure that minutes of such meetings are taken and subsequently distributed and maintained.
- Appoint the officers of the department and members of department committees.
- Plan and supervise the processes of the faculty recruitment, implementing in so doing any relevant decisions of the department that may have previously been taken.
- Organize and carry out the annual collective department review by senior faculty of each untenured faculty member and communicate in writing the results of this review to the untenured faculty member in question and to the appropriate divisional dean.
- Ensure that University policies and procedures are understood by those responsible for financial transactions, and that the department operates within the constraints of externally and internally funded budgets.
- Conduct an annual evaluation of the performance of each faculty member of the department and recommend a salary for each such individual to the Dean.
- Oversee the preparation of all documents needed for reappointment or promotion of faculty.
- Oversee staff evaluation, salary setting and staff development.
- Communicate departmental needs and plans to the administration and in turn communicate the administration's needs and goals to the department.
- Exercise general oversight of the department's graduate and undergraduate curricula, and oversee the appropriate procedures for the establishment of new courses.
- Work with the departmental manager or the person in the equivalent position to make sure that all departmental deadlines are met, that jobs are appropriately delegated, and that a yearly budget for the department is planned and approved.
- Represent the department in all Tenure, Promotions, and Appointments Committee (TPAC)-related issues.

- Assign office and laboratory space in the department, and discuss any concerns about space or its use with the Provost's office.

Where appropriate given the nature of the department's work, the Chair shall also do the following:

- Work with the Office for the Vice President for Research to attract large block research grants for the department.
- Work with the Office for the Vice President for Research on all issues regarding compliance with contracts and grants, conflict of interest policies, intellectual property issues, and the commercialization of products resulting from research.
- Review in advance all requests for external funding by department faculty.

2.6 Relevant Policies

Chairs are also responsible for being familiar with University policies, which are articulated throughout this Handbook, in the Faculty Rules and Regulations, on the University's policy website, and by those organs of the University who are responsible for them (the Graduate School, the College, the Controller's Office, etc.). Several specific policies are listed here, while others are found in Chapter 14, Legal Issues, and Chapter 15, Miscellaneous Matters.

2.6.1 Bias, Discrimination, and Harassment

Brown University does not tolerate unlawful bias, discrimination, and harassment. This is detailed in the University's [Nondiscrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy](#). Employees can report allegations of discriminatory and harassing behaviors without fear of retaliation. Brown will investigate reports of alleged discrimination and harassment and take reasonable care to prevent and promptly correct any behaviors which are found to be in violation of Brown's policies prohibiting discrimination and harassment. Additional information on gender discrimination and sexual violence can be found on [the website of the Title IX Office](#). Additional information on bias reporting can be found on the website for [the Office of Diversity and Inclusion](#).

2.6.2 Drugs in the Workplace

All employees are prohibited from the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession or use of illegal drugs and controlled substances, and abuse or misuse of prescription medications on Brown's premises or as part of University activities, in vehicles owned or provided by Brown, at work sites at which University duties are being

performed by employees, or in the workplace (unless specifically authorized). Reporting to work or working while impaired by alcohol or illegal drugs is also prohibited. In addition, the use of alcohol or illegal drugs while using machinery or heavy equipment owned or operated by Brown is prohibited. Examples of substance abuse and misuse related behaviors not tolerated by the University include, but are not limited to:

- Alcohol use by employees at Brown which interferes with the employee's ability to effectively perform the responsibilities of their positions.
- Reporting to work or working while impaired by alcohol or illegal drugs.
- The use, sale, manufacture, possession, or distribution of alcohol or illegal drugs while at work.
- The inappropriate use of prescription or over-the-counter drugs (i.e., use in excess of medical necessity as determined by the prescribing physician, or to the extent that it impairs the employee's ability to perform their job – unless such use has been cleared by the University authorities, or use of prescription drugs not prescribed to that employee).
- Commission of a crime involving the use, possession, sale or distribution of any controlled substance.
- Failure to report to the employer (within five (5) days of the conviction) any conviction of a violation of a criminal drug statute that occurred in the workplace.
- Furnishing alcohol to those on campus under the age of 21.