

University Handbook, 2013-2014, Section Three Points of emphasis re: DFCs

The University Handbook provides important guidance around the formation and function of Department Faculty Councils (p.41-44). The operation of College Faculty Councils (pp.44-46) mirrors these. The Handbook appears in its entirety on the [Academic Affairs website](#).

The guiding principles of the Department and College Faculty Councils are:

Communication: the main point of the councils is to provide a basis for improving it.

Transparency: Chairs' and Deans' final decision-making authority is crystal clear; at the same time but they are expected to operate as transparently as possible with the elected representatives of their faculty.

Legitimacy: the Faculty Councils have a right, even a duty, to consult their chair's (or dean's) supervisor if their rights of consultation and/or their access to information are not respected by their chair.

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3.6. Departmental Bylaws and Department Faculty Council

B. The Department Faculty Council (DFC)

~~The Role and Purpose of the DFC~~

The DFC is advisory to the Chair, who holds decision-making authority at the department level.

The purpose of the DFC is to promote collegiality and effective shared governance of the department by increasing the transparency and two-way communication between the faculty and the Chair with regard to the development of policy and to increase communication about the implementation of policy.

This unequivocal statement also means that the chair has no grounds to withhold information from or to fail to consult because she fears her authority may be undermined.

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Implementation and Membership of the DFC

The Chair is an *ex officio*, non-voting member of the DFC. Chairs will respect their DFC's desire, on occasion, to meet without the Chair present.

Department Chairs are not eligible to vote for or to serve as representatives to the DFC.

So... the DFC is an elected body that is separate from a department's administrative committee, and

may meet without the chair or the chair's appointees.

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Alternatives to the DFC

The body performing the functions hereby outlined for the DFC may be constituted differently if the faculty so desire, but any such alternative body must:

- Be composed of a majority of voting members who are elected by the permanent full-time faculty of the departments they represent.
- Be chaired by a tenured, elected faculty member who is elected by vote of the elected members of the body.
- Clearly acknowledge in its bylaws the prerogative of the elected members, when those members wish, to meet without the Chair.
- Be clearly identified in the department's bylaws as performing the functions of the DFC.
- Be initially approved and then reaffirmed annually by a majority vote of the permanent full-time faculty members of the department by secret ballot as their preferred alternative to a DFC as outlined elsewhere in this document.

Any single voting member can insist on a secret ballot election annually to confirm the department's preference.

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Operation

Consistent with its purpose of providing greater transparency and two-way communication between the faculty and the Chair, the DFC will have the right to prompt access to department information relating to the planning and implementation of departmental policies.

Once the DFC is established in a particular department, the DFC should work with the Dean and/or the Ombuds office to address problems arising in its work that may require external assistance, and should notify the Faculty Senate Executive Committee for information purposes.

The DFC has a right to such information. In the event the chair will not provide access the DFC may appeal to the Dean and should inform the Ex Comm of the Faculty Senate.

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Frequency of Meeting and Summer DFCs

The DFC should meet as often as deemed appropriate by the council membership with a minimum of two meetings per semester. Each meeting will be called by the chair of the DFC. The Department Chair or any other member of the DFC can request a meeting by contacting the chair of the DFC.

A DFC is not limited to meetings called by the chair. It should meet at least twice a semester and let colleagues, including the chair, know it is doing so.

[p.44]

Each DFC will take necessary measures to assure continuing functioning of the DFC during the summer months. These may include, but are not limited to, establishing a reduced quorum requirement, allowing members to name, or elect, proxies from among the faculty of their department, and electing an acting DFC chair. Determining the best mix of such necessary measures will be the decision of the DFC itself, based on immediate circumstances and without outside intervention. Such a "Summer DFC" will be recognized by the administration as the legitimate representative of faculty interests in the shared governance of the department during the summer months, and consulted accordingly.

*The DFC should make these arrangements clear to the chair annually, and stress that it expects to be consulted over the summer just as during the academic year.
No "summer surprises!"*