DEPARTMENT OPERATING PROCEDURES AND POLICIES

ELECTRICAL AND COMPUTER ENGINEERING

Approvals—Department (6/2/2025), PPBC (5/29/2025), Dean (9/25/2025), Provost (9/25/2025)

Preface

This document outlines the internal operating procedures and policies of the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering (EECE) at Western Washington University. It is intended to provide clarity and transparency about how the department functions, covering topics such as leadership roles, committee structures, curriculum oversight, faculty responsibilities, and program governance.

The policies and procedures described here are designed to:

1. Ensure the department operates fairly, consistently, and in alignment with university policies and values.
2. Support high-quality teaching, advising, research mentoring, and academic programming.
3. Maintain accreditation standards and promote continuous improvement.
4. Foster a collaborative and inclusive environment for learning and scholarship.

A. *Department Mission Statement*

The Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Western Washington University serves current students, industry, the University, and the citizens of the State of Washington by developing industry-ready graduates through a combination of creative problem-solving, analytical skills development, and experiential learning. The educational experience that we provide emphasizes critical thinking and an understanding of the impact of engineering solutions in a global, economic, environmental, and societal context. We value and foster teamwork, communication, and a commitment to equity, justice, and respect for the rights and dignity of others.

B. *Department Membership and Voting Rights*

The voting rights and limitations for the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering are:

1. Eligibility for voting on probationary reviews, tenure, and promotion is specified in the faculty contract in sections 7.6.2.2.2 and 7.7.2.2.
2. Only tenured (TN) and tenure-track (TT) faculty members may vote on hiring decisions for tenure-track faculty positions and proposed changes to the department's COPEP Addendum.
3. Only members of the faculty as defined in the Constitution of the Faculty of Western Washington University, Article II, may vote on curricular matters.
4. TN/TT faculty members, jointly appointed faculty members with Electrical and Computer Engineering as their home department, NTT faculty members with appointments of 0.5 FTE or higher, and staff with permanent positions of 0.5 FTE or higher may vote on departmental business not addressed by points 1–3.

A quorum of two-thirds of the department's voting members is required to conduct a vote. Unless otherwise specified, motions pass with a simple majority of those present. Voting typically takes place in person during department meetings. However, remote voting may be permitted when needed, provided a consistent and secure method is used for all eligible voters, such as a secure electronic ballot or live virtual vote. Voting eligibility for specific matters may be subject to additional restrictions as outlined in Section J.

In cases of business travel, illness, or other approved exceptional circumstances, proxy voting is allowed. The proxy must be a voting-eligible department member, and the arrangement must be made in advance. The absent member must notify the Department Chair by email before the meeting. A proxy may only cast a vote as directed by the absent member and may not participate in discussion or deliberation on the absent member's behalf.

C. Department Meetings

Department meetings may be scheduled weekly at an established time, but do not need to be held if there is no business to warrant a meeting. When meetings are held, an agenda shall be distributed at least one business day before the meeting, and minutes shall be taken and stored in a place accessible to all voting members of the Department.

D. Department Chair Responsibilities

The Department Chair's responsibilities are:

1. Duties as specified in the Collective Bargaining Agreement, Section 17.3 and in the CSE COPEP, Section V.
2. Management of assessment and accreditation efforts.
3. Working with the Foundation to support departmental fundraising and development efforts.

E. Graduate Program Director Responsibilities

The Graduate Program Director (GPD) serves as the administrative and academic leader of the department's graduate program, providing strategic vision and day-to-day management to ensure program quality, student success, and alignment with institutional goals. In this role, the GPD works closely with the Graduate Program Committee (GPC), the Department Chair, administrative staff, faculty advisors, and the Graduate School to ensure the smooth functioning and continued improvement of the graduate program.

One tenured faculty member, appointed by the Department Chair, serves a two-year term as the Graduate Program Director, with the possibility of reappointment. The faculty member in this role receives a one-course release each academic year in recognition of these substantial administrative responsibilities. The GPD is responsible for the following:

1. **Leadership and Coordination.** Chair the Graduate Program Committee. Serve as the main point of contact for the graduate program. Coordinate with administrative staff and the Graduate School on program matters.
2. **Recruitment and Admissions.** Lead outreach, marketing, and info sessions for prospective students. Oversee the admissions process, including application review, communication with applicants, and coordination with the Graduate School.
3. **Teaching Assistantships.** Award TA positions, assign TAs to courses, and monitor performance.
4. **Student Support and Advising.** Assign initial advisors for new graduate students. Monitor graduate student progress and support students in securing faculty mentorship and staying on track for degree completion. Coordinate fall orientation and maintain advising materials.
5. **Curriculum and Assessment.** Lead program review and updates to curriculum and policies. Oversee assessment for both in-person and remote courses. Maintain documentation for accreditation and continuous improvement.

6. **MS Project Oversight.** Ensure policies and expectations for research project submissions and presentations are clearly communicated and followed. Confirm that students meet the MS project requirements. Verify paper submissions or ensure GPC review.

F. Department Committees

The Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering maintains an Executive Committee and three standing departmental committees, as described in the charges outlined below. All standing committees shall be composed of at least four tenured or tenure-track (TN/TT) faculty members, including a chair, all appointed by the Department Chair. Committee chairs are typically appointed for two-year terms. The Department Chair shall not serve as the chair of any standing committee.

Unless otherwise specified, all committee members shall have voting rights. In some cases, a designated program staff member may serve as a non-voting member of a committee to provide administrative support, continuity, or subject matter expertise, as appropriate.

Committee chairs are responsible for distributing a meeting agenda to all committee members no later than one business day prior to each meeting. The agenda shall include hyperlinks to all documents requiring review. In cases where substantial material is to be considered, the agenda and associated materials should be circulated earlier to allow sufficient time for review and preparation.

Faculty members not formally appointed to a given committee but directly involved in or meaningfully affected by specific agenda items shall be invited to attend the relevant portion of the meeting in a non-voting capacity. Committee meetings are open to all departmental faculty and staff.

Executive Committee:

Membership Notes: The committee is comprised of the Department Chair plus the chairs of the three standing committees below.

Charge: The Executive Committee advises the Department Chair on matters of departmental policy, long-term planning, and strategic direction. It serves as a consultative body for issues with impact on departmental operations, resource allocation, or governance. The committee also helps ensure transparency and faculty representation in major decision-making processes.

Responsibilities:

1. Provide input to the Department Chair on strategic planning for departmental growth and direction.
2. Offer guidance on budget priorities and resource allocation.
3. Advise Department Chair on faculty workload policies and instructional planning.
4. Coordinate across departmental committees to identify and discuss overlapping concerns.
5. Review departmental policies and procedures and provide recommendations for the Department Chair to consider.
6. Discuss faculty development practices, mentorship structures, annual review processes, and the equitable distribution of service and teaching responsibilities, offering suggestions and feedback to support the Department Chair's leadership.

7. Provide input on ad hoc issues brought forward by the Department Chair or faculty that may benefit from broader faculty leadership perspectives.

Curriculum Committee (CC):

Membership Notes: The EECE Program Coordinator shall attend as a non-voting member. Other faculty members will be invited to attend as non-voting participants when the agenda includes discussion of courses they coordinate, new course proposals they have submitted, or other relevant matters. First-year faculty will be invited to attend selected meetings involving ABET assessment activities to help familiarize them with program-level evaluation processes.

Charge: The CC serves as the primary governing body for the undergraduate curriculum within the department. The committee makes recommendations on undergraduate curricular changes, coordinates curriculum change requests, and oversees the ABET assessment and continuous improvement processes.

Responsibilities:

1. Coordinate all undergraduate course change proposals, new course requests, and other curricular changes. Recommendations involving new course proposals or significant curricular revisions shall require approval by a vote of the faculty.
2. Evaluate student exception requests, consulting other relevant faculty members when appropriate.
3. Review and maintain the schedule for student outcome (SO) assessments and ABET course reviews and notify appropriate faculty in advance regarding upcoming reviews requiring their participation.
4. Ensure that all ABET assessments have been conducted in a complete and thorough manner, and that all assessments have appropriate evidence and documentation.
5. Maintain documentation which summarizes the assessment methodologies, assessment targets, attainment of outcomes, recommended changes, and recommended reassessment plan.
6. Maintain a record of all continuous improvement actions, including their rationale, implementation status, and follow-up results, as part of the department's program assessment archive.

Undergraduate Program Committee (UPC):

Membership Notes: The EECE Program Coordinator shall attend as a non-voting member.

Charge: The UPC oversees and enhances the quality and effectiveness of the undergraduate program. The committee supports academic excellence, consistent advising practices, student engagement, outreach efforts aimed at both current and prospective students, sustaining a professional and welcoming learning environment, and advancing the visibility and reputation of the undergraduate program.

Responsibilities:

1. Participate in the review and selection of applicants to the undergraduate program.
2. Coordinate the advising structure and maintain consistency and clarity in advising practices across faculty members.

3. Plan and support outreach activities, including prospective student information sessions, visit days, and building tours.
4. Organize and promote student-facing events such as orientation sessions and the annual capstone project expo.
5. Manage the nomination and selection process for undergraduate student awards and scholarships.
6. Support student engagement activities that encourage constructive communication, collaboration, and shared expectations among peers.
7. Support undergraduate student clubs, encourage faculty-student engagement, and involve students in departmental outreach efforts.
8. Solicit and review feedback from current students and recent alumni to inform program improvement efforts, and recommend or initiate changes to advising, curriculum, student support, or departmental practices based on that input.

Graduate Program Committee (GPC):

Charge: The GPC is responsible for the administration, oversight, and continuous improvement of the graduate program. The committee plays a central role in ensuring academic quality, operational efficiency, and strategic development of graduate offerings. Areas of responsibility include admissions, advising, student support, graduate curriculum, research project requirements, ongoing program assessment, and outreach and recruitment efforts.

Responsibilities:

1. Support graduate program outreach and recruitment efforts, including coordination with the Graduate School, marketing initiatives, and information sessions.
2. Review and evaluate applications for admission to the graduate program.
3. Organize and support orientation activities for new graduate students to ensure a smooth transition into the program and the department.
4. Provide guidance on graduate student advising practices and maintain advising materials and policies to ensure consistency and clarity.
5. Review and recommend changes to graduate course offerings, degree requirements, or course sequencing based on enrollment trends, faculty capacity, or feedback from students and alumni.
6. Oversee the implementation of research project requirements, including submission guidelines, presentation expectations, and faculty review procedures.
7. Review applications for teaching assistantships, recommend TA assignments to the Department Chair, and maintain clear criteria for selection and renewal.
8. Monitor graduate student progress toward degree completion to help identify students who may need additional guidance in securing faculty mentorship or making timely academic progress.
9. Support program assessment activities, including the collection and review of relevant data, coordination with faculty on student learning outcomes, and contributions to external reporting requirements.

G. Academic Year Teaching Load Expectations

The standard teaching load for a 1.0 FTE tenure-track or tenured (TT/TN) faculty member in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering is **five courses** per academic year, though the actual number

of assigned courses may vary slightly depending on course credit values and structure. One- and two-credit courses, including seminar-style offerings, are treated as fractional loads (i.e., less than one full course), while certain multi-CRN courses may be weighted more heavily and may count as more than one course. As a result, while most faculty members teach exactly 5.0 courses, some faculty members' total loads may fall between 4.5 and 5.0 courses per year.

Most undergraduate courses in the department are either 4-credit lecture/lab combinations, 4-credit lecture-only courses, or 3-credit capstone project courses. Graduate courses are generally 4-credit lecture courses offered simultaneously in the face-to-face and remote modalities. Each of these course types counts as one course toward a faculty member's annual load.

Multi-CRN courses with multiple laboratory sections, each serving at least 30 students, are typically assigned a graduate teaching assistant to support the lab sections and count as a single course. If sufficient graduate TA support is unavailable and the faculty member must teach all sections, these courses are credited as a teaching load of $(N+1)/2$ courses, where N is the number of lab sections (e.g., a lab course with 2 lab sections would count as 1.5 courses).

Instruction in the department is supported by a collaborative teaching model involving faculty, graduate TAs, and undergraduate TAs, whose complementary roles are essential to sustaining instructional quality and manageable workloads. Graduate TAs often assist in coordinating large or complex labs; undergraduate TAs provide critical support in lab courses and student engagement. Teaching load expectations presume continued access to both graduate and undergraduate TA support at levels consistent with historical norms.

Independent Study (EECE 300, 400) and Directed Research (EECE 495) are offered at the discretion of the faculty member and are not included in the standard teaching load. EECE 691 may be counted as one course only after a faculty member has advised four distinct graduate students, each completing at least 10 credits of EECE 691, pending availability of funds for replacement coverage by NTT faculty if required. This threshold may be met within a single academic year or cumulatively over a two-year period; however, a given student may be counted only once toward the threshold, even if advised across multiple years. Because the number of students advised is not predictable at the start of the academic year, credit for teaching EECE 691 may be applied retroactively in the following academic year after the threshold has been reached, at the discretion of the Department Chair.

Faculty with joint appointments between Electrical and Computer Engineering and another academic unit will have their teaching loads prorated according to the percentage of their appointment in each department, as defined by the faculty member's appointment letter.

Modifications to the standard teaching load may occur through approved course releases. These may be granted through provisions in this Department Operating Procedures and Policies document (e.g., for the Graduate Program Director), the CBA (e.g., for the Department Chair), or individual faculty contracts (e.g., for startup-related course release). In academic years when an ABET self-study report must be written, the faculty member leading the effort (typically the Department Chair or the Chair of the Curriculum Committee) will receive a one-course release in recognition of the substantial additional workload. All course releases must be approved by the Dean each year.

Recognizing that not all courses require the same instructional effort, the department strives to assign teaching responsibilities equitably. Course-specific demands, including faculty time spent outside of scheduled class hours, are considered to ensure fairness in workload distribution.

Faculty are also expected to support departmental accreditation processes by collecting, evaluating, and preparing documentation for their assigned courses as part of their regular teaching responsibilities.

H. Summer Teaching Scheduling and Instructor Assignment

This policy does not apply to independent study, directed research, or graduate research courses. Summer session courses do not contribute toward a faculty member's academic year teaching load.

Each winter quarter, the Department Chair shall distribute a list of anticipated summer course offerings and invite current faculty members to express interest in teaching. Summer offerings are developed in consideration of student demand, availability of required courses, and the overall viability of the session. Faculty may also propose additional course offerings, accompanied by a brief written justification. The Chair will convene a meeting with interested faculty to discuss preferences and strive to reach a consensus regarding teaching assignments.

If consensus cannot be achieved, or the number of requests exceeds the number of available courses, assignments shall be determined according to the following priority system:

1. **Tenured and Tenure-Track (TN/TT) Faculty.** Priority is first given to TN/TT faculty members. Among these, faculty who did not teach during the previous summer session shall receive priority over those who did. In cases where this criterion does not differentiate among candidates, preference shall be given to those with greater length of service at Western Washington University.

2. **Non-Tenure Track (NTT) Faculty.** Once all interested TN/TT faculty have been assigned at least one course, remaining teaching opportunities may be allocated to NTT faculty. Among NTT faculty, preference shall be given to individuals with longer service in the department. For those holding senior instructor status (as defined in the CBA), faculty who did not teach in the previous summer shall receive priority over those who did. For NTT faculty without senior instructor status, assignments shall be made based on qualifications and availability.

Length of service is defined as the number of years employed since the employee's date of hire. Faculty members who propose a new course that is subsequently approved for summer offering shall have the right of first refusal to teach that course. Faculty may be assigned to a second summer course only after all interested and qualified faculty have been assigned at least one course.

I. Data Access Policy

In alignment with WWU Information Systems Policy POL-U5100.07, all full-time faculty and staff will have access to department-wide shared folders containing general administrative, instructional, and operational materials. However, folders containing sensitive information, such as student scholarship records, personnel evaluations, and other confidential administrative data, will be restricted to individuals directly involved in those processes. To maintain proper oversight, Non-Tenure Track (NTT) faculty will only be

granted access to specific files necessary for their teaching and service during their appointment, with any additional access requiring department approval.

J. Approval and Amendment of Operating Procedures and Policies

Amendments to the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering Operating Procedures and Policies may be proposed by any voting-eligible faculty or staff member (see Section B.4). The approval process for proposed changes varies depending on the nature of the section being amended. Unless otherwise specified below, amendments are approved by a simple majority of eligible voters who are present during a department meeting with quorum.

Voting Restrictions by Section:

1. **Section B (Voting Rights):** Only those currently eligible to vote on a given matter may vote to change the rules governing voting on that matter.
2. **Section F (Committees):** Only faculty members as defined in the WWU Faculty Constitution, Article II, may vote on changes to the membership or charge of the Curriculum Committee (CC) and Graduate Program Committee (GPC), as these involve curricular matters.
3. **Section G (Teaching Load):** Only tenured and tenure-track (TN/TT) faculty may vote on changes to this section.
4. **Section H (Summer Teaching):** Only faculty members as defined in the WWU Faculty Constitution, Article II, may vote on changes to this section.
5. **Section J (Amendment Process):**
    a. If the proposed amendment changes who may vote on a given section (i.e., lifts or alters a voting restriction), then only the group currently eligible to vote on that section may vote to modify its restriction.
    b. If the proposed amendment is editorial (e.g., clarification, formatting) or general, and does not affect voting rights, it may be approved by a simple majority of those eligible to vote on general departmental business.