

Charter for the Biology Department, GCC

Biology Department Philosophy and Mission:

Biology Department Philosophy:

The GCC Biology department has a long history of academic excellence. As the faculty of the Biology Department, we are committed to thinking innovatively to accomplish our goals as individuals and as the Department, understanding that the optimal results occur when both individual and group goals are attained. We seek to establish and maintain a positive working environment of mutual respect for one another without regard to the roles we play. While we cannot succeed without each other's support, we remain responsible for our individual success. As faculty, we have the right to be heard, respected, and valued by one another, and we share responsibility for making our Department successful and upholding the departments strong academic traditions

We establish this charter to specify the guidelines and principles we will use to facilitate the creation of the Department culture we seek. The charter outlines the process and principles for the development of policies and procedures to govern the operation of the Department.

Our mission is to:

Offer learning opportunities designed to help our students better understand the process and practice of science based on the application of the scientific method and the critical analysis of reliable, repeatable and statistically significant evidence. Our students are provided quality educational experiences that are designed to help them develop a working knowledge of the foundational concepts in various facets of biology, along with the scientific vocabulary and critical thinking skills vital in the progression toward their academic, personal and professional goals and to their active participation as a scientifically literate member of a global society

Our objectives are to:

- Foster an interactive and dynamic educational environment where teaching and learning are our top priorities.
- Work within and outside of the department with colleagues and/or transfer partners to develop and maintain courses and programs that provide seamless, intellectually progressive pathways leading towards academic award outcomes.
- Develop and apply strategies for evidence-based assessment of student learning so as to evaluate whether course competencies and program learning outcomes are being achieved by completion. Use resulting data to monitor and adjust instructional strategies to improve effectiveness and/or evaluate appropriateness of expectations for students at this level. Work with the Biology Instructional Council to refine curriculum accordingly.

- Attract, mentor and retain high caliber faculty who are first and foremost outstanding scientists but also effective teachers who can communicate difficult concepts to a diverse student population in a manner that achieves measurable learning outcomes.
- Maintain a faculty actively involved in their respective disciplines so as to maintain the currency of courses and programs of study in a rapidly changing world.
- Explore pedagogical strategies and resources in an effort to maximize the learning opportunities of a diverse audience without sacrificing academic rigor.
- Work collaboratively with our K-12 partners, GCC recruiters and colleagues in other departments to encourage pre-college students to prepare for and pursue majors/careers in STEM fields.
- Work with other members of the STEM Field of Interest (FOI) team such that our current and prospective students are provided with both strong programs of study in our respective disciplines, but also personalized, accurate and timely support services.
- Help students see relationships between course content and real life applications and encourage them to thoughtfully evaluate evidence and sources in decision-making.
- Using integrative approaches to learning and application-based science to prepare students for educational or career advancement.

Operational Practices:

1. Process for Proposal and Revision of Biology Department Charter¹

1.1 Voting Members and Process:

Consistent with the college's philosophy of shared governance², all Residential faculty members within the Department are considered to be voting members. The Department Chair votes as a regular, voting member of the faculty.

All faculty currently teaching within the Department are to be provided with all charter-related proposals and given adequate time to read and provide comment on approval or non-approval of the charter or amendments thereto. Comments will be collected in a shared document and given to voting members for consideration at least five business days prior to the vote being held.

Charter-related business will be discussed in a Department meeting and must be approved by at least 2/3 of those voting members in attendance (in-person or virtual). At the request of any voting member, the vote will be held by secret ballot, ensuring anonymity.

The current Departmental charter including any approved amendments are provided to the College Faculty Senate annually by October 15 for public posting and inclusion as an Appendix of the College Plan in compliance with the Faculty Agreement and College Plan.

¹ RFA 2024-2025: Article 6.4

² https://www.gccaz.edu/sites/default/files/inline-files/SharedGovernance_p2.pdf

1.2 Routine Charter Review or Amendment

The Biology Department charter will be reviewed by the faculty every three years (starting in the fall semester (or at the start of the term of a new “off-cycle” chair) . Sections in need of further discussion/possible revision will be identified by the start of the spring semester and sub-committees/work groups established as necessary to draft recommended changes by March 1 for departmental consideration and vote. Final approved edits made by the end of spring semester will go into effect the following academic year.

Pursuant to a commitment to shared governance, any faculty member may propose an amendment to the charter at any time during the period of accountability. A written motion via electronic mail must be submitted to members of the faculty, describing the nature of the amendment and documenting its need. The voting process will be as described in section 1.1. Unless otherwise specified, an amendment, once approved by the voting members and GCC Faculty Senate, will be enacted effective immediately. Proposals that are not approved may be revised and submitted for reconsideration.

1.3 Updating Charter to Assure Compliance:

In the event that the Faculty Agreement and/or the College Plan are revised, Department Charters must be updated as necessary to remain in compliance. The Chair may revise a specific section of the document to comply with District and College policies at any time. Such revisions will be distributed to the faculty as information items.

* 2. Biology Department Chair Duties³:

Duties That Cannot Be Delegated (60%)	Duties That Can Be Delegated (40%)
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Plan, manage, and oversee the Department budget2. Review and provide final approval for the selection and evaluation of Adjunct Faculty in accordance with current Human Resources procedures3. Review and provide final Department-level approval for Department reports (e.g., annual reports, staffing requests, program reviews, assessment reports)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Plan, manage, and oversee the Departmental class schedule subject to final approval by the VPAA or designee2. Recruit, review and provide final hiring recommendations for the selection of Adjunct Faculty3. Participate as a representative for the Department on Leadership Councils4. Supervise and support all Faculty5. Chair Residential Faculty and/or full-time staff search committees

³ RFA 2024-2025: Article 7.2.4

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Facilitate Department meetings 5. Address, manage and work to resolve conflicts 6. Manage and work to resolve formally registered student concerns 7. Identify, select, and evaluate other supervisory and non-supervisory roles in accordance with procedures set forth in the College Plan 8. Communicate College and District objectives, policies, and procedures to Department faculty and staff and ensure adherence. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Evaluate Probationary Residential Faculty in accordance with the Faculty Agreement 7. Evaluate Adjunct Faculty 8. Supervise, support, and evaluate staff and temporary employees, according to the Staff Policy Manual 9. Perform supervisory duties including evening and summer supervision 10. Plan, manage and oversee program-specific budgets and/or grant funds 11. Oversee occupational programs (e.g., supervise faculty and staff, administer Advisory Council meetings, mentor current and prospective students) 12. Coordinate completion of required program reports (e.g., program reviews, program assessment, reports to granting agencies)
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*** 3. Process of Identifying and Delegating Biology Department Leadership Roles⁴:**

The Biology Department recognizes that Department and College-level issues, initiatives, and challenges are dynamic and that the needs of each Department Chair are unique and subject to change depending on circumstances. Accordingly, the GCC Biology Department will allow each Chair to determine which, if any, delegable duties they choose to delegate and to whom; they may also change such distribution of duties on a semester-by-semester basis as needed. Faculty are encouraged to volunteer for these roles and/or individuals may be asked to fulfill these responsibilities. Individuals serving in a delegable role will be offered regular feedback as needed and/or requested. The Chair may revoke delegated duties each semester. The timeline for the revocation will be decided in consultation with the department’s Dean of Instruction and/or GCC Human Resources.

The following is a list of leadership roles typically filled by members of the Biology Department and their usual scope of responsibilities.

⁴ RFA 2024-2025: Article 7.3

- **Evening supervisors/Assistant Department Chairs**
 - Evaluate newly hired adjunct faculty and provide feedback and support to optimize the quality of instruction
 - Make recommendations re: rehire
 - Fill in as proxy for the chair at events and committee/council meetings
 - In the Chair's absence, manage day to day tasks requiring immediate attention (e.g., student grievances, time sensitive approvals, etc.)
 - Review written applications of potential adjunct faculty and make recommendations on whom to interview; attend microteaches and make recommendations on hiring and rehiring decisions

- **Course Coordinators** - Assigned based on teaching responsibilities as well as academic background and experience. The course coordinator works within a framework of collaboration, and communication to best ensure a high quality educational environment for students and consistent learning outcomes while continuing to acknowledge each faculty member's individuality and academic freedom.
 - Plan common lab schedule for the semester; communicate it to all faculty teaching the course (residential and adjunct) as well as to the lab supervisor before the start of term
 - Work with the lab supervisor to identify any specially ordered supplies needed and their requisite delivery dates.
 - Work with the lab supervisor to keep laboratory prep sheets up to date and communicate any changes that might be needed for a lab set-up.
 - Work with other faculty to make decisions re: textbook requirements/ recommendations; communicate that information to the department secretary and Chair by the deadline for final drafts of class schedule.
 - Work with other faculty to develop a common course assessment according to designated rotation schedule and shared learning outcomes and to encourage participation of all faculty
 - Provide course development assistance to newly hired adjuncts including shared instructional resources (e.g., Canvas course shell, syllabi, sample exams/quizzes, assignments, assignments, grading rubrics, Powerpoint slides, videos), encouragement to attend classes of "master teachers," and mentorship
 - Attend microteaches of applicants for adjunct positions in their discipline; make recommendations on hiring and rehiring decisions

- **Instructional Council (IC) Representative/Alternates**
 - Engage in professional development designed to familiarize representatives with the curricular process and their role and responsibilities
 - Represent the department at Biology IC meetings (~2x year) as a voting member (in person or via alternate/proxy/designee)
 - Participate in online discussions of curricular matters
 - Serve as liaison between college/department and IC to facilitate two way communication
 - Actively involve the department in the development of new curriculum as well as course/program modifications/updates; work to maintain currency and relevance of content

- Participate on relevant curricular design and development teams (aka “mapping teams”) or solicit participation of others such that discipline/department has a “voice” in that process
 - Potentially take on leadership responsibilities as IC chair and/or statewide Articulation Task Force (ATF) representative. The latter represents the district as annual discipline-specific meetings to discuss and coordinate articulation issues with state universities and other community colleges.
- **e-Course Coordinator**
 - Actively participate in bimonthly e-Course committee meetings (committee assignment) and CTLE training opportunities
 - Regularly communicate recommendations, changes, training opportunities and conferences related to pedagogy in online modalities (synchronous/asynchronous/live online/hy-flex) to all members of the department
 - Assist in compilation/organization/cataloging/curation of repositories of online resources [e.g., videos, lab exercises, case studies, etc.]
 - Refer faculty to appropriate contacts and resources
 - Understand the HLC definitions and requirements of online, hybrid, and correspondence courses. Help faculty understand these requirements.
 - Work with course coordinators to ensure online components of courses are in line with policies stated in section eight of the department charter.
- **Department Assessment Coordinator (DAC) (1.5 load, funded by College)**
 - Actively participate in DAC meetings
 - Regularly hold assessment discussions at departmental meetings, sharing information about best practices, assessment events, and data analytics in an effort to cultivate an assessment-driven culture
 - Coordinate BIO course assessment initiative by helping faculty develop meaningful course assessment and engage in evidence-based reflective practice, supporting course leads in efforts to ensure participation in common course assessment and report outcomes, and managing the common course assessment cycle.
 - Develop and maintain the Department Assessment Plan.
 - Encourage faculty participation in institutional learning outcome (ILO) assessment and serve as a resource to program directors and club advisors in their assessment reporting.
- **Occupational Program Director(s) (OPD) (load negotiated with administration depending on scope of responsibilities; funded by the College).**
 - Work with other faculty and STEM Connect team to help recruit, advise, mentor and retain students for whose academic and professional goals align with those of the program
 - Build relationships with business and industry leaders so as to increase the profile of GCC’s program among potential employers, ensure the currency of the curriculum and workforce readiness of program graduates and to create opportunities for student internship experiences

- Build relationships with transfer institutions so as to enable students to progress as seamlessly as possible from CTE programs to bachelors degrees and beyond.
- Participate in OPD meetings called by the Dean of Career and Technical Education
- Engage in regular evidence-based program review so as to enable the department and college to make informed decisions re: the program's viability and sustainability

*** 4. Course Assignments⁵:**

The department chair and faculty members determine teaching assignments in consultation with academic administration and with the approval of the College president.

Instructional responsibilities depend on the faculty member's academic background and professional expertise as they relate to departmental needs. The latter is projected and adjusted based on analysis of previous semesters offerings/enrollment patterns, student-demand, and efforts to avoid "bottlenecks" in student progression through programmatic pathways.

The department chair is responsible for scheduling but may delegate some of these duties. Every effort is made to afford residential faculty their preferred schedule but a primary consideration must be to offer classes on days/times and in locations/modalities that best serve students, the department and the college as a collective whole. Scheduling is also constrained by room availability and classroom capacities. In cases of non-adjustable scheduling conflict, final decisions will be made by the department chair based on what is best for students and prioritized by seniority as outlined in the RFA

New adjunct faculty will be hired and assigned to unstaffed classes upon the recommendation of assistant chairs, course coordinators and/or other faculty members teaching the same course who have evaluated his/her preparation and experience.

Faculty are responsible for proofing their own classes (including meeting pattern, modality, and course fees) in SIS before they are opened for enrollment. Book requirements should also be verified.

*** 5. Book Selection:**

The ability to comprehend written/illustrated descriptions of scientific concepts is a core value of the department and the college and thus textbooks are an important component of the Biology department's courses. However, the faculty recognizes that the high cost of these materials can be a financial hardship for students so everything possible will be done to keep the cost of these materials as low as possible without compromising significantly on instructional value. Low cost/no cost options include Open Educational Resource (OER) textbooks, Inclusive Access to eText packages, and offering a choice of texts (including earlier editions).

⁵ RFA 2024-2025: Article 5.5

In accordance with the RFA's policies on shared Academic Freedom⁶, all faculty teaching the same course will work together to review texts and identify the best options for each course. Course fees are assigned commensurate with any instructional materials (e.g., lab supplies, textbook, online lab simulations) required by the instructor. Consequently if all faculty teaching a course have not selected the same student resources, the course fees charged may vary from section to section depending on their relative costs.

6. Other Departmental Business Practices¶

6.1 Biology Department Meetings⁷:

The residential faculty and staff of the Biology Department meet 3-4 times per semester (typically monthly) as a collective group.

- The first meeting of each semester occurs during the week of accountability
- Meeting days and times for subsequent meetings for the rest of the semester are agreed upon at that meeting and invitations are sent to all faculty.
- Attendance and participation of residential faculty and full-time staff are expected. Those unable to attend for personal reasons need to report a two hour absence.
- The Chair shall prepare and distribute a tentative agenda to all members of the department prior to the meeting with sufficient time for others to request that items be included on the meeting agenda.
- The department secretary takes minutes, circulates them to all faculty for edits and approval, and stores them in a shared folder.

6.2→Biology Department Committees:

- It will be necessary at times to develop committees to perform relatively short-term tasks. Committees normally should not be in existence for more than one year.
- These committees may consist of residential faculty, adjunct faculty and/or staff members, depending on the purposes of the committee.

6.3→Biology Department Chair Election Process⁸:

- Department chairs are nominated and elected as per the process outlined in the College Plan
- In the event that more than one faculty member is nominated to serve in the chair role, candidates may be asked to address common questions/prompts, submitted by other faculty or a designated work team thereof, in either a written statement and/or as part of a departmental forum.

⁶ RFA 2024-2025: Article 3.1

⁷ RFA 2024-2025: Article 6.4

⁸ RFA 2024-2024: Article 7.2

7. Adjunct Rights and Support

7.1 Adjunct Support⁹:

Adjunct faculty in the Biology Department are guided by course coordinators in order to ensure consistent course structure (including lab schedule) and learning outcomes. Course coordinators and/or evening supervisors and/or department chair provide feedback, mentorship and support to adjunct faculty based on classroom observations, student and peer evaluations and as requested by the individual.

7.2 Process for Reappointment of Biology Department Adjunct Faculty¹⁰:

Adjunct faculty are “at will” employees. Rehiring is dependent on alignment of adjuncts’ areas of expertise and instructional experience and the department’s needs [for particular courses and modalities/meeting patterns]. It is also based on content knowledge, quality of instruction, commitment to students [as measured by communication, encouragement and support of persistence], adherence to departmental guidelines/expectations and potential for/evidence of professional development.

8. Expectations of Biology Department Faculty¹¹

Biology department faculty are expected to meet their professional and institutional commitments at the College and within the Department. Faculty should familiarize themselves with the Faculty Agreement, the College Plan, the Department Charter, and government mandated laboratory safety regulations to ensure compliance with all policies and procedures.

The Biology Department expects the following of its faculty.

1. Develop, maintain, and deliver course materials. Evaluate student performance through frequent formative and summative assessments, and adjust teaching approaches as necessary.
2. → Consistent with the RFA’s policies¹² and the college’s commitment to shared governance¹³, work with all colleagues teaching the same course as a member of a collaborative team with common goals.¹⁴ While still recognizing the individuality of each person’s style of teaching and faculty’s academic freedom, mastery of the same course competencies is expected for all sections. Unless working on a special project, all faculty follow the same lab schedule and manual, and adhere to the same relative point distribution (including maximum extra credit and policies regarding dropping exam scores) for lecture and lab. Faculty are encouraged to discuss their pedagogical strategies, the nature of their exams and quizzes, and to share assignments they have developed with colleagues.

⁹ RFA 2024-2025: Article 6.4

¹⁰ RFA 2024-2025: Article 5.5

¹¹ RFA 2024-2025: Article 6.4

¹² RFA 2024-2025: Article 3.1

¹³ https://www.gccaz.edu/sites/default/files/inline-files/SharedGovernance_p2.pdf

¹⁴ RFA 2024-2025: Article 3.1

3. The lecture and laboratory experience of all students should be equitable and students held to the same level of accountability regardless of modality. Faculty recognize that hands-on lab experiences are a critical part of a student's learning experience that is difficult to simulate with written exercises or video/computer/online simulations. Faculty are committed to having labs for all 200-level courses as well as courses for majors (BIO181 and 182) scheduled with a weekly hands-on and in-person component.
4. Participate in common course level assessment activities as a tool to inform continuous instructional development efforts and improve learning outcomes. Report results to course and/or departmental assessment coordinator. Engage in discussions related to optimizing students' preparation for sequential courses
5. Assess Institutional Learning Outcome(s) (ILOs) in each course per rubrics provided by the college in Canvas.
6. Participate in Program Assessment of all Associates degrees related to Biological Sciences and use resulting data to modify instruction, reexamine relationship between a course and a given learning outcome and/or work with the Instructional Council to collaborate on formal curricular change in an effort to improve student success and/or adjust expectation while still maintaining academic rigor.
7. Be active participants as committee members, student mentors/advocates, and/or in whatever other capacity they can render the best service in the affairs of the Department, the College, and the District.
8. Adherence to the Professional Code of Ethics defined in Section 5.1 of the Faculty Agreement
9. Adherence to the Standards of Residential Faculty Accountability / Professional Responsibilities in Section 5.2 of the Faculty Agreement

Approved by majority of voting members (Residential Faculty) by anonymous electronic ballot, October 2, 2024