

# GUIDE TO UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE (HSC) ELECTIONS

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## Introduction

All UW employees are represented by an organizational health and safety committee. There are 10 organizational health and safety committees (HSCs) representing the University of Washington (UW). Employees in all UW departments, divisions, campuses, schools, and organizations are represented by the organizational HSC that serves their functional area. These HSCs are referred to by number, as well as by name. Units and departments and their respective organizational committees are listed on the Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) [Health and Safety Committees](#) webpage at [www.ehs.washington.edu/workplace/health-and-safety-committees](http://www.ehs.washington.edu/workplace/health-and-safety-committees).

Each organizational HSC reports to an executive sponsor. The senior director of Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S), as advised by the executive sponsors, determines the number of organizational HSCs in compliance with Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) rules and variances.

Each organizational health and safety committee selects two representatives from its membership to serve on the University-Wide Health and Safety Committee (U-Wide). At least one of these two must be an elected member. The U-Wide reports to and advises the EH&S senior director.

<https://www.washington.edu/admin/rules/policies/APS/10.11.html>, "UW Health and Safety Committees" ([www.washington.edu/admin/rules/policies/APS/10.11.html](http://www.washington.edu/admin/rules/policies/APS/10.11.html)), defines the scope, organization, and compliance responsibility of organizational health and safety committees at the University. Each University employee must have an opportunity to nominate and to vote during the organizational health and safety committee elections.

The organizational health and safety committees fulfill the requirements of Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 296-800-130. Therefore, the state requirements for selecting committee members are not required for departmental safety "teams" or other University committees that address safety concerns.

## Composition of an organizational health and safety committee

Any employee is eligible to serve on an organizational health and safety committee. Committee members consist of elected representatives, employer-appointed representatives, and union representatives. The total number of appointed representatives who can vote must not exceed the total number of elected members. This rule is referred to as "balance." A committee may also include ex-officio members; these members do not vote and do not affect the quorum or balance.

### Size

The number of members on an organizational health and safety committee is determined by the executive sponsor to whom the committee reports, with advice from the committee and EH&S. The minimum membership is five.

### Term length

All health and safety committee members serve for two-year terms unless circumstances make it impossible to complete the term. The two-year term length is covered in an Amended Permanent Variance with L&I, FN10200, dated January 9, 2008. Each two-year term begins in January of each even numbered year.

### **Diversity, equity, and inclusion**

HSC elections and employer appointments must support diversity, equity, and inclusion principles of integrity, excellence, collaboration, innovation, and respect. Membership should represent different and unique identities, characteristics, experiences, and perspectives. Members should be supported with the access, resources, and opportunities they need to succeed, especially those who are underrepresented or have been historically disadvantaged. Elections should have a welcoming culture in which differences are celebrated, and everyone is valued and respected.

Ex-officio members may fill gaps in perspective or experience among elected and appointed representatives to address issues in diverse representation and matters specific to equity and inclusion. A proxy can be selected to address diversity in the committee membership; furthermore, the proxy role is a helpful path to eventual membership.

### **Elected representatives**

Individuals are nominated and elected in a process that includes all University staff, faculty, temporary, hourly, and student employees. All employees represented by a health and safety committee must be given an opportunity to nominate and vote for candidates. Organizational health and safety committees may generate nominations for their election through an internal process and make a general call for nominations. Elected representatives are voting members of the HSC.

### **Employer appointments**

Employer appointments may be made by either the executive sponsor or by the head of an organizational unit or department. The executive sponsor's office and organizational units or departments will notify the committee election coordinator, committee chair, and EH&S of the appointee's names by December 1.

Executive sponsor appointees typically represent the sponsor and organizational management. Appointees representing organizational units and departments are UW employees assigned responsibilities for unit/department safety, building coordinators, or other UW employees who are knowledgeable about and interested in safety. These appointees have historically served very well in attending meetings regularly and in representing their units and departments in keeping their executives apprised of safety activities. Employer appointed members are voting members of the HSC.

### **Union representatives**

A union may be represented on a health and safety committee, given the following conditions:

1. The union's bargaining agreement/contract with the University specifically provides for representation on a health and safety committee.

2. The union has members either employed by or performing services for units or departments within the same health and safety committee.

During the election process, EH&S will ask the UW Labor Relations Office to send letters to unions inviting them to participate in the new term. Unions are responsible for choosing their representatives. Union representatives are always considered “elected” members of the organizational health and safety committee and participate fully in committee functioning, regardless of how they were selected by the union. Union representatives are voting members of the HSC.

If a union chooses to send a representative to an organizational health and safety committee, they must inform the Labor Relations Office and EH&S in writing by December 1 of the election year.

EH&S contact information is shown at the end of this guide.

### **Ex-officio representatives**

Ex-officio members serving on organizational health and safety committees represent departments or organizations that can contribute to health and safety discussions due to their knowledge or position at the University. They are non-voting members and do not affect the quorum or balance of the committee.

### **Proxies**

Members and executive sponsors of the committee may establish a proxy to attend one or two meetings when a committee member is unable to attend. When selecting a proxy ensure the individual is an employee and served by the same health and safety committee. Ideally they would be the recipient of the second-highest number of votes in the last health and safety committee election.

## **Election Responsibilities**

### **HSC election coordinator**

Each health and safety committee will select an election coordinator who accepts responsibility for the committee’s timely completion of the election and who will communicate with EH&S and the executive sponsor per the timeline shown in appendix 1. The HSC election coordinator may be part of the committee or from outside of the committee. The election coordinator can be running for election if a second person who is not running in the election can oversee the election results. Each health and safety committee should notify EH&S of their election coordinator by August 1 of the election year. The responsibilities of the election coordinator are as follows:

1. Verify with the executive sponsor the departments represented by the organizational health and safety committee.
2. Request current letters of appointment from the executive sponsor for the upcoming term.
3. Develop a communications plan that includes specific methods, channels, and a

timeline for communicating to *every individual* in each department represented by the health and safety committee. Communications must include:

- a. Sending out a call for committee member nominations
- b. Verifying willingness of nominees to participate in the election
- c. Sending out ballots for voting
- d. Tallying votes and providing results to represented departments, EH&S, and executive sponsor

## **EH&S**

EH&S assists each health and safety committee throughout the election year. EH&S responsibilities include:

1. EH&S senior director sends letter to Health and Safety Committee executive sponsors.
2. Publish the list of election coordinators on its website.
3. Ask the UW Labor Relations Office to invite authorized unions to choose representatives for the new term.
4. Generally, promote the election process through timely announcements for nominations and elections in media such as the UW Today and EH&S newsletter. These announcements alert employees to look for specific election information from their own committee and/or department.
5. Provide guidance to election coordinators and ensure the election process is on track for all health and safety committee.
6. Announce election results in the UW Today and EH&S newsletter in late December following the elections.
7. Train committee members at the January meeting at the beginning of the new term.

## **Executive sponsors**

Executive sponsors ensure that their health and safety committee complete the election process. Additional responsibilities include:

1. Assist the committee, if needed, in selecting their election coordinator.
2. Assure that all staff, faculty, temporary, hourly, and student employees had the opportunity to participate in the nomination and election by helping the election coordinator to identify all departments and employees within the committee's area of responsibility.
3. Provide letters of appointment to the election coordinator. The committee chair or election coordinator may prepare letters for the executive sponsor.
4. Assure that all aspects of the election are completed by December 1 per the timeline shown in Appendix 1.

## Election Process

All employees represented by the health and safety committee must be notified of the upcoming election by providing an opportunity for nominations. Health and safety committees and executive sponsors can determine if employees can nominate others outside their department/organization but within the same health and safety committee.

Committee members are encouraged to review their nomination and election process for potential diverse representation, access, and opportunity barriers. Current members are encouraged to build a sense of community by seeking out and mentoring new members who might not otherwise volunteer for this work but could make meaningful contributions given their varied backgrounds, interests, and areas of expertise.

Once nominees are determined for the ballot(s), the election can be held. A minimum of one week should be allowed for the nomination period, and a minimum of one week for the election period. A suggested timeline for the election process can be found in [Appendix I](#).

### Contacting UW employees for nominations

Any method or combination of methods may be used (e-mail, paper ballots, flyers, meetings, etc.) to contact employees. Establish a system of contacting employees with limited access to computers, seasonal employment, limited English proficiency, or other barriers to full participation. Choose a notification method that is appropriate for the employees represented by the health and safety committee.

Distribution lists take time to develop; therefore, EH&S recommends beginning early on this process. It is possible that distributions lists are available from the office of the health and safety committee executive sponsor.

In addition, a notice must be posted on the Safety Bulletin Board. If the Health & Safety Committee has a website the notice(s) should be posted in both locations.

The rules below offer general guidance for the health and safety committee nominations:

1. Individuals may nominate themselves and vote for themselves.
2. Managers and supervisors are *not* restricted from being nominated and elected.
3. UW employees may nominate a potential candidate who is also covered by the same health and safety committee.
4. Election coordinators should contact potential candidates to determine if they are willing to run for election and serve on the committee. Election coordinators should also confirm that the person's organization belongs with the specific committee who is seeking nominations. Candidates should respond in writing/email that they are willing to run in the election and serve on the committee. Save this verification with election documentation.
5. A candidate may run unopposed but must receive a least one vote to win.
6. An individual may serve multiple terms.

7. Members who are appointed and elected must choose the status they prefer.

### **Election ballots**

Voter instructions should be provided within the ballot. All candidate names should be listed with their home department (e.g., John Lee, Financial Services). A committee can decide if a separate election should be held for each department/organization in the group or one election across all departments/organizations. An election method may be reviewed and changed by committee vote before an election.

Ensure the election method will accommodate all employees, including those working off site or with limited access to computers. Elections can be online, but precautions must be taken to ensure eligible voters vote only once. Paper ballots must be provided to locations where employees who are represented by the HSC work with limited computer access.

Election coordinators should record who received the second or third most votes, as these individuals may be asked to replace the person with the most votes if they are no longer able to attend meetings. They may also be asked to serve as a proxy when the elected member is occasionally unable to attend a meeting.

The election coordinator should share election results with EH&S in writing including how the election was done, who won, and who came in second, third, etc.

### **Documentation**

L&I and the University agreed to a regulatory variance thereby allowing a two-year term and 10 health and safety committees (rather than a 1-year term for one health and safety committee per employer as stated in the regulations). Nominations and ballot documentation for each HSC must be kept for at least two years, which includes the following:

1. Announcements about nominations with distribution lists
2. Nominations received and verification of their acceptance of the nomination
3. Sample ballots, voting/balloting instructions, and paper ballots or other electronic results
4. Election result postings
5. The location for election records should be approved by the executive sponsor to whom the organizational health and safety committee reports.

### **Changes in membership**

If an *elected* member must stop participating on a committee, that member must be replaced prior to the next scheduled meeting by:

1. Sequentially asking the next runner-up from the previous election if they would like to complete the term, *or*
2. Conducting a replacement election in that member's department or organization to fill the vacancy.



All roster changes made during the term should be communicated promptly to the executive sponsor, committee chair, and EH&S.

## **U-Wide Health and Safety Committee**

The University-Wide (U-Wide) Health and Safety Committee is comprised of member representation from organizational health and safety committees, unions, the Faculty Senate, the Associated Students of the University of Washington, and any other organizations that would contribute to discussions of health and safety at the University. The U-Wide reports to and advises the EH&S senior director.

### **Health and safety committee representation**

At the beginning of a new two-year term, each organizational health and safety committee selects a chair and a co-chair. The chair and one other selected committee member will attend the U-Wide meeting and serve as voting U-Wide members. Either the chair or the other selected committee member must be an elected member of the organizational health and safety committee. The selection of the member who will attend U-Wide can be by majority vote of the committee members.

### **Union representation**

A maximum of one representative from each union may serve as a voting member on the U-Wide. These representatives must be serving on an organizational health and safety committee, as well.

### **Faculty Senate representative**

The Faculty Senate may elect one person to represent that body as a voting member on the U-Wide.

### **Associated Students of University of the Washington representative**

The president of the Associated Students of the University of Washington (ASUW) may elect one person to represent that body as a voting member of the U-Wide.

### **Ex-officio**

EH&S may invite additional employees to serve on the U-wide as ex-officio members if they can contribute to health and safety discussions with their knowledge or position at the University. They are non-voting members and do not affect the quorum or balance of the committee.

## **Contacts**

If you have any questions or if you wish to submit election materials, please contact EH&S, Occupational Safety and Health, Accident Prevention Team at 206.543.7388, [ehsdept@uw.edu](mailto:ehsdept@uw.edu), or Box 354400.

## Appendix I: Recommended Timeline - Health & Safety Committee Elections

Month	July				August				September				October				November			
Week	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Choose an election coordinator	█	█	█																	
Notify EH&S the name and contact information of election coordinator			█	█	█															
Work with executive sponsor to review committee organization and verify units				█	█	█														
Verify organizational contact lists with office of executive sponsor					█	█	█													
Open nominations with e-mail, paper copy, or online tool. Allow 1-3 weeks for entries.						█	█	█												
Verify willingness of nominees							█	█	█	█										
Solicit candidates if none nominated							█	█	█	█										
Prepare ballot - either paper or website.									█	█	█	█								
Begin election - allow 1-2 weeks										█	█	█	█							
Tally ballots													█	█	█					
Contact all nominees														█	█	█	█			
Announce election results and send election results to EH&S by December 1																	█	█	█	█