

What TIME on Standing Committee nominations date do we open submissions?

April 18 was the opening DATE for standing committee nominations. Announcements about the April 18th starting date did not give a TIME for when nominations would be accepted. 82 faculty submitted their names on April 18 with 9 right after midnight and the rest (89%) after the start of business hours (7:30 AM).

The Senate President assumed that we would go with the start of business hours on April 18 which is after sunrise, a time when humans have associated with the start of a new day for many millennia at least. However, some faculty interpreted the start time to be right after the stroke of midnight which is in the middle of the night that began the previous date of April 17. Of course, electricity has enabled some people to be “night owls” and to continue their work from the previous day into the predawn hours (for example, this was drafted at 3 AM), so some segments of modern society have adopted midnight as the start of the day for non-financial transactions. Banks, other financial institutions, government agencies, many businesses, etc. would say that their day begins sometime after sunrise and will ignore requests made before their day begins.

All this is to say that the “simplest, literal” interpretation of when (what TIME) we should say is the start of committee membership nominations is open to debate and it is up to the Senate body to decide what time we should honor as the time for the opening of committee requests. Should it be the start of business hours which is 7:30 am for those teaching early classes and 8 am for non-teaching employees or should it be right after the stroke of midnight?

This time factor significantly affects the membership of one committee and an argument can be made by both sides of the start time question that not agreeing with their assumption will be unfair because no time was given in the announcements about the April 18 start time. A majority of the E-board recommends that the Senate chooses midnight as the start time while a minority of the E-board recommends what 89% of the April 18 submitters assumed.

There is no one right answer.

By the way, do note that this explanation of the issue was written by an astronomy instructor and astronomy has a “sidereal day” measured from successive passages of a star across an observer’s meridian and “solar day” measured from successive passage of the sun across an observer’s meridian (which is near noon, not midnight), so the author just has to laugh when people say there is a simple definition of a day or the start of a day.