
Reorganization of the Faculty Handbook: Focus on Tenure, Promotion, and Faculty Grievance Procedure

Committee on Governance

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The Motion.....

The Committee on Governance (COG) recommends and we move that the reorganized Faculty Handbook, as distributed to the WPI Faculty, be adopted in place of the current Faculty Handbook (updated as of July 1, 2022).

What could be simpler??!!

The Need.....

- The Good News:

- The WPI Faculty Handbook has always been updated regularly to include the most recent changes approved by the Faculty.
- The current version (July 1, 2022) of the Handbook reflects all such changes through May 2022.

- The Bad News:

- Historically, **additions** to the Handbook have been made logically but in **piecemeal fashion** that **could not** be synthesized at every step.
- As WPI has become more complex, the need to make continuous changes and additions to the Faculty Handbook has increased dramatically....
- The result is that the current Faculty Handbook is up-to-date but nearly impossible to navigate and difficult to interpret.
- It now resembles a **Christmas tree** with ornaments that have been hung since 1968!



- The Goal: **Reorganization** rather than wholesale revisions.

Overview

G	T
A	P
	F

- **Emphasis on Reorganizing and Recombining for Improved Clarity and Usability**
 - Combining Sections
 - Reorganizing Within Sections
 - Extracting Elements from Different Sections and Combining into New Sections and Subsections
 - Involves weaving together related but separated pieces of information
 - Subsections, paragraphs, sentences, parts of sentences,...

Overview

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- **Resulted in Five Reorganized and Recombined Full Coherent Chapters:**

Governance	(Separated From Tenure, Promotion, Grievance and Conduct Process) Constitution: Sections One to Six Bylaws One to Ten (plus technical Appendix)
Academic Appointments	(Separated from Tenure and Promotion)
Tenure	(Separated from Academic Appointments, Governance)
Promotion	(Separated from Governance, Academic Appointments)
Faculty Grievance Procedure	(Extracted from Governance)

Chapter Three Overview: Tenure

CONTENTS IN THE REORGANIZED HANDBOOK

SECTION 1

Eligibility and Conditions for Tenure, Probationary Reviews, and Mandatory Reviews

SECTION 2

The Tenure Clock

- a. Starting and Running the Tenure Clock
- b. Stopping the Tenure Clock
- c. Early Tenure Review Prior to the Scheduled Tenure Review

SECTION 3

The Tenure Criteria

- a. Tenure Criteria for Associate and (full) Professors
- b. Tenure Criteria for Associate and (full) Professors
- c. Guidance for Documenting and Assessing Activities Toward Tenure for Professors of Teaching

SECTION 4

Department Tenure Committees

SECTION 5

Joint Tenure Committees

SECTION 6

Joint Tenure Committees for Interdisciplinary Candidates

SECTION 7

Tenure Procedures

- a. General Overview
- b. Procedures for Tenure Reviews, Recommendations, Final Decisions, and Appeals

FINAL LOCATION IN THE REORGANIZED HANDBOOK

SECTION 1

**Eligibility and Conditions for Tenure,
Probationary Reviews,
and Mandatory Reviews**

Part One: Bylaw One
Membership, Duties, Responsibilities of the Standing Committees of the Faculty

Section V: Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom

Part One: Appendix A

Report of the Ad Hoc Tenure Committee

Section A: General Procedural Matters

Subsection 1: Applicability

Subsection 2: Limitations on time in service for probationary appointments

Part One: Appendix A

Report of the Ad Hoc Tenure Committee

Section B: Procedure for Granting Tenure

Subsection 1: Policy

Part Two: Section 1

Policies Regarding the Status of Faculty

Section A: Academic Freedom and Tenure

Subsection: Tenure

- Eligibility and Conditions for Tenure

Part Two: Section 1

Policies Regarding the Status of Faculty

Section B: Appointments and Reappointments of Tenure-Track Faculty

Subsection 1: Initial Appointment

Part Two: Section 1

Policies Regarding the Status of Faculty

Section D.3: Promotion

Subsection 1: Eligibility and Time in Rank for Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty

Chapter Three – Tenure: Contents and Mapping

FINAL LOCATION IN THE REORGANIZED HANDBOOK

SECTION 1

Eligibility and Conditions for Tenure,
Probationary Reviews,
and Mandatory Reviews

LOCATION IN THE CURRENT HANDBOOK FROM WHERE REORGANIZED TEXT COMES

Part One: Bylaw One
Membership, Duties, Responsibilities of the Standing Committees of the Faculty

Section V: Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom

Part One: Appendix A
Report of the Ad Hoc Tenure Committee

Section A: General Procedural Matters

Subsection 1: Applicability

Subsection 2: Limitations on time in service for probationary appointments

Part One: Appendix A
Report of the Ad Hoc Tenure Committee

Section B: Procedure for Granting Tenure

Subsection 1: Policy

Part Two: Section 1
Policies Regarding the Status of Faculty

Section A: Academic Freedom and Tenure

Subsection: Tenure

- *Eligibility and Conditions for Tenure*

Part Two: Section 1
Policies Regarding the Status of Faculty

Section B: Appointments and Reappointments of Tenure-Track Faculty

Subsection 1: Initial Appointment

Part Two: Section 1
Policies Regarding the Status of Faculty

Section D.3: Promotion

Subsection 1: Eligibility and Time in Rank for Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty

Chapter Three – Tenure: Contents and Mapping

FINAL LOCATION IN THE REORGANIZED HANDBOOK

SECTION 2

The Tenure Clock

- a. Starting and Running the Tenure Clock
- b. Stopping the Tenure Clock
- c. Early Tenure Review Prior to the Scheduled Tenure Review

SECTION 3

The Tenure Criteria

- a. Tenure Criteria for Associate and (full) Professors
- b. Tenure Criteria for Associate and (full) Professors
- c. Guidance for Documenting and Assessing Activities Toward Tenure for Professors of Teaching

LOCATION IN THE CURRENT HANDBOOK FROM WHERE REORGANIZED TEXT COMES

Part One: Appendix A

Report of the Ad Hoc Tenure Committee

Section A: General Procedural Matters

Subsection 2: Limitations on time in service for probationary appointments

Part One: Appendix A

Report of the Ad Hoc Tenure Committee

Section D: Procedural Amendments

Part Two: Section 1

Policies Regarding the Status of Faculty

Section A: Academic Freedom and Tenure

Subsection: Stopping the Tenure Clock

- *New Child Provision*
- *Unpaid Leaves and Part-time Employment*
- *Effect on Tenure Review*

Part Two: Section 1

Policies Regarding the Status of Faculty

Section A: Academic Freedom and Tenure

Subsection: Tenure

- *Tenure Criteria for Assoc. and full Professor*
- *Tenure Criteria for Assoc. and full Professors of Teaching*
- *Guidance for Documenting and Assessing Activities Toward Tenure for Professors of Teaching*

Chapter Three – Tenure: Contents and Mapping

FINAL LOCATION IN THE REORGANIZED HANDBOOK

SECTION 2

The Tenure Clock

- a. Starting and Running the Tenure Clock
- b. Stopping the Tenure Clock
- c. Early Tenure Review Prior to the Scheduled Tenure Review

SECTION 3

The Tenure Criteria

- a. Tenure Criteria for Associate and (full) Professors
- b. Tenure Criteria for Associate and (full) Professors
- c. Guidance for Documenting and Assessing Activities Toward Tenure for Professors of Teaching

LOCATION IN THE CURRENT HANDBOOK FROM WHERE REORGANIZED TEXT COMES

Part One: Appendix A

Report of the Ad Hoc Tenure Committee

Section A: General Procedural Matters

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Part Two: Section 1

Policies Regarding the Status of Faculty

Section A: Academic Freedom and Tenure

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- *New Child Provision*
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Part Two: Section 1

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Section A: Academic Freedom and Tenure

Subsection: Tenure

- *Tenure Criteria for Assoc. and full Professor*
- *Tenure Criteria for Assoc. and full Professors of Teaching*
- *Guidance for Documenting and Assessing Activities Toward Tenure for Professors of Teaching*

Chapter Three – Tenure: Contents and Mapping

FINAL LOCATION IN THE REORGANIZED HANDBOOK

SECTION 4

Department Tenure Committees

SECTION 5

Joint Tenure Committees

LOCATION IN THE CURRENT HANDBOOK FROM WHERE REORGANIZED TEXT COMES

Part One: Bylaw One
Membership, Duties, Responsibilities of the Standing Committees of the Faculty

Section V: Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom

Part One: Appendix A
Report of the Ad Hoc Tenure Committee
Section B: Procedure for Granting Tenure
Subsection 2: Joint Tenure

Part One: Appendix A
Report of the Ad Hoc Tenure Committee
Section D: Procedural Amendments

Part One: Bylaw One
Membership, Duties, Responsibilities of the Standing Committees of the Faculty

Section V: Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom

Part One: Appendix A
Report of the Ad Hoc Tenure Committee
Section B: Procedure for Granting Tenure
Subsection 2: Joint Tenure

Part Two: Section 1
Policies Regarding the Status of Faculty
Section A: Academic Freedom and Tenure
Subsection: Tenure
Introduction

Chapter Three – Tenure: Contents and Mapping

FINAL LOCATION IN THE REORGANIZED HANDBOOK	LOCATION IN THE CURRENT HANDBOOK FROM WHERE REORGANIZED TEXT COMES
<p style="text-align: center;">SECTION 4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Department Tenure Committees</p>	<p>Part One: Bylaw One Membership, Duties, Responsibilities of the Standing Committees of the Faculty Section V: Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom</p> <hr/> <p>Part One: Appendix A Report of the Ad Hoc Tenure Committee Section B: Procedure for Granting Tenure <i>Subsection 2: Joint Tenure</i></p> <hr/> <p>Part One: Appendix A Report of the Ad Hoc Tenure Committee Section D: Procedural Amendments</p>
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Chapter Three – Tenure: Contents and Mapping

FINAL LOCATION IN THE REORGANIZED HANDBOOK

SECTION 6

Joint Tenure Committees for Interdisciplinary Candidates

SECTION 7

Tenure Procedures

- a. General Overview
- b. Procedures for Tenure Reviews, Recommendations, Final Decisions, and Appeals

LOCATION IN THE CURRENT HANDBOOK FROM WHERE REORGANIZED TEXT COMES

Part One: Bylaw One
Membership, Duties, Responsibilities of the Standing Committees of the Faculty

Section V: Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom

Part One: Appendix A

Report of the Ad Hoc Tenure Committee

Section B: Procedure for Granting Tenure

Subsection 2: Joint Tenure

Part One: Bylaw One

Membership, Duties, Responsibilities of the Standing Committees of the Faculty

Section V: Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom

Part One: Appendix A

Report of the Ad Hoc Tenure Committee

Section B: Procedure for Granting Tenure

Subsection 1: Policy

Subsection 2: Joint Tenure

Part One: Appendix A

Report of the Ad Hoc Tenure Committee

Section D: Procedural Amendments

Part Two: Section 1

Policies Regarding the Status of Faculty

Section A: Academic Freedom and Tenure

Subsection: Tenure

- *Introduction*

- *Eligibility and Conditions for Tenure*

- *Procedures for Tenure*

Chapter Three – Tenure: Contents and Mapping

FINAL LOCATION IN THE REORGANIZED HANDBOOK	LOCATION IN THE CURRENT HANDBOOK FROM WHERE REORGANIZED TEXT COMES
<p style="text-align: center;">SECTION 6</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Joint Tenure Committees for Interdisciplinary Candidates</p>	<p>Part One: Bylaw One Membership, Duties, Responsibilities of the Standing Committees of the Faculty Section V: Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom</p>
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	<p>Part One: Appendix A Report of the Ad Hoc Tenure Committee Section D: Procedural Amendments</p>
<p>Part Two: Section 1 Policies Regarding the Status of Faculty Section A: Academic Freedom and Tenure <i>Subsection: Tenure</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Introduction</i> - <i>Eligibility and Conditions for Tenure</i> - <i>Procedures for Tenure</i> 	

Conforming to Practice: Tenure Chapter

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- **Modified/Added Wording to Conform to Accepted Current Practice**
 - **Assistant Profs. and Assistant Profs. of Teaching receive a combined review for tenure and promotion:**
 - Tenure criteria and promotion criteria are the same
 - Avoids possibilities of contradictory and/or moot/untenable CTAF deliberations
 - Changes made over 20 years ago for these reasons
 - Avoids confusions created by referring to an undesirable possibility
 - **Provost’s annual list of probationary faculty members includes only relevant information:**
 - Year of scheduled tenure review
 - Exact title rank/title and department/program affiliation
 - Eliminates “conditions attached to probationary appointment”
 - **Department Head given responsibility for writing JTC letter of recommendation in the case of a negative tenure recommendation**
 - Consistent with Dept. Head’s responsibility in the case of a positive recommendation
 - **Requirement for JTCs to file minutes with SOF by May 1 – eliminated**
 - JTC deliberations are confidential and final tenure decisions made to the entire community (late Feb.)
 - **Replacement process for JTC member who resigns – specified**
 - Same as process used for recusals due to dept affiliation and/or conflict of interest
- **Broadened/Generalized Wording to include Professors of Teaching as TTTs:**
 - **Allow credit on the tenure clock for full-time academic experience while at WPI**
 - **Includes/adds “continuing professional growth and currency...” etc., as appropriate**

Clarifications: Tenure Chapter

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- Clear/Explicit Definitions of Probationary Periods, Tenure Clock, and Tenure Review Timing:
 - **Probationary period** - refers to the *total* time served at WPI as a *tenure-track faculty* member regardless of whether the tenure clock is running or is stopped, including time served during the academic year of the tenure review.
 - **Tenure Clock** - measures the five years that must be accumulated prior to the mandatory tenure review. Time is accumulated in only two ways: through time served at WPI while the tenure clock is running; and through time credited when initially appointed.
 - **Mandatory Tenure Review** - conducted for all tenure-track probationary faculty members in the academic year immediately after they have accumulated five years on the tenure clock.
- Clarifications of process for early tenure for special contributions by the faculty member:
 - Must be consistent with minimum allowable probationary period
 - Must abide by same (April 15) deadline as all other tenure cases
- Clarifications of process for early tenure when academic freedom of a probationary faculty member is in jeopardy:
 - Candidate is “invited” rather than required to apply for tenure
 - Tenure (if) granted to an Assistant Professor/Assistant Professor of Teaching includes promotion to associate rank

Process Improvements: Tenure Chapter



- **Process Improvements**

- **Clarity in communicating the effect of tenure clock stoppages on individual faculty members:**
 - Provost must send letter to faculty candidate with new date of scheduled tenure review
 - New date of tenure review must be stated in reappointment letters
- **Timely formation of Joint Tenure Committees for interdisciplinary candidates:**
 - JTCs should be formed in the year before the tenure review rather than during the year of the tenure review – to allow for preliminary gathering of external letters of reference, etc.

Chapter Four Overview: Promotion

CONTENTS IN THE REORGANIZED HANDBOOK

Section 1

Eligibility, Time in Rank, and Conditions for Promotion

- a. Eligibility, Time in Rank, and Conditions for Promotion of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty
- b. Eligibility, Time in Rank, and Conditions for Promotion of Nontenure-Track Faculty

Section 2

Promotion Criteria

- a. Criteria for Promotion of Tenured and Tenure-Track Dual Mission Faculty
- b. Criteria for Promotion of Tenured and Tenure-Track Teaching Faculty
- c. Criteria for Promotion of Secured Teaching Faculty
- d. Criteria for Promotion of Research Faculty

Section 3

Promotion Procedures: to (full) Professor; (full) Professor of Teaching; (full) Teaching Professor; Associate Teaching Professor

- a. Process
- b. The Promotion Dossier

Section 4

Promotion Procedures: to Senior Instructor; Assistant Teaching Professor; Associate Research Professor; and (full) Research Professor

Section 5

Mentoring and Professional Development of Professors at the Associate Level

FINAL LOCATION IN THE REORGANIZED HANDBOOK

Section 1

Eligibility, Time in Rank, and Conditions for Promotion

- a. Eligibility, Time in Rank, and Conditions for Promotion of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty
- b. Eligibility, Time in Rank, and Conditions for Promotion of Nontenure-Track Faculty

Section 2

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- a. Criteria for Promotion of Tenured and Tenure-Track Dual Mission Faculty
- b. Criteria for Promotion of Tenured and Tenure-Track Teaching Faculty
- c. Criteria for Promotion of Secured Teaching Faculty
- d. Criteria for Promotion of Research Faculty

LOCATION IN THE CURRENT HANDBOOK FROM WHERE REORGANIZED TEXT COMES

Part Two, Section 1.D: Promotion

D.3.1 Eligibility and Time in Rank for Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty

Part Two, Section 10:

Promotion Procedures and Criteria for Nontenure-Track Faculty

- A. Promotion to Senior Instructor from Instructor or to Assistant Teaching Professor from Instructor (of either level)
- B. Promotion to Associate Teaching Professor
- C. Promotion to (full) Teaching Professor
- D. Promotion to Associate Research Professor
- E. Promotion to (full) Research Professor

Part Two: Section 2, 1.D. Promotion

D.1.1 The Criteria for Promotion to Associate and full Professor

D.1.2 Definition of Scholarship

D.2.1 Criteria for Promotion in the Professor of Teaching Track

D.2.2 Definition of Teaching Practice, Professional Growth and Currency

Part Two: Section 10:

Promotion Procedures and Criteria for Nontenure-Track Faculty

- A. Promotion to Senior Instructor from Instructor or to Assistant Teaching Professor from Instructor (of either level)
- B. Promotion to Associate Teaching Professor
- C. Promotion to (full) Teaching Professor
- D. Promotion to Associate Research Professor
- E. Promotion to (full) Research Professor

Chapter Four - Promotions: Contents and Mapping

FINAL LOCATION IN THE REORGANIZED HANDBOOK

Section 1

Eligibility, Time in Rank, and Conditions for Promotion

- a. Eligibility, Time in Rank, and Conditions for Promotion of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty
- b. Eligibility, Time in Rank, and Conditions for Promotion of Nontenure-Track Faculty

Section 2

Promotion Criteria

- a. Criteria for Promotion of Tenured and Tenure-Track Dual Mission Faculty
- b. Criteria for Promotion of Tenured and Tenure-Track Teaching Faculty
- c. Criteria for Promotion of Secured Teaching Faculty
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LOCATION IN THE CURRENT HANDBOOK FROM WHERE REORGANIZED TEXT COMES

Part Two, Section 1.D: Promotion

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Part Two: Section 2, 1.D. Promotion

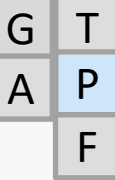
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- D.1.2. Definition of Scholarship
- D.2.1. Criteria for Promotion in the Professor of Teaching Track
- D.2.2. Definition of Teaching Practice, Professional Growth and Currency

Part Two: Section 10:

Promotion Procedures and Criteria for Nontenure-Track Faculty

- A. Promotion to Senior Instructor from Instructor or to Assistant Teaching Professor from Instructor (of either level)
- B. Promotion to Associate Teaching Professor
- C. Promotion to (full) Teaching Professor
- D. Promotion to Associate Research Professor
- E. Promotion to (full) Research Professor

Chapter Four - Promotions: Contents and Mapping



FINAL LOCATION IN THE REORGANIZED HANDBOOK

Section 3

**Promotion Procedures: to (full) Professor;
(full) Professor of Teaching;
(full) Teaching Professor; and
Associate Teaching Professor**

- a. Process
- b. The Promotion Dossier

Section 4

**Promotion Procedures: to Senior Instructor;
Assistant Teaching Professor;
Associate Research Professor;
and (full) Research Professor**

Section 5

**Mentoring and Professional Development of
Professors at the Associate Level**

LOCATION IN THE CURRENT HANDBOOK FROM WHERE REORGANIZED TEXT COMES

Part Two: Section 2, 1. D. Promotion

D.1.3. Documentation in the Dossier for Promotion to full Professor

D.1.4. Standards for Evaluation of the Dossier for Promotion to full Professor: Quality, Impact and Peer Review

D.2.3. Documentation in the Dossier for Promotion to full Professor of Teaching

D.2.4. Standards for Evaluation of the Promotion Dossier: Quality, Commitment, Impact and Peer Review

D.3.2. Nomination and the Formation of a Joint Promotion Committee

D.3.3. Selection of Internal and External Peer Reviewers

D.3.5. Review by the Joint Promotion Committee, Dean, and Provost

Bylaw One Membership, Duties, and Responsibilities of the Standing Committees of the Faculty

VI. The Committee on Appointments and Promotions (COAP)

Part Two: Section 10, Promotion Procedures and Criteria for Nontenure-Track Faculty

A. Promotion to Senior Instructor from Instructor or to Assistant Teaching Professor from Instructor (of either level)

D. Promotion to Associate Research Professor

E. Promotion to (full) Research Professor

Part Two: Section 2, 1. D. Promotion

E. Mentoring and Professional Development of Professors at the Associate Level

Chapter Four - Promotions: Contents and Mapping

FINAL LOCATION IN THE REORGANIZED HANDBOOK
<p>Section 3</p> <p>Promotion Procedures: to (full) Professor; (full) Professor of Teaching; (full) Teaching Professor; and Associate Teaching Professor</p> <p>a. Process</p> <p>b. The Promotion Dossier</p>
<p>Section 4</p> <p>Promotion Procedures: to Senior Instructor; Assistant Teaching Professor; Associate Research Professor; and (full) Research Professor</p>
<p>Section 5</p> <p>Mentoring and Professional Development of Professors at the Associate Level</p>

LOCATION IN THE CURRENT HANDBOOK FROM WHERE REORGANIZED TEXT COMES
<p>Part Two: Section 2, 1. D. Promotion</p> <p>D.1.3. Documentation in the Dossier for Promotion to full Professor</p> <p>D.1.4. Standards for Evaluation of the Dossier for Promotion to full Professor: Quality, Impact and Peer Review</p> <p>D.2.3. Documentation in the Dossier for Promotion to full Professor of Teaching</p> <p>D.2.4. Standards for Evaluation of the Promotion Dossier: Quality, Commitment, Impact and Peer Review</p> <p>D.3.2. Nomination and the Formation of a Joint Promotion Committee</p> <p>D.3.3. Selection of Internal and External Peer Reviewers</p> <p>D.3.5. Review by the Joint Promotion Committee, Dean, and Provost</p>
<p>Bylaw One Membership, Duties, and Responsibilities of the Standing Committees of the Faculty</p> <p>VI. The Committee on Appointments and Promotions (COAP)</p>
<p>Part Two: Section 10, Promotion Procedures and Criteria for Nontenure-Track Faculty</p> <p>A. Promotion to Senior Instructor from Instructor or to Assistant Teaching Professor from Instructor (of either level)</p> <p>D. Promotion to Associate Research Professor</p> <p>E. Promotion to (full) Research Professor</p>
<p>Part Two: Section 2, 1. D. Promotion</p> <p>E. Mentoring and Professional Development of Professors at the Associate Level</p>

Conforming to Practice: Promotions Chapter

G	T
A	P
	F

- **Modified/Added Wording to Conform to Accepted Current Practice**
 - **Associate Profs. and Associate Profs. of Teaching should first achieve tenure before seeking promotion to the full rank:**
 - Consistent with current practice and consistent between the two tracks
 - **Procedures and dossier format for promotion to Associate Teaching Professor and (full) Teaching Professor follow those for promotion to (full) Professor and (full) Professor of Teaching:**
 - With differences for (full) Professors and (full) Professors of Teaching highlighted
 - **Letter of recommendation in promotion cases clarified:**
 - Signed by voting members of the Joint Promotion Committee, only
 - Forwarded directly to the Provost, only
 - **Standards for evaluation of the promotion dossier applied to all reviewers:**
 - Identifies explicitly JPC members, Provost, all peer reviewers
- **Broadened/Generalized Wording throughout to be Consistent with Expectations of the Teaching Faculty**

Simplifications: Promotions Chapter

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A	P
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- Simplified How Credit for Time-in-Rank is Documented and Considered in the Timing of Promotion Eligibility
 - **Probationary faculty** – covered by date of mandatory tenure review/time on the tenure clock.
 - **Tenured and nontenure-track faculty** – covered explicitly and flexibly by the eligibility guidelines provided in the faculty handbook.

Chapter Five Overview: Faculty Grievance Procedure

CONTENTS IN THE REORGANIZED HANDBOOK
Section 1 Grounds
Section 2 Submission of Relevant Documentation and Dates for Filing a Grievance
Section 3 Formation of and FRC Subcommittee and Recusals
Section 4 Investigation of the Grievance and Access to Relevant Documentation
Section 5 Resolution of the Grievance, Required Actions, and Final Appeals



Chapter Five Faculty Grievances: Contents and Mapping



FINAL LOCATION IN THE REORGANIZED HANDBOOK
Section 1 Grounds
Section 2 Submission of Relevant Documentation and Dates for Filing a Grievance
Section 3 Formation of and FRC Subcommittee and Recusals
Section 4 Investigation of the Grievance and Access to Relevant Documentation
Section 5 Resolution of the Grievance, Required Actions, and Final Appeals

LOCATION IN THE CURRENT HANDBOOK FROM WHERE REORGANIZED TEXT COMES

Part One: Bylaw One
Membership, Duties, and Responsibilities of Standing Committees of the Faculty

- Subsection IX: The Faculty Review Committee

Part One: Appendix B
Operational Guidelines for the Faculty Review Committee

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Part One: Bylaw One
Membership, Duties, and Responsibilities of Standing Committees of the Faculty

- Subsection IX: The Faculty Review Committee

Part One: Appendix B
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Part One: Appendix B
Operational Guidelines for the Faculty Review Committee

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Chapter Five Faculty Grievances: Contents and Mapping

G	T
A	P
	F

FINAL LOCATION IN THE REORGANIZED HANDBOOK
<p>Section 1 Grounds</p>
<p>Section 2 Submission of Relevant Documentation and Dates for Filing a Grievance</p>
<p>Section 3 Formation of and FRC Subcommittee and Recusals</p>
<p>Section 4 Investigation of the Grievance and Access to Relevant Documentation</p>
<p>Section 5 Resolution of the Grievance, Required Actions, and Final Appeals</p>

LOCATION IN THE CURRENT HANDBOOK FROM WHERE REORGANIZED TEXT COMES
<p>Part One: Bylaw One Membership, Duties, and Responsibilities of Standing Committees of the Faculty <i>- Subsection IX: The Faculty Review Committee</i></p>
<p>Part One: Appendix B Operational Guidelines for the Faculty Review Committee</p>
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<p>Part One: Bylaw One Membership, Duties, and Responsibilities of Standing Committees of the Faculty <i>- Subsection IX: The Faculty Review Committee</i></p>
<p>Part One: Appendix B Operational Guidelines for the Faculty Review Committee</p>
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<p>Part One: Appendix B Operational Guidelines for the Faculty Review Committee</p>

Clarification/Conforming to Practice: Faculty Grievances

- Clarified current practice that existing Grievance Procedures apply to cases of non-renewal and termination of appointments of secured teaching faculty members on 3- and 5-year contracts.
- Clarified limitations on role of President and Provost when either person has a conflict of interest

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The Big Picture

- **The Benefits of the Reorganized Faculty Handbook:**

- **Unscrambles** the current version
- Establishes a **unified, synthesized baseline** for our current faculty policies and processes
- **Eliminates much of the confusion** about those policies and processes
 - Clearer interpretation; better organization; easier navigation
- **Clarifies the broad and the technical issues as well as the gaps** we need to address to improve those policies and processes
 - Easier future discussions

- **The General Sensibility for Consensus:**

- No project of this magnitude and complexity can repair all the defects of our current Faculty Handbook, and no organizational scheme or set of interpretations will satisfy everyone perfectly.
- **Focus on the big improvement and avoid getting distracted by things we need to fix.**
- The reorganized Faculty Handbook is not an endpoint – it is **a new starting point** for discussions that may be complex based on substantive matters but will not be complicated by unnecessary confusions created by a disorganized foundation.

Feedback to:

Committee on Governance

Len Albano (CEAE, Chair)

Althea Danielski (CEAE)

Tanja Dominko (BBT)

George Heineman (CS)

Art Heinricher (Provost, 2022-23)

Suzanne LePage (CEAE)

Mark Richman (AE, SOF)

Wole Soboyejo (Provost)

Diane Strong (WBS)

Karen Troy (BME)

Drop-in Sessions at the Quorum

Wednesday (4/19) and Thursday (4/20)

9am to noon

Complimentary coffee and pastries!