

Faculty Handbook Revision Committee (FHRC)

Spring 2025 Report

9 June 2025

Submitted by Sarah Brooks & Samantha Prins, Co-Chairs

Charge:

- Proposing substantive and organizational changes to the Faculty Handbook. This shall be done in consultation with appropriate internal and external experts, including, but not limited to, the Senate, General Counsel, divisional administrators, and Human Resources.
- Meeting regularly throughout the process with various constituencies of the university community, including open forums for the entire campus community and meetings with smaller constituencies. The purpose of these meetings is to solicit input. Meetings and open forums shall also inform the campus community of the committee's progress.
- Providing regular updates to the University community.

Background:

The faculty handbook was last reviewed as an entire document in 2001, with subsequent updates made to particular sections, in response to specific needs. This annual update process is led by the standing committee known as the Faculty Handbook Committee (FHC). The JMU Board of Visitors' Academic Excellence Committee annually reviews changes that the FHC proposes; BOV approved changes become part of each new year's handbook when it is published every August.

In the Spring of 2024, the Provost and the Faculty Senate Speaker established a new joint committee, the Faculty Handbook Revision Committee (FHRC), to undertake a two-year wholesale revision of the faculty handbook, nearly 23 years after a similar process was undertaken. Committee work began in June 2024.

Overview of Membership:

The FHRC reflects the division's deep commitment to shared governance, with membership drawn from the widest stakeholder group possible. The expansion of the original committee to 17 members in total ensured the broad array of faculty stakeholders were represented, and that faculty buy-in could begin at the very start of this major project.

The 14 voting members include: three faculty senators appointed by the Senate speaker, who also represent their home colleges; eight elected faculty, representing the remaining colleges with permanent faculty, as well as RTA [Renewable Term Appointment], A&P [specifically Professional], and adjunct faculty respectively; and two deans, one academic unit head (AUH), and one associate vice provost (AVP), appointed by the Provost. Faculty

elections took place in such a way that: all colleges were represented by a senator, or an elected faculty member, and each of the faculty contract and position types were represented.

The committee's three non-voting (ex-officio) members include: a technical writer; an AVP expert in policy; and university counsel.

Alphabetical List of Members (current through May 15, 2025):

- Sarah Brooks, Professor (Co-Chair, Faculty Senate), College of Visual and Performing Arts
- John Burgess, Associate Vice Provost, Faculty Affairs and Curriculum
- Gianluca De Fazio, Associate Professor, College of Arts and Letters
- Liz Edwards, Academic Unit Head, College of Health and Behavioral Studies
- Samar Fitzgerald, Instructor (Adjunct Faculty), College of Arts and Letters
- Scott Gallagher, Associate Dean, College of Business
- Steven Garren, Professor, College of Science & Mathematics
- Rubén Graciani, Dean, College of Visual and Performing Arts
- Steven Harper, Professor, College of Integrated Science and Engineering
- Michael Klein, Professor (Ex Officio: Technical Writer), University Studies
- Jill Lassiter, Assistant Professor (Faculty Senate), College of Health and Behavioral Studies
- Lauren Mullen, Lab Director (Professional Faculty), College of Health and Behavioral Studies
- Michael O'Fallon, Associate Vice Provost (Ex Officio: Policy), Faculty Affairs and Curriculum
- Sam Prins, Dean (Co-Chair), College of Science and Mathematics
- Meg Sander, Associate University Counsel (Ex Officio: Counsel), Office of University Counsel
- Eileen Shifflett, Senior Lecturer (RTA Faculty), College of Business
- Brian Sullivan, Education Librarian, Libraries, University Studies
- Kris Wiley, Associate Professor (Faculty Senate), College of Education

Schedule of Work Completed to Date:

June-October 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finalize membership through elections• Feedback on current handbook solicited through email• Style best practices developed• Approval process developed
November-December 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stakeholder/Faculty fora held to solicit feedback on current handbook• Additional feedback solicited through email
February-May 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5-week draft cycles by three subcommittees, with full committee feedback
May-June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Draft 1 completed and disseminated to Academic Affairs via email

Solicitation of Feedback and Process for Draft 1:

The work of the committee in composing Draft 1 followed these guiding principles: a focus on content, with style left to the technical writer; content clarity for readers; process transparency and clarity; remove redundancy with JMU policies; and multiple touchpoints for feedback.

The FHRC gathered feedback by email submission for five months in fall 2024; and hosted 14 online and in-person fora in November and December 2024. Expansion of the committee to include all stakeholders meant that fora could be tailored to each stakeholder group and provided opportunities for all stakeholders to participate.

Feedback was logged and categorized by the type of suggestion and topic. In all, there were 252 items logged. To provide a safe space for faculty and to protect the anonymity of respondents, the FHRC is not sharing the details of submissions or literal feedback broadly. The committee received robust feedback especially around: grievance and misconduct; faculty search procedures; and faculty evaluation and expectation. The need to clarify complex processes that involve multiple steps was also reflected in responses: for example, currently the same process is detailed in several places, noting different timetables (5 vs. 7 days). Another example is verifying faculty ranks and contracts consistent with a modern university.

The FHRC worked in subcommittees, soliciting advice from appropriate offices, e.g. REDI, Provost, TGS, to produce Draft 1. The Faculty Senate Speaker and Provost received an earlier version of this draft. Draft 1 was disseminated to all members of Academic Affairs via email from handbookrevision@jmu.edu on May 12 (without III.KL) and May 28 (with III.K). Feedback was invited via a QuestionPro survey until June 8, 2025.

Planned Schedule to Completion:

June 8, 2025	Deadline for faculty feedback on Draft 1 using a QuestionPro survey
June-August 2025	Incorporate feedback into Draft 2 Style work begins
September 2025	Draft 2 feedback solicited through email and fora
October 2025	Incorporate feedback into Draft 3
November 2025- January 2026	Approval process begins, directed by the existing, standing Faculty Handbook Committee (FHC), the committee in charge of the annual review process
February 2026	Board of Visitors review begins
April 2026	Voting in the April 2026 BOV meeting

END OF REPORT