

**Faculty Handbook Revision Committee (FHRC)**  
**2025-2026 - Final Report**  
**22 May 2026**

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 sections in response to specific needs. This annual update process is led by the standing Academic Affairs 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 July.

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's membership reflected the division's deep commitment to shared governance, with membership drawn from the widest stakeholder group possible. The expansion of the original committee to 18 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 15 voting members included: 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 included: a technical writer; an AVP expert in policy; and university counsel.

**Alphabetical List of Members:**

- 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
- Amy Connolly, College of Business (replaced Scott Gallagher in Summer 2025)
- 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

**Timeline to Completion 2024-2026:**

June-Oct. 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalization of membership through elections</li> <li>• Feedback on current handbook (2024) solicited through email</li> <li>• Style best practices developed</li> <li>• Approval process developed</li> </ul>
Nov.-Dec. 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder/Faculty first fora held to solicit feedback on current handbook</li> <li>• Additional feedback solicited through email</li> </ul>
Feb.-May 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5-week draft cycles by three subcommittees, with full committee feedback</li> </ul>
May-June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft 1 completed and disseminated to Academic Affairs via email</li> <li>• Feedback solicited through survey</li> </ul>
July-Aug. 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback incorporated into Draft 2</li> </ul>
Sep. 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback on Draft 2 solicited through second survey and second round of in-person and virtual fora</li> </ul>
Oct. 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback incorporated into Draft 3</li> </ul>
Nov. 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback on Draft 3 solicited through survey</li> </ul>
Dec. 2025–Feb. 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback incorporated into Final Draft (Draft 4)</li> </ul>
Feb. 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senate speaker, provost, and president approval of Final Draft</li> <li>• Board of Visitors review begins</li> </ul>
April 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board of Visitors approval of Final Draft</li> </ul>

## **Guiding Principles and Process Towards Handbook Revision**

The work of the committee followed these guiding principles towards revision: a focus on content, with style left to the technical writer; content clarity for readers; process transparency and clarity; eliminating redundancy with JMU policies; and multiple touchpoints for campus feedback.

The 18 FHRC members worked in four subcommittees throughout our multi-year process. The committee began by gathering campus-wide feedback on the current (2024) handbook through email submissions to the FHRC email address and fora (in person and/or virtual). The initial 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 solicited on each of 3 subsequent drafts through the mechanism in the table on page 2. The Final Draft (Draft 4) was completed with additional input from the Provost and the Senate Speaker, working with the Senate Steering Committee, combined with the campus-wide input on Draft 3.

The FHRC solicited advice from appropriate offices, e.g. REDI, the Provost, TGS and OEO, to refine its multiple drafts.

## **Executive Summary of Changes from 2024 to 2026 JMU Faculty Handbook**

The following highlights some of the changes and additions to the handbook in its new 2026 form:

- Changes in Style
  - Greater clarity of procedures and sections
  - JMU policies are referenced not repeated
  - A comprehensive and navigable structure
  - Reduced redundancy of sections
- Inclusion of Shared Governance Task Force definitions
  - Shared governance
  - Role of stakeholders
  - Effective shared governance indicators
- Faculty Employment Policies Expansion
  - Increased clarity on faculty responsibilities
  - Increased detail on sections such as workload expectations, class modality and outside employment
- Faculty Categories and Ranks Expansion
  - Creation of the new Professor of Practice track for RTA faculty
  - Added job performance as alternate to teaching for Libraries/Professor of Practice
- Newly established use of Memoranda of Understanding to detail responsibilities and expectations
- Significant revisions to evaluation, promotion, and tenure
  - Greater detail for research/scholarly and creative activity and for service
  - Clarified use of student feedback surveys in teaching evaluations
  - Separated promotion standards into distinct procedural tracks with clearer steps, timelines and requirements
  - Roles of existing documentation and committees are clarified or more explicitly defined
  - Added new steps and timelines for appeals

- Comprehensive rewrite of misconduct, grievance and appeals processes
  - Clearly defined and separated policy violations, grievances and misconduct, with resolution pathways clarified for each
  - Clarified who may be a complainant/appellant and respondent, and rights to information
  - Refined appeal rights and procedures
  - Explicated timelines and documentation requirements
  
- Expansion of Faculty Appeals Committee
  - Included requirement of elected representatives from each college who receive training and serve staggered three-year terms
  - Included oversight of
    - Sanction appeals enacted at the dean or VP level following a misconduct complaint
    - A decision and/or sanctions following a grievance against a supervisor
  - Added new procedures, if respondent is a dean or provost
  - Modified hearing committees to include peers of respondents as well as complainant/appellant
  - Clarified procedures and shorter timeline of appeals

**END OF REPORT**