

Proposal to Amend WKU Faculty Handbook: Substantive Change

Section III.A-2026 (Faculty Rank and Promotion [Terminal Degree & Intent to Apply])

Substantive change is defined as addition, deletion, or revision of policy or procedure.

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1. Type of Change:

Addition: Where possible, identify the section of the handbook to which addition is proposed:

Deletion: Identify the section of the handbook from which deletion is proposed:

Revision: Identify the section of the handbook to which revision is proposed:

Current wording:

The department chair/school director and departmental/school faculty within each academic unit have the responsibility of developing specific criteria for determining what constitutes “sustained achievement” for each rank. These criteria must conform to the minimum University standards listed below and must be made publicly available in hard or e-copy form. Guidelines for all ranks must be recommended and approved by departmental/school faculty. Tenured and tenure-eligible faculty vote on all guidelines; continuing instructors vote only on instructor promotion guidelines; and clinical faculty vote only on clinical faculty promotion guidelines. Guidelines must also be approved by the department chair/school director, dean, and the Provost, who has final approval. Approved guidelines will be signed and dated by department chair/school director, dean, and Provost.

2. Proposals should be made in the form of text intended as an addition to or a replacement of, in whole or in part, some current section of the Faculty Handbook.

Proposed:

The department chair/school director and departmental/school faculty within each academic unit have the responsibility of developing specific criteria for determining what constitutes “sustained achievement” for each rank. These criteria must conform to the minimum University standards listed below and must be made publicly available in hard or e-copy form. **Furthermore, if a department/school wishes to accept a terminal degree that is not readily identified as an appropriate terminal degree for the discipline, then those terminal degrees must be included in the tenure and promotion guidelines.** Guidelines for all ranks must be recommended and approved by departmental/school faculty. Tenured and tenure-eligible faculty vote on all guidelines; continuing instructors vote only on instructor promotion guidelines; and clinical faculty vote only on clinical faculty promotion guidelines. Guidelines must also be approved by the department chair/school director, dean, and the Provost, who has final approval. Approved guidelines will be signed and dated by department chair/school director, dean, and Provost.

Note: Faculty who are seeking promotion and not bound by a mandatory review year (all non-tenure-eligible ranks and tenure-eligible faculty seeking promotion to full professor) must submit a brief notice of intent to apply for promotion to their department chair/director by August 1 of the year they plan to apply. Faculty may withdraw the intent to apply at any time before October 1.

3. Rationale for amendment:

Both revisions are designed to better protect faculty interests.

We've had a few cases of confusion about what counts as a terminal degree. This confusion can have a particular impact on pedagogical professors seeking promotion to full and instructors seeking promotion to Senior Instructor because they aren't eligible without a terminal degree. Faculty in each discipline should have clear information about whether they are eligible for promotion to the highest rank.

We have had a few challenges with folks seeking promotion to full professor that could have been resolved if chairs/directors knew that they were going to go up prior to October 1 (they thought they were eligible but they were not). Recall that assistant professors have a mandatory review year, but associates (and non-tenure-eligible faculty) can go up for full any time after they have sat at rank for five years.