Policy and Procedures Manual
Application: All Faculty
Section F9.1 Process for Handbook Revision

F9.1 Process for Handbook Revision

The Faculty Handbook at East Central University is a dynamic and evolving document that must effectively and efficiently guide the current activities, actions, and interactions of the faculty and administration. To this end, a set of protocols must be in place to ensure an accurate and current Handbook. The Board of Regents of the Regional University System of Oklahoma has delegated authority and responsibility for the internal administration of each university to its President (Section 1.25.1 of RUSO Policy Manual). Therefore, the President has the ultimate responsibility to review and approve all changes in policies and procedures of the University; the President may delegate this authority.

F9.1.1 Timing of Handbook Revisions

The Faculty Handbook as a document involves many different individuals and entities and so many people must be engaged in keeping it current. At the same time, it is valuable to keep the Faculty Handbook stable as much as possible so that Faculty members can rely on the policies and procedures it contains. As a result, the Faculty Handbook will be updated once a year, with some exceptions noted below.
Most general updates or changes to the Faculty Handbook shall take effect at the start of the next academic year. Each year, a current version of the handbook shall be published with a list of changes made in the previous year.

F.9.1.1.1 Immediate Changes

Some changes may be due to changes in federal or state law, OSHRE or RUSO board policy, or similar governing body, and as such may become effective immediately as required. When the University has been notified by any of the entities of the need for such a change, the VPAA shall inform Faculty Senate and request them to draft appropriate wording to include such mandatory modifications in the Handbook. If appropriate due to time constraints or specific required language, the VPAA may draft and submit the modification to the Faculty Senate and any other appropriate entities for review and comment. Reviewed modifications and non-discretionary modifications will be submitted by the VPAA to the President for final review and approval. Once the President has approved a final version of the modification to the Faculty Handbook, the VPAA will execute the change and notify the campus community within 10 working days. In such a case, a notice of the change should be sent via email to all Faculty and any other pertinent individuals.

F.9.1.1.2 Editorial Changes

This policy is designed for revisions to the Faculty Handbook that represent actual changes in content or intent. Edits which are merely editorial or clerical, such as grammatical corrections, spelling, additional clarifying language, changing titles to reflect an institutional reorganization, correcting contact information, reordering and renumbering of sections, or other changes of this nature shall be made without a full review. Regardless, Faculty Senate should be notified of such changes when they are made.

F9.1.2 Requests for Revisions

Any entity or individual may request a change or modification to the Faculty Handbook. Such requests should be brought to Faculty Senate and the VPAA. Faculty Senate has the authority to review and draft changes to the Faculty Handbook based on these suggestions, and the VPAA maintains the responsibility to ensure compliance and approve such changes before submission to the President.

Any changes drafted and approved by Faculty Senate vote should be formally submitted to the VPAA by March 1st for their review as detailed in F9.1.3 including whatever relevant consultation with other on campus or off campus entities. The VPAA will conduct a review and notify Faculty Senate of their feedback by April 15 as specified in F9.1.4.

F9.1.3 Review of proposed revisions

The VPAA will review the recommended changes to ensure they are consistent with and in accordance with the laws, statutes, directives, and policies that apply to the University; this review may include the use of both on-campus and off-campus individuals. Specifically, the VPAA will review existing policies and procedures and work with pertinent individuals/entities so that the proposed changes and/or new policies and procedures address the following applicable criteria:

- Ensure compliance with laws, statutes, and/or directives from the federal and state government;
- Ensure compliance with applicable policy changes made by the Board of Regents for the Regional University System of Oklahoma (RUSO) and the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE);
- Ensure compliance and consistency with both The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) and specialty accreditation requirements;
- Ensure policies and procedures are consistent with the University's mission, vision, goals, and strategic plan;
- Ensure policies and procedures provide employees with fair, workable, and consistent practices;
- Ensure the review of proposed changes occurs in a timely manner; and
- Ensure the accuracy and clarity of approved changes.

Although the VPAA is responsible for this review, in practice many different groups both on and off campus will contribute to this process as needed. Specifically, the VPAA is expected to consult with the president as needed to ensure general agreement. It is also the responsibility of Faculty Senate to draft language that is compliant with the aforementioned criteria based on available information.

F9.1.4 Feedback to Senate

Each proposed change may be accepted or rejected individually. In many cases, the VPAA may simply request small amendments or modifications to language or other aspects of the Senate proposals.

The VPAA decision on each proposed change shall be one of the following:

1. Accept as is: The proposed change is acceptable and will be executed and reflected in the next edition of the Faculty Handbook.
2. Request revision: The proposed change is acceptable in spirit, but upon review there are issues that need to be modified. In this case, the VPAA will clarify said modifications and provide a timeline for Senate to make or approve the modifications. If Senate does not complete modifications in that timeline, then the modification will not be done this academic year, but can be revisited in the next one.
3. Reject: The proposed change is not acceptable in some critical way and will not be considered for this year's modifications to the Faculty Handbook. In this case, the VPAA should provide a short, written explanation of the issue to Senate.

All accepted changes to the Faculty Handbook shall be given to the President (or designee) by the VPAA by May 1st. If the President (or designee) approves the modification, the VPAA will execute the change for the next edition of the Faculty Handbook and notify the campus community. If the President (or designee) does not approve a modification, then they should provide a brief written explanation to the VPAA to be shared with Faculty Senate.

All effort will be made to ensure that policies and procedures are consistently applied across campus. However, some variation in the practice/application of policies and procedures may occur due to requirements mandated by specialty accreditation and/or interdisciplinary differences.

F9.1.5 Operational Protocols

- The current Faculty Handbook and all previous versions will be maintained by the Office of Academic Affairs and Faculty Senate.
- The current Faculty Handbook will be available on the University website.

- The Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) and Faculty Senate will work with pertinent individuals to ensure the accuracy and clarity of the Faculty Handbook.
- Any decisions involving a requested modification will be reflected in the minutes of Senate or the handbook committee.
- All requested or required changes to the Faculty Handbook approved by the President (or designee) will be made Effective starting July 1st.
- All non-editorial changes made to the Faculty Handbook during the prior academic year will be listed in an appendix along with the date of approval by Faculty Senate;
- The Handbook will be archived by academic year in a read-only document; the year will be listed on each page.

F9.1.6.1 Timeline for revision process

Proposed changes or suggestions may be given to Faculty Senate at any time during the year.

Faculty Senate will provide the VPAA with all proposed changes by March 1st.

The VPAA will conduct their review and notify Faculty Senate of decisions by April 15.

Faculty Senate and the VPAA may work together to make edits and then final recommendations will be given to the president for official approval by May 1st.

The Office of Academic Affairs will ensure that approved changes are made to the Faculty Handbook, indexed, and the previous handbook is archived by July 1st.