

2024-2025 Year-End Committee Report

Committee:	Faculty Handbook
Charge:	The Faculty Handbook Committee revises the Northwestern University Faculty Handbook, which constitutes the contract between the faculty and the University, and advises other committees as needed.
Chair:	Anne Zald
# of Meetings:	2

Completed Business and/or Accomplishments

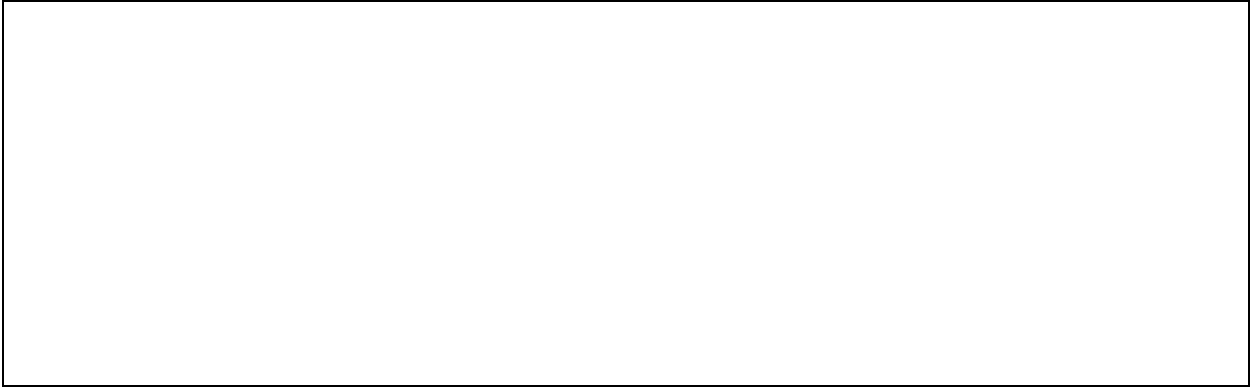
Reviewed the Handbook for broken links and recommended corrections to the Provost's Office.

Unfinished/Continuing Business

A case of faculty discipline arose in the Medill School during Fall 2024 in which a faculty person was removed from teaching responsibilities. This raised issues of faculty rights similar to a case before the Committee on Faculty Rights & Responsibilities in Spring 2011. While the initial removal from teaching was resolved, the case continued to develop throughout the year. The committee discussed the case, and the chair had conversations with the Chair of the Faculty Rights and Responsibilities Committee. No changes to the Handbook were recommended.

The Provost's Office provided a document summarizing policy statements regarding the assignment of teaching responsibilities, which is attached to this report.

New Business for Next Year



Assignment of Teaching
Office of the Provost
February, 2025

Together, the [Faculty Handbook](#) and the [Policy on Tenure and Promotion Standards and Procedures](#) make clear that (1) teaching is one of many responsibilities that a faculty member might have and (2) teaching assignments are made by the Dean and are, therefore, subject to their discretion.

To the first point, throughout the Handbook, references are made to the faculty's responsibility to not only teach, but to engage in research and service to the University, as well. The Handbook also clarifies that in-class instruction is not the only form of teaching in which faculty can engage. A few notable examples are below:

- “The faculty of the University are responsible for transmitting accumulated knowledge. Faculty whose appointments entail research expectations are also responsible for discovering new knowledge. In addition, faculty members are responsible for participating in the business of the University, as well as its schools and departments, through committee service, attendance at faculty meetings and other customary ways.”
- “The University recognizes that teaching responsibilities take a variety of forms, including but not limited to fostering students’ performance or skills in the studio or laboratory; tutoring undergraduate students; supervising graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and clinical trainees; and developing courses and curricula.”
- “Because of the many scholarly and professional enterprises represented at Northwestern, the University does not provide a common standard for faculty productivity. Faculty members are responsible for being active and productive in the creative, artistic, scholarly, and research pursuits appropriate to their respective fields.”
- “Throughout a faculty member’s career at Northwestern, the proportion of effort devoted to teaching, research and administrative activities may change. While it is the duty of the faculty to remain engaged fully and productively in these various pursuits, it is the responsibility of the departments and schools to monitor their activities and to assist faculty in redistributing their efforts as appropriate.”
- “Although procedures concerning promotion and tenure vary somewhat from school to school, the University’s goal is to ensure that faculty approved for promotion and/or tenure have met the highest standards with respect to professional achievement in the areas of scholarship/creative work and teaching.... The individual’s record is carefully considered with regard to teaching, research accomplishments and potential, service, and the relative quality of the individual’s academic and professional achievements as a whole.”

The Policy on Tenure and Promotion Standards and Procedures is consistent on this point:

- “In considering the award of tenure, Northwestern seeks to apply the highest standards with respect to professional achievement in the areas of scholarship/creative work and teaching. Each case is evaluated on its own merits. Northwestern aims at the superlative in both teaching and research.”
- “[T]enure or promotion reviews are based on the quality and impact of scholarship and teaching along with volume and quality of service.”

- “It is expected that the dossier for every candidate for promotion and/or tenure will include the following materials when submitted to the Provost's office....
 - A reflective statement by the candidate summarizing the candidate's past accomplishments and future plans in the areas of a) teaching, b) research or artistic accomplishments, and c) University and professional service....
 - A detailed letter addressed to the Dean, and/or Promotions and Tenure Committee as appropriate, from the candidate's department or program. This letter should include a thorough discussion of the candidate's performance as a teacher and as a scholar or artist/performer. Discussion of the candidate's University service and citizenship also should be included.”

To the second issue, as faculty are employees of the University, the University retains the discretion to assign work to the faculty as it deems appropriate. To that end, the Faculty Handbook makes clear that classes are assigned at the discretion of academic leadership: “School deans, department chairs, and program directors assign teaching responsibilities and courses to each faculty member with consideration for a faculty member's engagement in research, service and other professional activities.” Similar language is often included in a faculty member’s appointment letter.

Based on the above, it is clear that teaching is just one of many responsibilities that the faculty have as employees of the University and teaching assignments are subject to Dean discretion.