



FACULTY HANDBOOK

July 1, 2025

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Preamble: The Mission of George Mason University	5
Preface to the Handbook	6
CHAPTER I. UNIVERSITY ORGANIZATION.....	9
1.1 The Rector and Board of Visitors	9
1.2 Administrative Organization.....	9
1.2.1 The President	9
1.2.2 The Provost	9
1.2.3 Executive Council and President's Council	10
1.2.4 Academic Deans as Members of the Central Administration.....	10
1.2.5 Faculty Participation in the Selection of Certain Members of the Central Administration	10
1.3 Faculty Organization.....	11
1.3.1 The General Faculty.....	11
1.3.2 The Faculty Senate.....	11
1.3.3 Colleges and Schools	12
1.3.4 Academic Schools.....	12
1.3.5 Academic Departments.....	13
1.3.6 Local Academic Units (LAU), Primary Affiliation, and Joint Appointments.....	13
1.3.6.1 Primary Affiliation.....	13
1.3.6.2 Local Academic Unit Governance.....	13
1.3.6.3 Joint Appointments	14
1.3.7 Colleges and Schools without Subdivision.....	14
1.3.8 The Graduate Council	14
1.3.9 Multidisciplinary or Interdisciplinary Programs.....	14
1.3.10 Centers	15
1.3.11 Research Institutes	15
CHAPTER II. FACULTY PERSONNEL MATTERS	16
2.1 Faculty Appointments	16
2.1.1 Tenured Appointment	16
2.1.2 Tenure-Track Appointment	16
2.1.3 Term Appointments	17
2.1.4 Part-Time Appointment	18
2.1.5 Adjunct Appointment.....	18
2.1.6 Postdoctoral Research Fellows and Research Staff.....	18
2.1.7 Affiliate Faculty	18
2.1.8 Academic Year Appointments and Fiscal Year Appointments	19
2.2 Description of Faculty Ranks.....	19
2.2.1 Instructor and Professor of Practice	19
2.2.2 Assistant Professor.....	20
2.2.3 Associate Professor.....	20
2.2.4 Professor	20
2.2.5 Distinguished University Professor	20
2.2.6 Distinguished Service Professor	20
2.2.7 Emeritus Faculty	20

2.2.8 Administrators Holding Faculty Rank	21
2.3 Recruitment and Appointment of Faculty	21
2.3.1 Policies on Recruitment and Appointment of Faculty	21
2.3.1.1 Favoritism in Personnel Decisions	21
2.3.2 Procedures for Recruitment and Appointment of Tenured, Tenure-Track, and Term Faculty	22
2.3.2.1 Competitive Appointments	23
2.3.2.2 Non-competitive Appointments	23
2.3.2.3 Awarding of Tenure at the Time of Appointment	24
2.4 Criteria for Evaluation of Tenured, Tenure-Track, and Term Faculty	24
2.4.1 Teaching	25
2.4.2 Research and Scholarship	26
2.4.3 Service	26
2.4.4. Administrative Responsibilities	27
2.5 Procedures for Evaluation of Tenured, Tenure-Track, and Term Faculty	27
2.5.1 Teaching	27
2.5.2 Research and Scholarship	27
2.5.3 Service	28
2.6 Annual Evaluations of Faculty and Administrators	28
2.6.1 Annual Review of Faculty	28
2.6.2 Post Tenure Review Policies and Procedures	30
2.6.3 Faculty Role in the Evaluation of Academic Administrators	32
2.6.4 Annual Evaluations and the RPT Process Have Distinct Functions	33
2.7 Procedures for Reappointment, Renewal, Promotion, and Tenure	33
2.7.1 Procedures for Reappointment	34
2.7.2 Procedures for Renewal	35
2.7.3 Promotion and Tenure	35
2.7.3.1 Procedures for Promotion of Term Faculty	35
2.7.3.2 Procedures for Promotion and Tenure of Tenured/Tenure-track Faculty	36
2.7.4 Tenure-Track Contract Extension	39
2.8 Appeal of Negative Decisions in Renewal, Tenure and Promotion Cases.	41
2.8.1 Grounds for Appeal	41
2.8.2 University Promotion, Tenure and Renewal Appeal Committee	41
2.8.2.1 Committee Charge	41
2.8.2.2 Committee Composition	42
2.8.3 Appeal Procedure	42
2.8.4 Final Consideration When Appeal Not Found to Have Merit	43
2.8.5 Remand Process	43
2.9 Policies and Procedures Relating to Termination	44
2.9.1 Financial Exigency	44
2.9.2 Discontinuation of Degree Programs	45
2.9.3 Termination of Appointment of Tenured, Tenure-Track, and Term Faculty Members for Cause	45
2.10 Faculty Duties and Responsibilities	49
2.10.1 University Policies	49
2.10.2 Professional Ethics	50

2.10.3 Faculty Work Assignments.....	50
2.10.4 Faculty Absences from Class.....	50
2.10.5 Faculty Responsibility Under the Honor Code.....	51
2.10.6 Political Candidacy	51
2.10.7 Full-Time Faculty Teaching at Other Institutions	51
2.10.8 Temporary or Short-Term Relief of Faculty from Duties and Responsibilities	51
2.10.9 The Family and Medical Leave Act.....	52
2.11 Faculty Rights and Privileges	52
2.11.1 Academic Freedom and Civil Liberties	52
2.11.2 Grievances.....	53
2.11.2.1 Policies Concerning Grievances	53
2.11.2.2 Grievance Procedures	54
2.12 Department Chairs	55
2.12.1 Duties and Responsibilities.....	55
2.12.2 Policies on Appointment and Renewal	55
2.12.3 Procedures for Appointment and Renewal	56
2.12.3.1 Search Procedures.....	56
2.12.3.2 Renewal Procedures.....	57
2.12.4 Removal	58
2.13 Directors of Academic Programs Spanning More Than a Single Academic Unit	58
CHAPTER III. FACULTY COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS	59
3.1 Faculty Salaries	59
3.2 Salary Increases	59
3.3 Summer Salary.....	59
3.4 Salary Matrix	60
3.5 Faculty Benefits	60
3.6 Faculty Development.....	60
3.6.1 Study Leave for Tenure-Track Faculty.....	60
3.6.2 Leave Program for Instructional Faculty	61
3.7 Retirement.....	61
3.8 Conversion Factors	61

Preamble: The Mission of George Mason University

George Mason University

Mission Statement

A public, comprehensive, research university established by the Commonwealth of Virginia in the National Capital Region, we are an innovative and inclusive academic community committed to creating a more just, free, and prosperous world.

Approved by the Board of Visitors on March 20, 2013.

Approved by the State Council of Higher Education Virginia on January 14, 2014.

Preface to the Handbook

The *George Mason University Faculty Handbook* defines and describes the conditions of full-time instructional, research, and clinical faculty employment; the structures and processes through which the faculty participates in institutional decision-making and governance; and the academic policies of the University as established by its Board of Visitors. As an institution of higher education of the Commonwealth of Virginia, George Mason University is governed by the Code of Virginia. Nothing in this Handbook shall be interpreted as creating any right or benefit not duly authorized by law, or which is contrary to any law, policy, rule or regulation of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The provisions of the *Faculty Handbook*, as amended from time to time, are incorporated by reference in all full-time instructional, research, and clinical faculty employment contracts. These provisions are binding on the University and on individual faculty members. The *Faculty Handbook* governs the employment relationship of individual faculty members, and sets forth the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of faculty members and of the University. Faculty and academic administrators are expected to read the *Faculty Handbook* and to be familiar with its contents.

Except as noted below, revisions to the *Handbook* may be proposed by any of the parties who have participated in its adoption: the Board of Visitors; the Faculty Senate, acting on behalf of the General Faculty; and the central administration.

Proposals to revise the Handbook will be considered by the Faculty Handbook Revision Committee (a University Standing Committee composed of three faculty members elected by the Faculty Senate) which meets jointly with representatives from Human Resources and Payroll and the Provost's office. The proposed revisions that are approved by that body will be presented to the Faculty Senate for approval.

All revisions require the formal approval of the Board of Visitors. Each revision shall be incorporated, as of the effective date fixed by the Board, in all existing and future faculty employment contracts; however, no revision shall operate retroactively to change materially the substantive rights of any faculty member or the conditions of award of tenure for faculty members already granted tenure, or who have filed a written request with the Dean of the school or college to be evaluated for the award of tenure. For example, the conditions of employment governed by the Handbook may be changed prospectively and criteria for tenure may be changed for faculty who have not been awarded tenure, but may not be changed for faculty already tenured. Where no effective date is fixed for a revision, it shall become effective on July 1st following its approval by the BOV.

When a policy or procedure described in this Handbook is subject to alternative interpretations, then the Provost and the Faculty Senate Executive Committee will be the designated body to resolve the disagreement.

As of the date of the adoption of this edition of the Handbook, all prior policies with respect to matters covered therein are superseded. With the exception of the bylaws governing the University's Board of Visitors, the provisions of this Handbook supersede all inconsistent bylaws, policies and procedures in effect at the time of its adoption by the Board of Visitors (including, if applicable, custom and usage) of any officer, person, body, or unit of the University, including but not limited to the President or other officer of the University and any college, school, academic department, academic school, or other faculty organization.

The *Handbook* Committee acknowledges that some sections use language taken from policy statements of the American Association of University Professors. The use of AAUP language does not, however, represent any University endorsement of AAUP policies other than those explicitly contained in this *Handbook*.

The Faculty Senate and the Provost's Office assume joint responsibility for updating and maintaining the contents of the Faculty Handbook in both the print and web versions.

University policies are located on the university's website at <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/>. The Provost's Office web address is <http://provost.gmu.edu/>. Other important information is located on the websites of the Human Resources and Payroll Office (<http://hr.gmu.edu/>) and the Office of Access, Compliance, and Community (<https://oacc.gmu.edu/>). Please refer to these websites for issues not addressed in the *Faculty Handbook*.

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CHAPTER I. UNIVERSITY ORGANIZATION

1.1 The Rector and Board of Visitors

Responsibility for the governance of George Mason University is vested by the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia in the Rector and Board of Visitors. Members of the Board of Visitors are appointed by the Governor of the Commonwealth to serve fixed terms of four years. The Rector is a member of the Board, elected by the Board to serve as its chair.

Without limiting the generality of its powers, the Board of Visitors exercises its authority principally in policy making and oversight. With the exception of meetings convened in executive session, meetings of the Board of Visitors and its committees are open to the public. The President of the Faculty Senate sits as a non-voting representative to the full Board. The voting membership of the General Faculty (see [Section 1.3.1](#)) shall elect a non-voting representative to all standing committees of the Board, except the Audit Committee (see below). To accomplish this, the Faculty Senate shall conduct elections biennially. The candidates will come from the voting membership of the General Faculty. The Faculty Senate will notify the Rector of the outcome of the election. A separate faculty member may be selected by the Board to serve as a nonvoting, faculty liaison to the Audit Committee. No faculty member may serve concurrently on more than one committee. No faculty member can serve more than three consecutive 2-year terms, although subsequent reelection is permitted.

1.2 Administrative Organization

1.2.1 The President

The Board of Visitors appoints the President of the University, who serves at its pleasure. The President is the chief executive officer of the University and reports to the Rector and Board of Visitors. As chief executive officer, the President is charged with carrying out the policies of the Board and providing leadership to the University's faculty, staff, and students in achieving major objectives. Within guidelines established by the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia and the Board of Visitors, the President is in charge of day-to-day administration and operation of the University.

1.2.2 The Provost

The Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost (hereafter abbreviated as Provost) is the chief academic officer of the University and is responsible for all educational matters. The Provost is appointed by the President and serves at the President's pleasure.

The Provost functions as the liaison to the Faculty Senate for the university administration and has a primary responsibility to keep the Faculty Senate informed about new initiatives as well as ongoing developments within the University. The Provost implements this function in a manner that promotes the highest levels of faculty participation in the shared governance of the University.

1.2.3 Executive Council and President's Council

The Executive Council is the President's advisory group. Members of the Executive Council have overall responsibility for monitoring university projects and for sharing information about major developments.

The President's Council includes senior members of the university administration and the President of the Faculty Senate. Its function is to keep members informed about initiatives and activities, and to participate in discussions of basic policy.

More information about organizational structure of the central administration is available on the Mason website at <https://www.gmu.edu/about/leadership>.

1.2.4 Academic Deans as Members of the Central Administration

Collegiate or school Deans function in a dual capacity: they are the principal representatives of the organizational units and faculties within their charge, but they are also members of the central administration. As members of the central administration, they are appointed by the President, serve at the President's pleasure, and report to the Provost.

1.2.5 Faculty Participation in the Selection of Certain Members of the Central Administration

The faculty plays a vital role in the appointment and reappointment of senior academic administrators and other leadership positions related to the academic mission of the university.

The Board of Visitors provides for participation on presidential search committees by faculty who are elected by the General Faculty. The search and selection process must include opportunities for the General Faculty to meet with candidates who are finalists for the presidency. The Board of Visitors also provides for participation in the process of presidential reappointments or contract extensions by faculty who are elected by the General Faculty. This process includes an opportunity for the General Faculty to meet with the President to discuss the President's achievements and future plans for the university.

The President provides for faculty participation on search and reappointment committees for the Provost by faculty who are elected by the General Faculty. The search and selection process must include opportunities for the General Faculty to meet with the Provost or with candidates who are finalists for the Provost position.

The Provost provides for participation on search and reappointment committees for college/school Deans by faculty who are elected from and by the faculty of the college/school in which the appointment will occur. The search and selection process must include opportunities for the college/school faculty to meet with the Dean or with candidates who are finalists for the position.

The Faculty Senate will assist in conducting elections by the General Faculty.

1.3 Faculty Organization

The faculty conducts its work and participates in institutional governance at the University level, the college/school level, and the level of the local academic unit (defined in [Section 1.3.6](#)). The faculty is organized accordingly, to provide for the exercise of its responsibilities at all three levels, as described in [Sections 1.3.1-1.3.6](#) below. Faculty who are assigned to the Provost's office, and do not have a primary affiliation in a college/school ([Section 1.3.6](#)), participate in University level governance as members of the General Faculty ([Section 1.3.1](#)) and are considered to belong to an independent academic unit.

1.3.1 The General Faculty

The General Faculty consists of all faculty who have full-time instructional, research, or clinical appointments at any George Mason University campus. The General Faculty participates in governance at the university level.

Meetings of the General Faculty are scheduled by the President of the University, who serves as presiding officer. If at least 10% of the voting membership petitions for a called meeting of the General Faculty, the President is obliged to schedule it within thirty days, or within ten days if the purpose of the call is to consider modification of the authority the General Faculty has granted the Faculty Senate; or reversal of specific decisions of the Senate; or amending the Senate charter. All members of the General Faculty have voting rights on matters that pertain to the General Faculty. All members of the University community may attend meetings of the General Faculty and participate in the debate of matters that come before it. The General Faculty may meet electronically, provided the technology used allows all members to hear each other simultaneously, seek recognition, vote, and exercise other rights.

Without relinquishing the generality of its powers, The General Faculty delegates by Charter to the Faculty Senate the responsibility for shared academic governance at the university level. Only those faculty who have instructional appointments – tenured, tenure-track, term, or adjunct – may be elected to the Faculty Senate.

1.3.2 The Faculty Senate

Under powers delegated to it by the General Faculty, the Faculty Senate is the principal faculty advisory body to the President. It has particular responsibility for the formulation of university-wide academic policies and is the principal voice of the faculty in matters affecting the faculty generally. It advises the President and other members of the central administration concerning matters that affect the welfare of the University as a whole.

The principal function of the Faculty Senate is to represent the faculty on all academic and governance issues not internal to any single college/school, including, but not limited to, curricular matters, matters concerning terms and conditions of faculty employment, and matters of academic organization and institutional change. In these matters, the Provost and Senate will consult during the process of planning and implementing changes. To ensure timely consultation about these and other matters, the Provost meets regularly with the Senate's executive committee. Meetings with the President and/or other members of the central administration occur as needed.

The Senate meets at least monthly during the fall and spring semesters. Meetings of the Senate are open to all members of the university community, who may speak to any item of business on the agenda. Only members of the Senate, however, may introduce motions and vote. The Faculty Senate deliberates in a respectful and open manner, consistent with existing principles of university discourse.

1.3.3 Colleges and Schools

The colleges and schools of the University are communities of teaching, learning, research and scholarship, and service established by the faculty and administration and approved by the Board of Visitors. They house faculties and programs representing shared educational interests. Colleges and schools may be subdivided into academic departments. Colleges may be also subdivided into one or more academic schools.

As an organizational unit the college/school meets four functional criteria: (i) it has a tenured and tenure-track faculty directly and specifically appointed to it or to its academic subdivisions by the Board of Visitors; (ii) its faculty establishes degree requirements; authorizes the conferral of degrees; proposes, reviews and approves courses and programs; actively participates in decisions concerning the creation, reorganization and dissolution of units within the college/school; and plays a key role in faculty personnel actions such as appointments, promotion, and granting tenure; (iii) it has an instructional budget that includes FTE funds for the payment of its faculty's salaries as well as funds for goods and services in support of its academic programs and other activities; and (iv) its chief administrative officer is a Dean who reports directly to the Provost.

The faculties of colleges/schools, together with their Deans, determine the processes and procedures of governance they will employ, consistent, with the provisions of the Faculty Handbook. All colleges/schools, and if so sub-divided, each of their academic subdivisions, must act in accordance with the best traditions of the academic profession and within the following guidelines, which prescribe that they

- a. operate in an open and democratic manner;
- b. define any extensions of voting membership and governance responsibilities for faculty who are not full-time;
- c. adopt bylaws or standing rules that are published and made available to all members and that undergo periodic review and that include procedures and define eligibility for faculty participation in the activities specified in this Handbook;
- d. meet often enough to ensure good communication and the timely conduct of business;
- e. hold meetings that follow an agenda distributed in advance;
- f. record the proceedings of the meetings in minutes that are distributed to and approved by the faculty.

1.3.4 Academic Schools

Colleges may be subdivided administratively into one or more academic schools. Academic schools may be further subdivided into academic departments. The lowest unit subdivision within the college is the local academic unit (LAU). Schools that are not subdivided are

administered by a director. Schools that are subdivided into departments are administered by a divisional dean.

Academic school faculties determine their own voting membership. Together with their administrators, they determine the processes and procedures of governance they will employ, but all schools must follow the guidelines applicable to colleges/schools set forth in [Section 1.3.3](#).

1.3.5 Academic Departments

In colleges/schools or academic schools that are subdivided administratively into academic departments, the department is the local unit of faculty organization. Each academic department is administered by a chair.

Academic department faculties determine their own voting membership. Together with their chairs, they determine the processes and procedures of governance they will employ, but all departments must follow the guidelines applicable to colleges/schools set forth in [Section 1.3.3](#).

1.3.6 Local Academic Units (LAU), Primary Affiliation, and Joint Appointments

The term "local academic unit" (LAU) refers to an academic department, an academic school without subdivision, or to a college/school without subdivision. In this *Handbook* the chief administrative officers of local academic units are generically called "local unit administrators" (LUA).

1.3.6.1 Primary Affiliation

In recognition of disciplinary qualifications and for purposes of governance, term, tenure-track, and tenured faculty are appointed directly and specifically to one or more local academic units. The status established by such appointments is called "primary affiliation." Initial primary affiliation in one local academic unit does not preclude the possibility of future additional part-time or full-time assignments to other local academic units. An appointment to primary affiliation requires the concurrence of the faculty of the local academic unit to which the appointment is to be made and may not be transferred from one local academic unit to another except with the concurrence of the faculty of the unit to which a transfer is proposed.

1.3.6.2 Local Academic Unit Governance

All full-time faculty possess governance responsibilities and voting rights in local academic units in which they hold primary affiliation and in the larger units of which their local academic units are a part. The local level of governance is the most important in the University for the faculty's direct exercise of professional and peer judgment. Faculties of local academic units actively participate in decision-making about academic matters, matters of faculty status, and organizational and institutional change. They have primary responsibility for such academic matters as unit reorganization, the design of programs, development and alteration of the curriculum, standards for admission to programs, and requirements in the major. They play a primary role in such matters of faculty status as the recruitment and initial appointment of new faculty; the reappointment/renewal, promotion, and tenure, of members; and in the selection of the local unit administrator.

1.3.6.3 Joint Appointments

Faculty members are said to hold a joint appointment if they hold both an appointment in a local academic unit and an appointment in one or more other local academic units, research units, or programs. A written Memorandum of Understanding between the units and the faculty member, and approved by the Dean(s), will contain all the conditions of the joint appointment of the faculty member in the units, including administrative oversight, workload expectations, processes for annual evaluation and changes in faculty status, and governance and grievance rights in the units.

1.3.7 Colleges and Schools without Subdivision

Colleges and schools without subdivision provide simultaneously for faculty governance at the collegiate level (as described in [Section 1.3.3](#)) and at the local level. In carrying out their function as local academic units, such colleges/schools will operate analogously to academic departments (as described in [Sections 1.3.4](#) and [1.3.5](#)).

1.3.8 The Graduate Council

The Graduate Council, established by the General Faculty, oversees the conduct of graduate education. It establishes the general norms within which local academic units offer graduate degree programs; reviews and acts upon new graduate degree proposals; authorizes the conferral of graduate degrees; participates in the periodic evaluation of graduate programs and the periodic review of academic policy and admissions policies and procedures; and performs other functions as requested by the office of the Provost.

The Graduate Council establishes the specific means of conducting its own business. Like all local units, however, it must act within the guidelines set forth in [Section 1.3.3](#).

1.3.9 Multidisciplinary or Interdisciplinary Programs

Most academic programs are offered by local academic units and are therefore administered and governed by the faculties of such units.

Some multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary programs are offered by faculties drawn from more than a single local academic unit. These faculty members do not hold primary affiliation in those programs but rather, in one or more local academic units (see [Section 1.3.6](#)). For purposes of personnel decisions regarding appointment, promotion and tenure, these faculty members are evaluated primarily by their peers in the local units of which they are a part, but with the requirement that recommendations from the multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary program faculty with which they are associated will be given due consideration.

Academic programs which are not internal to a single local academic unit are administered by a program director. This director is regarded as the equivalent of a department chair/school director and is therefore expected to possess equivalent academic credentials. Such program directors normally report to a Dean. If the program transcends the boundaries of a single college/school, normally the program director reports to the Provost.

Program faculty define their own voting membership. Together with their directors, they determine the procedures of governance they will employ, but all program faculties must act within the guidelines set forth in [Section 1.3.3](#).

1.3.10 Centers

A center is a unit of the University intended to advance the University's mission of research and/or public service. Normally housed within a college/school or one of its subdivisions, a center does not develop or administer academic degree programs, nor does it possess instructional faculty appointed to primary affiliation with it. Centers may require the presence of research, clinical, and/or professional faculty whose affiliation with the center is subject to the availability of research funds. Faculty appointed to a center under externally funded grants or contracts may not receive tenure-track or tenured appointments through the center. A center is chartered for a specific period of time by a Dean or the Provost on the recommendation of appropriate faculty. Renewal of a center's charter, when called for, is subject to favorable review of a center's performance and accomplishments

A center is administered by a director who serves at will and who is appointed by the local unit administrator of the unit within which the center is housed. Whenever possible, centers are expected to derive most of their operating budgets from a source or sources other than state appropriations.

1.3.11 Research Institutes

When the size and scope of a center's funding, personnel, and potential societal contributions grow to a level that is well beyond the parameters of a typical center, or when a new unit with this profile is initiated, that unit may be classified as a research institute.

Research institutes have the same defining features as centers with the following exceptions: (i) the overall volume and/or complexity of activity is substantially larger, as evidenced, for example, by the number of faculty affiliated with the unit, the range of projects undertaken, or the amount of funding invested in the unit; and (ii) the mission must include a broad social purpose focused directly on the betterment of the human condition.

The term "research institute" is reserved for special cases where there are clear and compelling reasons to provide a distinctive label for that unit. To ensure that this guideline is respected, the process for chartering a research institute must include opportunities for center directors, academic unit heads, and the Faculty Senate to review and comment on chartering proposals before a classification decision is made.

CHAPTER II. FACULTY PERSONNEL MATTERS

2.1 Faculty Appointments

The university's strategic goals are met by appointing faculty with varying contributions to the research, scholarship, teaching, and service missions. The number of tenure-line and term faculty appointments will be based on the needs of the academic units and/or the university, while assuring that accreditation standards are met and that our position as a Research I: Doctoral University is strengthened. This section defines the various types of faculty appointment at George Mason University.

2.1.1 Tenured Appointment

Although the word "tenure" does not appear in the Code of Virginia, the University grants "election without term." As used in a faculty member's employment contract, the word "tenure" has the same meaning as "election without term". The University defines tenure as the right to continued employment unless separated from the University under conditions outlined in [Section 2.9](#) of this document. For the University, tenure is a major safeguard of academic freedom, of the quality of education offered here, and of the continuity and stability of the institution. For the faculty member on whom tenure is conferred, it is a privilege granted by the University to those who have consistently demonstrated their value to the institution over an extended period of time. Faculty on instructional tenured appointments normally hold the rank of Associate Professor without term or Professor without term.

There is no specified time of service in the rank of associate professor without term. A request for consideration for promotion from associate professor without term to professor without term may be made by the faculty member at any time.

Tenure, once conferred, resides in the University, and is not affected by the reorganization of academic units. In the event of program discontinuation or financial exigency, the institution will make a good faith effort to protect and retain its tenured faculty members and to provide them with opportunities for professional development and training for other roles in the University.

2.1.2 Tenure-Track Appointment

This is an instructional faculty appointment for a fixed term which allows faculty the opportunity to meet the requirements for tenure. These appointments are issued for terms of up to three years. The University can, but is not required to, renew such appointments for additional terms up to a total of six years of service, not counting any extension of the tenure-track contract (see [Section 2.7.4](#)). Faculty on tenure-track appointments may hold the rank of Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, or Professor.

A decision on tenure may be made in any year that the candidate is appointed to the tenure-track unless a specific time is required by the appointment contract. Faculty in their sixth year on the tenure-track at George Mason University must stand for tenure at that time if they wish to retain their position beyond the seventh year. Earlier consideration for a tenured appointment is possible under certain conditions. For example, experienced faculty hired on tenure-track

appointments from other institutions will not normally be expected to serve a six-year tenure-track period, although there is no requirement that they stand for tenure prior to their sixth year of tenure-track service at George Mason University. Exceptionally, faculty may apply for early consideration based on unusually strong performance at George Mason University. An unsuccessful tenure decision prior to the final year on the tenure-track does not reduce the tenure-track period.

Tenure-track faculty cannot move to a term position, either as a direct appointment or as a result of a search, without prior approval of the Provost. (See [Section 2.3.2.](#)) This procedure will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

2.1.3 Term Appointments

Full-time faculty on fixed-term, non-tenure-track appointments are known as Term Faculty. Term faculty whose assignments focus primarily on teaching are appointed as instructional faculty. Term faculty whose assignments focus primarily on research are appointed as research faculty. Term faculty whose assignments focus primarily on clinical practice are appointed as clinical faculty. While term faculty may identify with a primary focus, their assignments may include a blend of teaching, research, service, clinical practice, administrative, or leadership responsibilities that go beyond the boundaries of their primary focus. The faculty member's specific responsibilities will be stipulated in the appointment contract or assignment letter.

Instructional term faculty with a terminal degree may hold one of the following ranks: Instructional Assistant Professor, Instructional Associate Professor, or Instructional Professor. Research term faculty with a terminal degree may hold one of the following ranks: Research Assistant Professor, Research Associate Professor, or Research Professor. Clinical term faculty with a terminal degree may hold one of the following ranks: Clinical Assistant Professor, Clinical Associate Professor, or Clinical Professor.

Instructional term faculty without a terminal degree may hold one of the following ranks: Instructor, Senior Instructor, Master Instructor; or Professor of Practice. Clinical term faculty without a terminal degree may hold the rank of Clinical Instructor, Clinical Senior Instructor, or Clinical Master Instructor. Research term faculty without a terminal degree are Research Staff ([Section 2.1.6](#)).

Term faculty on single-year appointments whose permanent employment is with another organization hold title with the prefix "Visiting."

Term faculty appointment contracts are issued for a single-year or for multiple years, up to a maximum of 5 years. For initial appointments for faculty with terminal degrees, the maximum contract length for assistant professors is three years and for associate and full professors it is five years. For initial appointments for faculty without terminal degrees, the contract length is one year. If a multi-year appointment is offered to a faculty member whose position relies entirely or partially on non-state appropriated funding, then a multi-year contract may be established subject to the continuing availability of funding throughout the contract period. Exceptions to either contract length or terminal degree requirements must be approved by the Provost.

Contracts automatically expire at the end of the contract period, and although a faculty member may be reappointed ([Section 2.7.1](#)), there is no guarantee or right to reappointment from one contract to the next, whether single-year or multi-year. With the prior approval of the Provost, term faculty with the terminal degree may be considered for a tenure-track or tenured appointment as a result of a search ([Section 2.3.2.1](#)) or, rarely, by a direct appointment ([Section 2.3.2.2](#)). Service on a term appointment, whether or not externally-funded, may be applied to tenure consideration only if specified in the initial tenure-track letter of appointment.

Term faculty are eligible to be considered for promotion in rank, normally after five years of service.

2.1.4 Part-Time Appointment

Term faculty who are appointed to less than full-time positions are called part-time faculty. Their assignments may include research, service, clinical practice, administrative program development, or instructional responsibilities that go beyond the boundaries of specific courses. Part-time term faculty positions are governed by the same appointment, rank, and title requirements as full-time term faculty positions. The Provost is the final approval level for part-time faculty appointments. Part-time faculty are not voting members of the General Faculty.

2.1.5 Adjunct Appointment

Adjunct Faculty are employees appointed to fulfill the teaching and advising responsibilities associated with a specific course (or a set of specified courses) in a specific semester.

Adjunct Faculty are not voting members of the General Faculty and are not covered by the provisions of this Handbook.

2.1.6 Postdoctoral Research Fellows and Research Staff

Postdoctoral Research Fellows are employees governed by the Postdoctoral Research Fellows Policy. Postdoctoral Research Fellows are not covered by the provisions of the Faculty Handbook.

Research Staff are employees governed by the Research Staff Policy. Research Staff are not covered by the provisions of the Faculty Handbook.

2.1.7 Affiliate Faculty

The University recognizes two types of affiliate faculty, neither of which is governed by the Faculty Handbook.

Affiliate Faculty

Faculty with teaching, research, service, or administrative assignments who are not employed by the University may be designated with the honorific title of Affiliate Faculty. Recommendations for affiliate faculty appointments are initiated by a local academic unit and must be approved by the Provost. Affiliate faculty appointments are honorific only and carry no employee status.

University Affiliate

Faculty who are employed by the University may be designated with the honorific title of University Affiliate. University affiliate appointments are initiated and approved by a local academic unit. University affiliate status is considered secondary to the faculty's primary appointment as described in [Section 1.3.6](#).

2.1.8 Academic Year Appointments and Fiscal Year Appointments

Academic Year Appointments (9 Months)

Academic year instructional appointments extend over the 9-month period from two weeks prior to the beginning of classes in the Fall semester until two weeks after the end of classes in the Spring semester (Governor's Consolidated Salary Authorization). The 9-month interval during which salary and benefits are paid is from August 25 through May 24. Assignments requiring significant work by faculty outside this time period should be compensated. Faculty on academic-year appointments who work less than the full 9-month period will be paid the appropriate percentage of their full 9-month salary.

Fiscal Year Appointments (12 months)

Faculty who are required to perform duties year-round are placed on 12-month or fiscal year appointments. Faculty on fiscal year appointments who work less than the full 12-month period will be paid the appropriate percentage of the full 12-month salary.

For faculty who convert from an academic year appointment to a fiscal year appointment, the conversion factor of 1.222222222 will be used to establish the new base salary. For faculty who convert from a fiscal year appointment to an academic year appointment, the conversion factor of .818181818 will be used to establish the new base salary.

2.2 Description of Faculty Ranks

Faculty are either appointed or are promoted to an academic faculty rank. Appointments should be made at the appropriate rank and account for years of professional, teaching, or other experience as judged by the appointing local academic unit and subject to the approval of the Dean and Provost. Faculty are promoted in rank according to the procedures in [Section 2.7](#).

2.2.1 Instructor and Professor of Practice

Term faculty without the terminal degree in the field may be appointed as Instructor. An instructor holds the master's degree or equivalent academic and/or professional qualifications and gives promise for making contributions in the area of their primary assignment focus. An instructor may be appointed or promoted in rank ([Section 2.1.3](#)) by meeting local academic unit criteria for the rank.

Term faculty, with or without a terminal degree, who possess the expertise, achievements, and experience to provide professional instruction in a manner that brings relevance and distinction to the local academic unit and the University may be appointed as Professor of Practice.

2.2.2 Assistant Professor

An assistant professor normally holds the terminal degree in the discipline or field and gives promise for making significant contributions to teaching, research, scholarship, creative work, and/or clinical work.

2.2.3 Associate Professor

A faculty member must meet the University's established criteria for advancement to the rank of associate professor as specified in [Section 2.7.3](#) Promotion and Tenure and in [Section 2.4](#) Criteria for Evaluation of Tenured, Tenure-Track, and Term Faculty. New faculty who are appointed to the rank of associate professor must have demonstrated equivalent qualifications that meet local academic unit and Faculty Handbook criteria for the rank.

2.2.4 Professor

A faculty member must meet the University's established criteria for advancement to the rank of professor as specified in [Section 2.7.3](#) Promotion and Tenure and in [Section 2.4](#) Criteria for Evaluation of Tenured, Tenure-Track, and Term Faculty. New faculty who are appointed to the rank of professor must have demonstrated equivalent qualifications that meet local academic unit and Faculty Handbook criteria for the rank.

2.2.5 Distinguished University Professor

From time to time the University will encounter opportunities to recognize current members of the faculty or appoint to its faculty people of great national or international reputation. The rank of Distinguished University Professor is reserved for such eminent individuals. Distinguished University Professors are appointed by the President and the Board of Visitors with the advice and consent of a standing committee appointed by the Provost.

Distinguished University Professor appointments are normally reserved for full professors. The criteria for such appointments include substantial research or scholarship or arts credentials, as appropriate to the discipline.

2.2.6 Distinguished Service Professor

Distinguished Service Professors are recognized as individuals whose careers have had a major impact on their field or on the university community that goes well beyond ordinary levels of service. Normally, such individuals are recommended by a Dean and appointed by the Provost.

Such appointments are normally reserved for full professors. The criteria for granting the rank of distinguished service professor includes extraordinary level of impact, sustained contributions to the good of the university and the academic unit, and/or significant contributions to the field that extend beyond the boundaries of the university.

2.2.7 Emeritus Faculty

Upon retirement from George Mason University, full-time Associate and Full Professors with ten or more years of continuous academic service may be recommended to the Board of Visitors

for election to the honorary rank of Emeritus/Emerita in recognition of outstanding dedication to the university. A letter reviewing the candidate's history of teaching, research and scholarship, and service at Mason is normally initiated by the individual's LAU. The letter is forwarded to the LAU Dean, the Provost and the President for accompanying recommendations.

2.2.8 Administrators Holding Faculty Rank

Each person appointed to an administrative/professional faculty position is assigned an academic rank. Initial appointment will normally be at the rank of Instructor. Individuals holding a terminal degree may be appointed at the rank of Assistant Professor. An academic unit and the Provost may together confer academic rank beyond Assistant Professor when appropriate. As exceptions, certain senior administrative positions will be assigned the rank of at least Associate Professor in keeping with the executive status of their position. Assignment of rank must be in accordance with *The Commonwealth of Virginia's Consolidated Salary Authorization for Faculty Positions in Institutions of Higher Education, 2001-2002*. (The assignment of rank to administrative/professional faculty does not confer, nor does time assigned to administrative/professional duties contribute to, tenure.)

Instructional faculty who are appointed to administrative/professional faculty positions, if tenured, retain their tenured status while so serving.

Faculty who are not tenured have no automatic right to return to their previous instructional, research, or clinical faculty position.

2.3 Recruitment and Appointment of Faculty

2.3.1 Policies on Recruitment and Appointment of Faculty

The Board of Visitors has full authority over faculty personnel matters, including faculty appointments. To carry out this function effectively, the Board selects a President, who appoints other academic administrators. Academic administrators share responsibility with the faculty for ensuring that appropriate standards are fostered; that equity and due process are the rule; that judgments in the selection, retention, and promotion of faculty are in the best long-term interests of the University; and that equal opportunity and fair employment practices are followed.

Initial review and evaluation of qualifications are carried out by eligible faculty in the local academic unit to which the candidate is to be appointed. Faculty recommendations for appointment are forwarded to the Dean of the academic unit in which the appointment is to be made. If concurring with the faculty recommendations, the Dean will forward them to the Provost.

2.3.1.1 Favoritism in Personnel Decisions

Favoritism, or the appearance of it, can undermine the trust that members of the university community place in personnel decisions as well as the public interest which the university serves. A personnel decision involving a family member or close personal relationship of a faculty member or administrator requires particular scrutiny and safeguards.

No faculty member or administrator who has reasonably questionable objectivity in the employment status of another employee may participate in the hiring, supervision, promotion, or evaluation of such employee. All employees of the university have a continuing affirmative obligation to disclose to their supervisors any relationship that may reasonably affect their objectivity in such matters.

If faculty members or administrators might exercise or appear to exercise control over any personnel action associated with a person with whom they have a family or close personal relationship, the supervisor of the faculty member or administrator must designate a disinterested person to substitute for the individual who might have a personal interest. Additional safeguards may also be required if colleagues or subordinates of the individual with a personal interest are involved in those personnel actions. “Appearance of exercising control” includes but is not limited to assigning responsibility for personnel actions or supervision to a colleague or subordinate. If the personnel action involves a faculty member or administrator in a local academic unit, the faculty in that unit and all other interested parties must be fully apprised of the relationship and the safeguards that have been taken to ensure that the individual with a relationship is not involved in the personnel decision.

Relationships constituting a personal interest under the Conflict of Interests Act (S2.2-3100, *et seq.*), of the Code of Virginia will be handled by the Board of Visitors in accordance with the Act. Family or other relationships reasonably suggesting favoritism under this provision will be fully disclosed to the Board of Visitors incident to promotion, tenure, and hiring decisions. Prior to consideration of a personnel action involving a family member or other relationship reasonably suggesting favoritism, the Provost or designee, will fully apprise the Board of Visitors of the relationship and the safeguards taken to ensure that the individual with a personal interest was not involved in the action. Only after the Board is satisfied that the present policy was implemented and that safeguards were adequate should the personnel action be approved.

2.3.2 Procedures for Recruitment and Appointment of Tenured, Tenure-Track, and Term Faculty

Requests for new faculty appointments to allocated positions normally originate with the local unit administrator, acting upon the recommendation of the unit's faculty. In particular, the administrator seeks the assistance of the faculty in defining the requirements of the position to be filled and the qualifications to be sought in the appointee. Authorization from the appropriate Dean and the Provost is necessary before a search is initiated to fill a vacancy or a new position. In unusual cases a waiver of the search process may be requested by the local unit administrator or Dean.

Before extending an offer of appointment, the local unit administrator must secure the concurrence of the unit's eligible faculty as specified in the following procedures, the relevant Dean, the Provost, and the Office of Access, Compliance, and Community.

All full-time faculty receive letters of appointment that must include the type and rank of faculty appointment ([Sections 2.1-2.2](#)); the terms of employment; and the start and end dates of the appointment (unless the appointment is without term). If a faculty appointment includes administrative or leadership assignments, these should be specified in the appointment letter.

Also included is the statement that such employment is governed by the administrative policies and regulations of the University (currently in force and as amended in the future).

Appointment letter templates are located on the Provost's website. Acceptance in writing of this letter constitutes a contract between the University and the individual faculty member.

2.3.2.1 Competitive Appointments

In accordance with its bylaws or standing rules ([Section 1.3.3](#)), the local academic unit establishes a faculty committee to advise and assist the local unit administrator in carrying out a search. After receiving appropriate training from the Office of Access, Compliance, and Community, this committee reviews applicant credentials and makes recommendations regarding potential finalists for the position. All eligible faculty of the local academic unit will be provided with an opportunity to review the candidates' application materials, to meet with the candidates, and to attend job seminars or formal presentations by the candidates. The search committee then formulates a recommendation that includes the opinions of the eligible faculty. The local unit administrator transmits the faculty recommendation, together with their own, to the Dean or to the Provost, as applicable. The faculty shall be apprised in writing of the local academic unit administrator's recommendation at the time of its transmittal.

2.3.2.2 Non-competitive Appointments

Noncompetitive or direct appointments are appointments in which the search process is waived when appointing term, tenured, and tenure-track faculty. Competitive searches for tenured, tenure-track, and term faculty must be used except in very special circumstances. These circumstances are normally limited to situations in which (a) the candidate has already established a national/international reputation, the program has a unique opportunity to appoint the targeted candidate, and the area of specialization complements those of faculty already in the program; (b) the candidate is a spouse or partner of a candidate being appointed through formal search procedures and the university is attempting to accommodate them; or (c) an administrator is appointed and is considered for acceptance in a specific local academic unit. While administrators are normally appointed using a competitive process at the administrative level, this policy applies because they are not part of a competitive process at the LAU level. Instructional term faculty may also be appointed without a search when classes must be staffed immediately due to unexpected circumstances. Waiver of a search in this situation is only valid for one year.

Eligible faculty in the LAU review the credentials of any individual who is a candidate for a noncompetitive appointment using the same procedures as those used to review candidates for competitive appointments. The appointment process moves forward only when a majority of the LAU faculty who are eligible to vote accept the candidate.

In the unusual case of an existing term faculty member seeking a noncompetitive appointment to a tenure-track position, the appointment process moves forward only when no fewer than two-thirds (2/3) of the LAU faculty who are eligible to vote accept the candidate.

2.3.2.3 Awarding of Tenure at the Time of Appointment

If a candidate is to be appointed without term, the appointment procedure is conducted as specified for competitive ([Section 2.3.2.1](#)) or non-competitive ([Section 2.3.2.2](#)) appointments. Following an affirmative decision to appoint, the eligible faculty consider whether to recommend tenure in a first-level review in conformance with [Section 2.7.3](#) Procedures for Promotion and Tenure.

The recommendation is then sent to the second-level college/school promotion and tenure committee. Independent external letters from recognized experts in the candidate's field must be obtained in a manner consistent with other tenure reviews, and candidates are held to the same standards as other candidates in that LAU. Since such appointments may be made outside the normal annual promotion and tenure cycle, college/school promotion and tenure committees must establish and follow procedures for promptly reviewing candidates out of cycle.

2.4 Criteria for Evaluation of Tenured, Tenure-Track, and Term Faculty

Recommendations on changes of faculty status are in large measure a faculty responsibility. The faculty's role in these personnel actions is based upon the essentiality of its judgment to sound educational policy, and upon the fact that scholars in a particular field have the chief competence for judging the work of their colleagues. An additional reason for the faculty's role in these matters is the general competence of experienced faculty personnel committees with a broader charge that encompasses the evaluation of teaching and service. Implicit in such competence is the acknowledgment that responsibility exists for both adverse and favorable judgments.

Faculty are evaluated when they are candidates for a change in faculty status: reappointment, renewal, promotion, or conferral of tenure ([Section 2.7](#)). Candidates will be evaluated in light of the missions of the University which are teaching; research and scholarship, both theoretical and applied; and service (as defined in [Sections 2.4.1-2.4.3](#)). Only these criteria, as further developed and published by the local academic unit, and approved by the Provost, may be used in evaluations of faculty. Peer review plays a central role in the evaluation of individual achievement in each of these areas. The primary consideration in the evaluation of faculty achievements will be the extent to which these continue to improve the academic quality of the University.

Faculty are not expected to have equal commitment or equal responsibilities in each of these areas. Levels of expectation will vary with the type of decision.

Initial tenure-track and term appointments will, to some extent, recognize perceived potential rather than achievement. Reappointment, renewal, appointment without term or promotion in rank will be based on achievement rather than potential.

Term faculty candidates for promotion to associate professor or to senior instructor must demonstrate at least high competence in the primary area (instructional, research, or clinical). They must also show evidence of service. The standards that must be met in the primary area and in service are developed by the LAU and approved by the Provost.

Term faculty candidates for promotion to professor or to master instructor must demonstrate genuine excellence in the primary area (instructional, research, or clinical). They must also show evidence of continuing service. The standards that must be met in the primary area and in service are developed by the LAU and approved by the Provost.

Tenure-track candidates for tenure and promotion to the rank of associate professor without term must exhibit genuine excellence either in teaching or in research/scholarship. High competence must be exhibited in both areas. Furthermore, candidates must provide evidence that their contributions in their area(s) of genuine excellence have had some significant impact beyond the boundaries of this University. If the primary strength is teaching, there should be evidence that the candidate's contributions have influence beyond the immediate classroom; if in research/scholarship, there should be evidence that the candidate's contributions have significant influence on colleagues at other institutions in this country, and where applicable, abroad. They must also show evidence of service. The standards that must be met in teaching, research/scholarship, and service are developed by the LAU and approved by the Provost. Appointment without term should leave no doubt about the candidate's value to the University over an extended period.

Tenured candidates seeking promotion to the rank of professor without term must maintain high competence in teaching, research/scholarship, and service while also maintaining genuine excellence in teaching or research/scholarship. In addition, evidence of significant impact beyond the boundaries of the University must be much more substantial than in cases involving tenure or promotion to the rank of associate professor without term. Clear and convincing evidence must be provided of an established external reputation in the primary field, based on consequential achievements in teaching, research and scholarship, or professional activities directly related to teaching and research and scholarship. The standards that must be met in teaching, research/scholarship, and service are developed by the LAU and approved by the Provost.

All evaluations should consider the candidate's adherence to professional ethics (see [Section 2.10.2](#)).

2.4.1 Teaching

Effective teaching is demonstrated through a combination of course and curricular materials, learning outcomes, assignments, and assessments designed to promote student learning; through review of those materials, outcomes, assignments, and assessments by knowledgeable peers and colleagues; through student evaluations of their learning experiences; and through engaging in professional/teaching development activities.

Examples of contributions to teaching include:

- Development and implementation of new courses, curricula, and programs (face-to-face, online, or hybrid);
- Use of research-based, innovative, inclusive, and/or high-impact teaching and assessment practices;

- Development of instructional materials, including appropriate use of emerging and digital technologies;
- Training and supervision of teaching (graduate) and/or learning (undergraduate) assistants;
- Course coordination for courses with multiple sections;
- Mentoring students, both undergraduate and graduate;
- Clinical and field supervision of students;
- Student academic advising;
- Mentoring faculty colleagues;
- Participating in educational development activities to strengthen knowledge, skills, and/or abilities.

2.4.2 Research and Scholarship

Scholarly achievement is demonstrated by original contributions to the advancement of the discipline/field of study, or to the integration of the discipline with other fields, or by the application of discipline- or field-based knowledge to the practice of a profession.

Examples of evidence for research and scholarship include:

- Publications (peer and non-peer reviewed), including journal articles, books, book chapters, monographs, etc.;
- Sponsored research activity and grant and contract awards;
- Conference and other scholarly presentations (peer-reviewed and invited);
- Original artistic work, software and media, exhibitions, and professional performances;
- Intellectual property, patents, and evidence of relevant entrepreneurial activities;
- Other evidence indicating scholarly recognition and reputation.

2.4.3 Service

Service, which may include leadership responsibilities, is demonstrated by faculty participation in governance, and operational or development activities in the local academic unit, the University, or the profession. Required service in the local academic unit includes, but is not limited to, such activity as attendance at faculty meetings and participation in faculty personnel matters and curriculum development. Other examples of service to the LAU include student advising, developing or supporting co-curricular experiences for students, and mentoring colleagues.

Professional service is demonstrated by contributions to recognized societies and associations that promote research and scholarship and by consultancies and cooperative projects that make the faculty member's discipline or field-based knowledge and skills available to individuals, groups or agencies outside the University.

Leadership is demonstrated by making significant and consequential contributions to the local academic unit, the University, professional societies and associations, and local/regional/national/international communities. Examples include, but are not limited to, chairing or co-chairing committees for the local academic unit; leading and/or actively contributing to university-wide initiatives; serving in leadership roles for professional societies

and organizations; serving in significant editorial roles; leading invited or peer-reviewed workshops; leading community-based activities related in some way to expertise; and mentoring faculty colleagues in formal programs.

Each local academic unit must develop standards to evaluate its expectations for institutional and professional leadership and engagement.

2.4.4. Administrative Responsibilities

Many faculty assume administrative responsibilities as part of their terms of employment. Evaluation of faculty performance of these responsibilities must be included in the annual review and any consideration of change of faculty status. The criteria for successful performance must be given to the faculty member in writing.

2.5 Procedures for Evaluation of Tenured, Tenure-Track, and Term Faculty

2.5.1 Teaching

Local academic units must regularly evaluate the teaching effectiveness of their faculty. In doing so, they are expected to incorporate data from both peers and students. Whatever additional methods may be used to gather information from students, the process should provide for their anonymous participation in course evaluations and should allow for comparisons among faculty teaching similar courses. Peer evaluation is expected to include, at a minimum, data on the development and implementation of new courses and programs, the appropriateness of course materials currently used, the level and quality of student advising, and learning outcomes. Additional forms of peer evaluation are expected. These may include, but are not limited to, peer observation of classroom teaching, evaluations by mentors, assessments of teaching performance by colleagues, and teaching portfolios.

The evaluation process requires both quantitative and qualitative data. The methods by which such data are gathered and incorporated into the final evaluation should be well-defined and made available to those who are being evaluated, as well as to those who are using the evaluations in personnel decisions. Specific guidelines for the procedures to be used in the evaluation of teaching effectiveness will be those determined by the office of the Provost in consultation with the University Faculty Standing Committee on Effective Teaching.

2.5.2 Research and Scholarship

The systematic evaluation of a candidate's theoretical or applied research or scholarship begins in the local academic unit with a peer review of the candidate's work. In tenure and promotion cases the faculty will make independent judgments and will also seek and give consideration to external evaluations from qualified referees who are not associated with the University. For cases of promotion of term faculty, the LAU may choose to consider external evaluations of the faculty member's work. Each local academic unit will develop its own specific guidelines with respect to the selection and use of external referees. These guidelines must be fair to all parties concerned and be publicized among the faculty in a timely manner.

2.5.3 Service

The evaluation of university service is based on a peer review of the faculty's contributions through engagement and leadership to the life and governance of the local academic unit and the larger organizational units of which it is a part. Procedures for the evaluation of external professional service and leadership are similar to those employed in the evaluation of research and scholarship.

2.6 Annual Evaluations of Faculty and Administrators

Universities have a long tradition of self-examination and improvement from within. That process includes the annual evaluation of faculty and administrators.

2.6.1 Annual Review of Faculty

All faculty are evaluated annually in their local academic units (LAUs). The evaluation is based upon the contributions of the preceding year, to include summer, if applicable.

All LAUs are expected to review their applicable bylaws or standing rules on a regular basis. LAUs are also expected to communicate annually to the faculty in the LAU the bylaws or standing rules that pertain to faculty annual evaluations.

The bylaws or standing rules of each local academic unit (LAU) will include:

- The process, to include the timing, by which faculty will be evaluated (e.g., by a faculty committee recommendation to the local unit administrator, or directly by the local unit administrator);
- The criteria by which faculty will be evaluated;
- The requirements for the evaluation materials submitted by faculty to include a self-assessment; and
- A statement of standards or criteria that differentiates at least three levels of annual performance developed in consultation with the LAU faculty (e.g., "Exceeds Expectations," "Satisfactory," "Unsatisfactory"). LAUs are expected to be able to distinguish annual performance that is "satisfactory" from annual performance that exceeds that standard. One of these levels must be reserved for "unsatisfactory" performance. Unsatisfactory performance means performance that fails to meet the basic standards as defined by the unit. An unsatisfactory performance evaluation triggers the requirement to establish a Performance Development Plan by the LAU administrator and employee as described below. For tenured faculty members, a second unsatisfactory performance evaluation within four years triggers post-tenure review as described in Section 2.6.2.

The criteria for the annual faculty review are the same as those listed [Section 2.4](#). Faculty are evaluated on the quality of their performance over the entire scope of their contributions during the year and in the context of their goals, assigned workload, and other responsibilities. Performance expectations should recognize differences in faculty assignments within the same LAU. The local unit administrator has a specific responsibility to ensure the annual review

includes all job components that are part of a faculty member's assigned workload during the evaluation period. The local unit administrator also has the specific responsibility to advise faculty on any type of contract, individually, regarding their progress toward achieving reappointment, renewal, tenure, or promotion.

The results of and rationale for the evaluation must be given to the faculty member in writing, and the faculty member must be afforded the opportunity to discuss the results of the evaluation with the local unit administrator before it is sent to the Dean. A faculty member may present in writing additional comments or records to the local committee or unit administrator, and to the Dean or Provost, as appropriate. These addenda must be included in the faculty member's personnel file with the annual evaluation. The faculty member will be notified that the personnel file has been updated.

The LAU administrator will meet within two weeks with any faculty member who receives an overall unsatisfactory rating for the annual review. The purpose of the meeting is to establish a written Performance Development Plan (PDP) to restore the faculty member's overall performance to a satisfactory level according to the standards of the local academic unit. The meeting discussion and resulting plan will:

- Define specific measurable and objective outcomes necessary to achieve a satisfactory rating;
- Outline the activities to be undertaken to achieve the necessary outcomes;
- Set appropriate timelines for accomplishing the activities and achieving intermediate and ultimate outcomes;
- Identify institutional resources to support the PDP; and
- Include a clear statement of consequences should improvements not occur within the designated time.

If the faculty member's duties are modified as a result of an unsatisfactory rating, the PDP should so indicate and take into account the new allocation of responsibilities.

The PDP should be finalized within 30 days of the faculty member receiving an unsatisfactory evaluation and no later than the end of the semester. One copy of the PDP will be retained by the faculty member; one copy will be placed in the faculty member's personnel file in the office of the LAU administrator; and one copy will be submitted to the Dean. The Provost will be notified by the Dean that the faculty member was given an unsatisfactory evaluation and that a PDP was developed. If the faculty member declines to participate in formulating a PDP, the LAU administrator will write one and give it to the faculty member and the Dean.

If the faculty member has made inadequate progress on the PDP or has demonstrated additional unsatisfactory performance by the end of the performance period following the unsatisfactory evaluation, this will be incorporated in the performance evaluation for the year. If progress has been achieved according to the provisions of the PDP, an unsatisfactory evaluation for the academic year cannot be given.

2.6.2 Post Tenure Review Policies and Procedures

The primary objective of post tenure review is to provide appropriate sanctions for faculty whose performance remains unsatisfactory.

Tenured faculty members who receive two overall unsatisfactory annual evaluations in any four-year period will be required to undergo a peer evaluation proceeding. The peer evaluation will be conducted by an evaluation committee (“Evaluation Committee”) composed of the faculty members currently serving on the college or school Promotion and Tenure Committee (i.e., the body authorized to conduct second-level review under the provisions of [Section 2.7.3](#)). The Chair of the Evaluation Committee shall be the same committee member who serves as chair of the college or school Promotion and Tenure Committee. Committee members may not participate in the evaluation of a faculty member with whom they have, or have had, a close family, personal, or professional relationship or other conflict of interest of a kind that might reasonably be thought to impair independent and dispassionate judgment (see [Section 2.3.1.1](#)). For faculty not assigned to a LAU, the Evaluation Committee will be composed of the faculty members currently serving on the second-level Promotion and Tenure Committee of the college or school most closely aligned with the faculty member’s area of expertise, as determined by the faculty member. If the faculty member does not choose such college or school within a two (2) week period of being notified to do so, the Provost will decide.

The post-tenure review will be conducted according to the following procedures:

1. The Provost will initiate the post-tenure review process with a written communication to the faculty member (the “Notice”). The Notice shall inform the faculty member that the process is initiated, and will include a copy of this [Section 2.6.2](#) of the Faculty Handbook.
2. Within thirty (30) days of receipt of the Notice, the faculty member must submit a portfolio (“Portfolio”) to the Chair of the Evaluation Committee. The Portfolio must include:
 - a. a copy of the annual evaluation for the year before the first unsatisfactory evaluation and each subsequent year thereafter;
 - b. a summary of the faculty member’s activities and accomplishments in teaching, research, and service, as appropriate, during the same period;
 - c. the PDP and timetable that were established as a result of the first unsatisfactory evaluation (see [Section 2.6.1](#)); and
 - d. any intermediate evaluations or progress reports.

There is no limit on the amount or type of documentation the faculty member may submit. If the faculty member fails to submit a portfolio to the Chair within 30 days of the date the Notice was transmitted, the Portfolio shall consist only of documentation provided by the LAU administrator.

3. The Evaluation Committee may seek additional information from those who made or contributed to the unsatisfactory annual evaluations and PDP. The Evaluation Committee may also review any records and interview any persons the Evaluation Committee deems to have

relevant information for its evaluation. Any response to such a request must be made in writing to the Evaluation Committee and shared with the faculty member.

4. The Evaluation Committee shall interview or receive written records from any person designated by the faculty member. Such requests by the faculty member must be made in writing to the Chair of the Evaluation Committee.

5. If the Evaluation Committee interviews any person, a recording of that meeting will be made, and a written copy will be provided to the faculty member. The Evaluation Committee shall provide the faculty member with copies of any records provided to the Evaluation Committee.

6. After the Evaluation Committee has received any additional information, the Evaluation Committee will offer in writing to the faculty member the opportunity to meet with the Evaluation Committee. If the faculty member elects to meet with the Evaluation Committee, a recording of the entire meeting will be made, and a written copy will be provided to the faculty member.

7. In the interest of avoiding unnecessary expense and to promote a prompt resolution, the Evaluation Committee may set reasonable time limits on speakers, and may limit testimony based on relevance.

8. The Evaluation Committee shall review the case to determine whether the faculty member has met the standards established by the LAU for satisfactory performance, or whether there is evidence of sustained overall unsatisfactory performance (including but not limited to incompetence and lack of appropriate expertise). The Evaluation Committee will not use the standards associated with the awarding of tenure and promotion to conduct this evaluation.

9. Based on the relevant information received by the Evaluation Committee, the Evaluation Committee shall write a report, including recommendations, to the Provost. The report shall include the rationale for its recommendation(s), and shall include the numerical vote of the Evaluation Committee members. A copy of the report shall be sent by the Chair of the Evaluation Committee to the faculty member at the same time.

Confidentiality is a basic expectation of each person participating in the process, including all members of the Evaluation Committee and those whom it interviews. Failure to maintain that confidentiality may subject such person to disciplinary action. However, the Evaluation Committee may release information to others with the consent of the faculty member, or to other University officials who have a legitimate business need to know (for example, the Office of Access, Compliance, and Community).

The Evaluation Committee may recommend one or more of the following:

- that no action be taken at this time;
- that appropriate professional development be continued;
- a change in the faculty member's duties and responsibilities in the LAU that are better aligned with the faculty member's strengths;

- a change of the faculty member's primary affiliation;
- implementation of other appropriate sanctions, such as a reduction or freeze in salary for a stated period; a reduction in rank; or a reduction or withdrawal of university support for such services as graduate student support or space assignment;
- that the facts discovered in the evaluation may rise to the level of adequate cause for dismissal, and the faculty member should be considered for termination of appointment.

The Provost shall decide what administrative action to take. The Provost will transmit that decision in writing to the faculty member, the LAU administrator, and the Dean. Termination may be considered by the Provost only if a majority of the Evaluation Committee votes to recommend termination. If termination is recommended and the Provost endorses this recommendation, the faculty member undergoing review must be given at least six months written notice before termination can take effect.

In the event of any outcome other than termination or that no action be taken at this time, the faculty member will meet with the LAU administrator to establish a PDP to accomplish the committee's recommendation(s).

The faculty member may appeal the Provost's decision to the President within 30 days of the date the written decision was transmitted to the faculty member, based on one or more of the following reasons:

- a. material procedural irregularity;
- b. violation of federal or state law or university policy;
- c. the conclusion is not sufficiently supported by the evidence;
- d. violation of academic freedom.

In case of appeal, the President shall make the final decision.

In the event the faculty member's employment is terminated in accordance with the procedures of this section, such termination shall be final and [Section 2.9.3](#) shall not apply.

2.6.3 Faculty Role in the Evaluation of Academic Administrators

Senior academic administrators serve at the pleasure of the President. In reviewing their performance, the President should refer, when available, to the annual faculty evaluation of administrators, conducted under the joint auspices of the Faculty Senate and the University's Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning. The purposes of this annual evaluation are (i) to provide information regularly to the President and the Board of Visitors about the strengths and weaknesses of administrators as perceived by the faculty; (ii) to provide, over an extended period of time, a record of faculty opinion regarding the performance of administrators; and (iii) to provide individual administrators with an assessment of their performance.

Faculty are expected to participate in the evaluation of academic administrators.

2.6.4 Annual Evaluations and the RPT Process Have Distinct Functions.

The Renewal, Promotion and Tenure (RPT) and faculty annual evaluations processes focus on the same general criteria (teaching; research, scholarship, creative activity; and service) and should, in general, be aligned; nevertheless, they have distinct functions.

Because faculty annual evaluations and RPT evaluations are distinct, it is important not to assume that faculty annual evaluation results will predict RPT outcomes at the level of an individual case.

2.7 Procedures for Reappointment, Renewal, Promotion, and Tenure

Recommendations in these matters originate through faculty action in accordance with established procedures; are reviewed by senior academic administrators; and presented to the Board of Visitors. The administration should overturn faculty personnel recommendations rarely, and only when it is clear that peer faculty have not applied appropriate standards, or when the University's long-term programmatic needs are an overriding consideration. Only in extraordinary circumstances and for clearly stated reasons should administrators substitute their own judgment of the value of scholarly or educational accomplishments for judgments made by faculty.

Reappointment, renewal, promotion, and tenure recommendations are based upon an evaluation of performance over the faculty member's total period of service at George Mason University ([Sections 2.4-2.5](#)). Scholarly achievements prior to joining the George Mason University faculty weigh less heavily in these evaluations, but are also considered. These evaluations differ from the annual review ([Section 2.6.1](#)) in their emphasis on lasting contributions, consistency of performance, and flexibility.

The terms "reappoint" or "reappointment" in this Handbook mean offering a term faculty member a contract for an additional term, which may include the same or different duties and responsibilities.

"Renew" or "renewal" in this Handbook means offering a tenure-track faculty member a contract for an additional term on the tenure track, which may include the same or different duties and responsibilities.

Faculty member duties and responsibilities that will be evaluated must be included in the appointment contract. If subsequent contracts or assignment letters are issued, the duties and responsibilities may be changed in consultation with the faculty member.

All faculty who are candidates for a change in appointment status are evaluated by faculty in the local academic unit. The processes and procedures by which they are evaluated are established by the bylaws or standing rules of the LAU and must be consistent with the procedures in this Handbook.

Local academic unit bylaws or standing rules may provide for faculty to participate in evaluation committee meetings electronically, provided the technology used allows all members to hear each other simultaneously. For all voting that pertains to changes in appointment status, provision must be made for anonymous submission by a written or secure electronic ballot.

Faculty members may not participate in a review of a candidate with whom they have, or have had, a family or close personal relationship or other conflict of interest (see [Section 2.3.1.1](#)).

2.7.1 Procedures for Reappointment

Term faculty will be evaluated annually for reappointment by following the procedures defined by the local academic unit bylaws or standing rules, which should be consistent with the procedures defined in the Faculty Handbook.

Term faculty on single-year contracts will be evaluated annually and term faculty on multi-year contracts will be evaluated in the final year of their contract appointment.

Instructors or assistant professors may receive a one, two or three-year reappointment. Senior and master instructors, or associate and full professors may be reappointed to contracts of up to five years. After three single-year appointments, term faculty who meet satisfactory annual performance standards will normally be recommended for a multi-year appointment. Continuing to issue one-year contracts for a faculty member over many years is discouraged.

Term faculty on single-year appointments are evaluated according to the criteria in [Section 2.4](#) and the procedures in [Section 2.5](#). Criteria for reappointment will focus on demonstrated performance in those areas designated in the initial and any subsequent contract letters. The local academic unit recommendation is sent to the Dean. Based on that recommendation and programmatic needs, the Dean will make the decision to reappoint, usually no later than 3 months prior to the last day of the initial contract, or usually no later than 5 months prior to the last day of the term of subsequent contracts.

Term faculty who are on or being recommended for multi-year reappointments are evaluated according to the criteria in [Section 2.4](#) and the procedures in [Section 2.5](#). Criteria for reappointment will focus on demonstrated performance in those areas designated in the initial and any subsequent contract letters. The local academic unit recommendation is sent to the Dean. Based on that recommendation and programmatic needs, the Dean will make recommendations to the Provost whether to reappoint and contract length. If the Dean's recommendation differs from that of the local academic unit, then the Dean should submit a brief justification for a different decision. All multi-year reappointments must be approved by the Provost. Any decision to reappoint a term faculty member who was previously on a multi-year contract to a single-year contract must include a written justification for the change.

Final determination on multi-year appointments for up to three (3) years are made by the Provost. Contract terms greater than three (3) years require the approval of the President or designee. Notification to term instructional faculty members will be sent, in writing, usually no later than 3 months prior to the last day of the term of their initial contracts, and usually no later than 5 months prior to the last day of the term of subsequent contracts. Notification to term

research and term clinical faculty members will be sent, in writing, usually no later than 3 months prior to the last day of the term of their contracts.

2.7.2 Procedures for Renewal

Faculty appointed to a tenure-track position receive an initial three-year term (see [Section 2.1.2](#)). Tenure-track faculty will be evaluated for renewal during the third year of their initial appointment using the following procedure:

1. Tenure-track faculty are evaluated by either the first-level or second-level promotion and tenure committee (see [Section 2.7.3](#)) according to the criteria in [Section 2.4](#) and the procedures in [Section 2.5](#).

The Dean will submit a recommendation for renewal or non-renewal to the Provost by March 15th. Based on this evaluation, the Provost will act on the recommendation for renewal or non-renewal by April 15th. Faculty members will be advised of their renewals or non-renewals by May 1st of the third year of their initial appointments. Faculty members receive their renewal contracts no later than May 24th of the evaluation year.

2. If the decision is for renewal, then the faculty member's contract normally will be renewed for three years, and the next full evaluation will be for tenure consideration. Under exceptional circumstances, a faculty member may be renewed for only one year, in which case another evaluation will be conducted the following year. Renewal of a contract resulting from the evaluation in the fourth year of service will be for two years, and the next full evaluation will be for tenure consideration.

3. In the event of non-renewal, the faculty member will be offered a terminal, one-year term appointment following the decision for non-renewal contingent on the faculty member having submitted an appropriate and timely dossier for the purpose of seeking tenure-track contract renewal. Contracts for faculty members who choose not to be evaluated will end on the last day of the term specified in the current contract.

4. If a faculty member is not renewed, the appeal procedure outlined in the Faculty Handbook [Section 2.8](#) may be used.

2.7.3 Promotion and Tenure

The processes for promotion of term and tenured faculty, and tenure for tenure-track faculty are initiated by the local academic unit with the faculty member's concurrence. Self-nomination is also permitted.

2.7.3.1 Procedures for Promotion of Term Faculty

A term faculty member may be considered for promotion, normally after five years of service in the current rank. Term faculty who meet the LAU criteria for promotion may be considered early; however, typical candidates for promotion have a minimum of three years teaching, research, or clinical work at George Mason University. Promotion may occur within the period of a multi-year contract. Upon promotion, a new contract will be issued ([Section 2.7.1](#)).

Term faculty members will be considered for promotion by a local academic unit committee according to the criteria for evaluation in [Section 2.4](#) and the procedures for evaluation in [Section 2.5](#). Members of the committee are those faculty who are eligible to vote on promotion of term faculty, normally tenured and term faculty above the rank of assistant professor. Term faculty from other substantively related areas may also serve on the evaluation committee if there is an insufficient number of eligible or qualified term faculty in the local academic unit. Colleges and schools may elect to include a second level review. The composition of the promotion committee and the procedures used are to be specified in the LAU bylaws or standing rules.

The recommendation for promotion is sent from the committee to the Dean. The Dean's recommendation for promotion is due to the Provost by November 1st. By the end of fall semester (no later than December 15th), the Provost will notify the faculty member, in writing, of a decision with accompanying justification, whether or not to recommend promotion.

Term faculty who are promoted will be announced to the Board of Visitors.

Term faculty who are denied promotion are eligible to be considered for promotion in subsequent promotion cycles.

2.7.3.2 Procedures for Promotion and Tenure of Tenured/Tenure-track Faculty

The Provost establishes the annual schedule for promotion and tenure review. Dossiers are to be prepared in accordance with the format provided by the Provost and the Dean. The candidate is responsible for assembling the contents of the dossier. The local unit administrator is responsible for inserting the external reference letters in the assembled dossier. Each formal internal evaluation letter is included in the dossier before sending it to the next level of review.

At any time in the promotion/tenure review process before a decision is made by the Provost, a faculty member may withdraw from candidacy by so stating in writing to the Dean and the Provost. After withdrawal from candidacy, there is no further review of the dossier. Candidates who withdraw from the review process in a mandatory decision year for tenure will be offered a one-year terminal appointment for the next academic year with workload expectations determined by the unit's workload policy as it applies to tenure-track faculty.

If a faculty member is (or is to be) appointed to primary affiliation in more than one local academic unit, a recommendation for promotion and/or tenure may be initiated by any of the units. A separate evaluation leading to a recommendation and decision will be made by each unit. An action by one local academic unit does not obligate another local academic unit to act similarly. It is required, however, that in each evaluation process the promotion and tenure committee must solicit and consider evaluations from the other units. All evaluations become part of the candidate's dossier.

In all cases of promotion and/or tenure, there are two levels of faculty review. At both levels, evaluations are carried out only by tenured faculty in accordance with [Section 2.4](#) and [Section 2.5](#). In addition to considering the candidate's dossier, faculty committees on promotion and tenure examine and include in the dossier, all relevant written evidence and testimony offered to them by members of the academic community and others with direct knowledge of the candidate's professional qualifications and achievements. Committees may provide in their

bylaws or standing rules for faculty to attend meetings using an electronic connection. For all voting pertaining to promotion and tenure, provision must be made for anonymous submission by a written or secure electronic ballot.

Faculty members may not participate in a review of a candidate with whom they have, or have had, a family or close personal relationship or other conflict of interest (see [Section 2.3.1.1](#)).

The purpose of the first-level review is for the candidate to be evaluated by colleagues who are in the best position to have observed the candidate's performance in teaching and service and who are best able to professionally evaluate the candidate's research/scholarship and publication record. Accordingly, the first-level review is undertaken by faculty in the candidate's local academic unit, which must have published bylaws or standing rules that govern renewal, promotion, and tenure procedures ([Section 1.3.3](#)).

In departmentalized colleges/schools (see [Section 1.3.5](#)), the first level of review is departmental.

In non-departmentalized colleges/schools, which are subdivided into programs or other divisions, the first level of review is carried out by faculty appointed to program(s) or division(s) to which the candidate belongs. Tenured faculty from other substantively related areas may also serve on a candidate's first-level review committee if there is an insufficient number of qualified tenured faculty in the candidate's affiliated program(s)/division(s). Program or division faculties cannot exist solely to make personnel evaluations.

In non-departmentalized colleges/schools, which are not further subdivided, the first-level review is carried out by all eligible tenured faculty in the candidate's college/school. Tenured faculty from other substantively related areas may also serve on a candidate's first-level review committee if there is an insufficient number of eligible or qualified tenured faculty in the college/school.

The purpose of the second-level review is to evaluate all the candidates for promotion and/or tenure in the school/college and to make a recommendation to the Dean. The second level of review is carried out by a committee of tenured faculty. The committee members are elected by the college/school in accordance with its bylaws or standing rules ([Section 1.3.3](#)). The second-level review committee can include members from outside the college/school who are elected in the same manner as other members of the second-level review committee.

At no time shall a faculty member evaluate a candidate at both the first and second levels of review. Faculty eligible for the first level review cannot withhold their participation at the first level to participate in the second level review.

The School of Law is exempt from the provisions specified in the above paragraphs, but it is not exempt from the requirement for two-level peer review.

The procedure for considering promotion and tenure cases is as follows:

- 1a. Departmental review is initiated by the local first-level promotion and tenure committee, which may be a committee of the whole. The committee communicates the results of its

review to the tenured members of the department who then vote. Normally, Associate Professors and Professors vote on promotion/tenure to Associate Professor, and Professors vote on promotion/tenure to the rank of Professor. Other voting combinations may be specified in the bylaws or standing rules. The department chair does not vote with the tenured faculty. The committee transmits the departmental recommendation and accompanying justification, including the division of the vote, to the department chair. The department chair transmits to the second-level review committee: (1) the candidate's dossier and related materials; (2) the recommendation of the departmental committee with appropriate justifications; and (3) the chair's own recommendation and justification, if the chair is tenured. If the chair is not tenured, the chair submits a summary of the promotion/tenure proceedings. Notification of the recommendation of the local academic unit and copies of the accompanying justifications are sent promptly to the candidate and to the faculty who participated in the deliberations before the dossier is sent to the second-level committee.

The candidate is evaluated by the second-level review committee, which must have published procedures that govern its deliberations. The procedures must include a method for communication between the committee, the candidate, the department chair, and the first-level review committee. Normally, Associate Professors and Professors vote on promotion to Associate Professor, and Professors vote on promotion to the rank of Professor. Other voting combinations may be specified in the college/school bylaws or standing rules.

The committee forwards its recommendation along with all preceding reports and recommendations to the Dean. Notification of the recommendation of the second-level review committee is sent to the faculty who participated in the deliberations at the first level of review. Copies of the statement of justification are sent promptly to the candidate and the department chair.

If the second-level review committee's recommendation differs from that of the first-level review committee, the second-level review committee's recommendation and accompanying justification are sent to the first-level review committee.

1b. The process is analogous in non-departmentalized units, except that the role assigned to department chairs is omitted.

2. All materials are reviewed by the Dean of the candidate's college/school. The dossier and the recommendation of the Dean are forwarded to the Provost. Notification of the recommendation is sent to the faculty bodies who participated in deliberations at the first and second levels of review and a copy of the accompanying justification is promptly sent to the candidate and the local unit administrator (the latter copy to be retained in the candidate's permanent file).

If the Dean's recommendation is different from that received from the second-level review committee, the reasons for that difference should be specified in the recommendation, which is sent to the candidate, to the faculty bodies participating in the decision-making process, and to the Provost.

3. The complete dossier is reviewed by the Provost. The Provost may consult with other academic administrators who have direct knowledge of one or more aspects of the candidate's professional performance. The Provost makes a recommendation as to whether promotion or tenure should be granted. Notification of the Provost's recommendation is sent to the faculty bodies who participated in deliberations at the first and second levels of review, and a copy of the accompanying justification is sent to the Dean, the candidate and the local unit administrator. The justification shall be retained in the candidate's personnel file.

If the Provost's recommendation is different from that received from the second-level review committee, the reasons for that difference should be specified in writing and sent to the candidate and to the faculty bodies participating in the decision-making process.

4. If the Provost recommends tenure or promotion be granted, the candidate's dossier, with all previously generated recommendations, is forwarded to the President. If the Provost recommends tenure or promotion not be granted, the recommendation is not forwarded to the President.

5. The President makes a recommendation as to whether tenure or promotion should be granted. If the President recommends tenure or promotion be granted, such recommendation is forwarded to the Board of Visitors. If the President recommends tenure or promotion not be granted, the recommendation is not forwarded to the Board of Visitors.

6. Tenure, and promotion to the rank of associate professor or professor, can only be conferred by the Board of Visitors. If the Board of Visitors decides to grant promotion or tenure, the candidate will be notified in writing by the Secretary of the Board of Visitors.

7. If either the Provost or the President recommends that tenure or promotion not be granted, the candidate will be notified of the decision on or before May 1. Upon receiving notice of the Provost's or President's decision, the candidate may:

- a. accept the decision; or
- b. appeal the decision according to the procedure described in [Section 2.8](#).

In the event tenure is not granted in a faculty member's final year on the tenure-track, the faculty member will be offered a one-year terminal appointment for the next academic year with workload expectations determined by the unit's workload policy as it applies to tenure-track faculty.

8. Tenure and promotion are never granted by default.

2.7.4 Tenure-Track Contract Extension

Extension of a tenure-track contract is granted when circumstances arise that may interfere substantially with a faculty member's ability to pursue their professional responsibilities (teaching, research/scholarship, service) while on the tenure track. At the time of tenure consideration, a faculty member who has received an extension or extensions will be considered using the same tenure criteria as those applied to other faculty in the college/school.

Length and frequency

Tenure-track contract extensions are granted in one-year increments. Two extensions are normally the maximum that will be granted for any combination of circumstances. The Provost may approve exceptions to this limit. However, in no case will a candidate receive more than three extensions. Tenure-track study leaves are independent of these extensions, but should generally not immediately follow a tenure-track contract extension.

Procedure for request and approval

The faculty member's request, in writing, to the local academic unit head must clearly state the circumstances that justify an extension of the tenure-track contract. The recommendation of the local academic unit head is forwarded to the Dean, if applicable, who forwards a recommendation to the Provost for final approval.

Medically-related extensions will correspond with the [Department of Labor Family and Medical Leave Act \(FMLA\)](#), [University Policy 2215](#) (Family Medical Leave), [University Policy 2230](#) (Faculty Paid Parental Leave), [University Policy 2232](#) (Sick Leave Policy for Faculty under the Traditional Sick Leave Plan), and/or [the Virginia Sickness and Disability Program \(VSDP\)](#).

Circumstances

1. The birth, adoption, or foster placement of a child

A faculty member who becomes a parent should request the tenure-track contract extension within one year of the child's arrival in the family and prior to August 25th of the academic year in which the tenure decision would have been made. Multiple births or multiple adoptions at the same time result in the same one-year extension as single births or adoptions.

2. Serious health condition

A tenure-track contract extension may be requested based on a serious personal health condition or a serious health condition of a member of the faculty member's immediate family. A serious personal health condition or serious health condition within the immediate family will be defined according to the FMLA criteria for family and medical leave. Human Resources must receive written certification by the primary treating physician. The request for extension must be made within three months of Human Resources & Payroll's certification of family and medical leave.

3. Military Service

In accordance with the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), a tenure-track faculty member who is also a member of the U.S. military and is called to active duty will be granted a tenure-track contract extension. The extension will last for the duration of the active duty assignment, rounded to the nearest year, but will not exceed the extension period provided by USERRA. For example, an active duty assignment lasting between 4 through 15 months will earn a one-year extension, 16 through 27 months will earn a two-year extension. The faculty member should make the

request as early as possible before entering active duty and prior to August 25th of the academic year in which the tenure decision would have been made.

4. Other Extraordinary Circumstances

Tenure-track faculty members who engage in important public or University service may request a tenure-track contract extension. The request should be made prior to August 25th of the academic year in which the tenure decision would have been made.

If there are circumstances beyond the faculty member's control that prevent them from fulfilling the professional responsibilities required for tenure consideration, the faculty member may request a tenure-track contract extension. The request should be made prior to August 25th of the academic year in which the tenure decision would have been made.

2.8 Appeal of Negative Decisions in Renewal, Tenure and Promotion Cases.

The decision of the President or of the Provost not to recommend renewal, tenure or promotion may be appealed to the University Promotion, Tenure and Renewal Appeal Committee (UPTRAC) as provided in this section. The intent of the appeal procedure is to provide a fair and competent review of the decision. The decision whether to appoint or reappoint a Term Faculty member may not be appealed.

2.8.1 Grounds for Appeal

An appeal must be based on one or more of the following reasons:

1. Substantial New Evidence;
2. material procedural irregularity;
3. violation of federal or state law or university policy related to nondiscrimination;
4. inadequate or faulty consideration of evidence; or
5. violation of academic freedom as defined in [Section 2.11.1](#) and [Section 2.11.2.1](#).

“Substantial New Evidence” means evidence that was not available at the time of the first-level review and that falls only within one or more of the following categories:

- a. Scholarly work accepted for publication, or creative work exhibited, performed, or published, or other evidence of scholarly distinction.
- b. Grants awarded.
- c. Reviews of the candidate's scholarly or creative work that have been published.
- d. Substantial evidence of significantly improved teaching.
- e. Substantial evidence of significantly increased and influential professional service.

2.8.2 University Promotion, Tenure and Renewal Appeal Committee

2.8.2.1 Committee Charge

Upon written appeal, the UPTRAC reviews the decision of the Provost or President not to recommend tenure, promotion, or renewal. The committee must publish and follow standard procedures for its conduct that are consistent with provisions in this section. The committee

members (including the member chosen by the appellant) do not act as advocates for either the appellant or the university. The committee does not review the merits of the tenure, promotion, or renewal case itself.

2.8.2.2 Committee Composition

The UPTRAC shall be composed of three tenured faculty members and two alternate tenured faculty members, elected by the Faculty Senate to staggered terms; and two tenured administrators and one alternate tenured administrator, selected by the Provost to staggered terms. Committee terms are for two years. No two committee members may be from the same local academic unit or administrative unit. A member can serve a maximum of two consecutive 2-year terms, although subsequent non-consecutive service is permitted. Elected alternate members' terms formally begin during the first year that they participate in an appeal. For the purpose of service on the UPTRAC, a local academic unit administrator is considered an administrator.

The appellant will choose a tenured administrator to serve as the sixth member of the committee for the duration of the appellant's appeal. The administrator must be someone who does not have a conflict of interest, who did not participate at an earlier stage of the appellant's promotion, tenure, or renewal process, and who does not come from the same administrative unit as one of the Provost's appointees.

If any member of the UPTRAC has a conflict of interest, participated at an earlier stage of the appellant's promotion, tenure, or renewal process, or is otherwise unable to serve, such member shall not participate in the appeal, and an alternate will serve instead. In the event there are not sufficient faculty alternates to serve, the Faculty Senate shall elect additional alternate members to serve for the appeal. If the need for faculty alternates arises after the last Faculty Senate meeting of the academic year, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee will select the alternate(s). In the event there are not sufficient administrators to serve, the Provost shall select alternate members to serve for the appeal.

2.8.3 Appeal Procedure

To initiate an appeal, the appellant must file a written petition for appeal with the President of the Faculty Senate and the Provost's office no later than May 14 of the year in which tenure, promotion, or renewal was not recommended. The reasons for the appeal must be clearly stated, and the appeal must be limited to the grounds permitted in [Section 2.8.1](#). All documentation and evidence in support of the appeal must accompany the petition. The burden of proof in the appeal rests with the appellant.

If the appellant alleges violation of federal or state law or University policy related to nondiscrimination, the appeal process shall be held in abeyance until the Office of Access, Compliance, and Community has completed a formal investigation of the allegation and has issued a final written determination.

In accordance with its published procedures, the UPTRAC will consider all grounds of the appeal and the accompanying documentation and evidence. The UPTRAC may require submission of additional documentation and evidence.

At the conclusion of its deliberations, the UPTRAC will simultaneously forward to the Provost, the appellant's local academic unit, and the appellant a complete case file consisting of: the appeal petition with accompanying documentation and evidence; any additional documentation and evidence requested by the committee; a written report that includes its decision of whether the case has sufficient merit and the basis for its decision; the numerical result of the vote of the UPTRAC members; and any recommendation to the Provost, if applicable.

If the UPTRAC does not determine by majority vote that the appeal has sufficient merit, the case proceeds to final consideration as provided in [Section 2.8.4](#). If the UPTRAC determines by majority vote that the appeal has sufficient merit, the case is remanded as provided in [Section 2.8.5](#).

2.8.4 Final Consideration When Appeal Not Found to Have Merit

If the UPTRAC does not determine by majority vote that the appeal has sufficient merit, the Provost considers the case. The Provost forwards the case file to the President and makes a recommendation as to whether renewal, tenure or promotion should be granted.

If the President believes that tenure or promotion should be granted, the recommendation is forwarded to the Board of Visitors for final action. If the President decides that renewal should be granted, the decision is final. If the President decides renewal, tenure or promotion should not be granted, the decision is final and there is no further appeal.

2.8.5 Remand Process

If the UPTRAC determines by majority vote that the appeal has sufficient merit, then the UPTRAC remands the case to the lowest level at which the grounds for appeal was based or to the first-level review committee if the grounds for appeal is based on Substantial New Evidence ([Section 2.8.1](#)). At that level and each subsequent level specified in [Section 2.7.3](#) (or in the case of renewal, [Section 2.7.2](#)), the case shall be evaluated by the designated bodies as they are constituted at the time of the remand, and by the individuals holding the relevant administrative positions at the time of the remand. At each level, a recommendation should normally be completed within fourteen calendar days and forwarded to the next level. The reason for the UPTRAC remand must be explicitly addressed in the recommendation at each level. No case may be remanded more than once.

If the President believes that promotion or tenure should be granted, the recommendation is submitted to the Board of Visitors for final action. If the President decides that renewal should be granted, the decision is final. If the President decides renewal, promotion or tenure should not be granted, the decision is final and there is no further appeal.

At each level of review in the remand process, if a recommendation or decision is negative, a clear, written justification is sent concurrently to the appellant, to the local academic unit, and to the next level of review.

2.9 Policies and Procedures Relating to Termination

2.9.1 Financial Exigency

Financial exigency is understood to mean an urgent need to reorder the nature and magnitude of the institution's financial obligations in such a way as to restore or preserve the institution's financial stability. The existence of a state of financial exigency must be established by clear and convincing evidence. This can be demonstrated by various means; for example, by showing declining enrollments coupled with operating deficits of a magnitude or duration as to leave little doubt about the financial weakness of the institution. The crisis should be of sufficient gravity that it cannot be met by less drastic means than salary reductions or termination of faculty appointments.

The University strives to maintain a reasonable balance between positions devoted to its primary missions (instruction, research, and public service) and those devoted to its support programs (e.g., the library, student services, general administration). If threatened by the possibility of financial exigency, the institution will undertake retrenchment in such a way that this balance is preserved, and the faculty will participate with others in the decision-making process. This initial process of retrenchment will not include the termination or reduction of salaries of faculty on tenure-track or tenured appointments. Should it become necessary for the Board of Visitors to consider declaring a state of financial exigency, the Faculty Senate will participate in the determinations that lead to the Board's decision.

Formal declaration of financial exigency by the Board of Visitors initiates the next phase of retrenchment. Administrators responsible for developing specific budget reduction plans must consult with tenured and tenure-track faculty in developing these plans, which may include salary or personnel reduction programs.

Termination of appointment of tenured faculty should be a last resort. Should reductions in the size of the faculty become necessary, the affected units will make reductions on the following priority basis:

1. Termination of part-time faculty;
2. Termination of faculty on fixed-term appointments;
3. Termination of tenure-track faculty;
4. Termination of tenured faculty.

Unless financial, academic, or equity and diversity considerations are demonstrated to be overriding, then tenure, rank, and order of seniority in rank will be respected, in that order, in the termination of appointment of faculty on tenured and tenure-track appointments. Administrators responsible for developing specific budget reduction plans involving the termination of appointment of tenured and tenure-track faculty must consult with tenured and tenure-track

faculty in developing these plans. Principles and criteria for identifying specific individuals whose appointments are to be terminated should be formulated by tenured and tenure-track-faculty.

Any faculty member whose appointment is to be terminated due to financial exigency may request a hearing before the college/school grievance committee. The findings of the committee will be presented to the Board of Visitors for final action after review by the President.

In all cases of termination of appointment because of financial exigency, the position of the terminated faculty member will not be filled within a period of three years, unless the released faculty member has been offered reinstatement. Faculty members are responsible for keeping a current address on file with the University. Any offer of reinstatement will be sent by registered mail, and the faculty member must respond to it within one month of its receipt. Should termination of full-time untenured faculty members become necessary during the term of their appointment, the University will give them as much notice as possible and no less than thirty days. Tenured faculty members will be guaranteed employment for one additional academic year.

2.9.2 Discontinuation of Degree Programs

The recommendation to discontinue a degree program will be based upon educational considerations as determined jointly by the faculty and the administration. Such educational considerations must reflect long-range judgments that the educational mission of the institution as a whole will be enhanced by the discontinuation. Faculty adversely affected by the discontinuation of a degree program and holding multi-year term appointments will be given at least one academic year's notice of the decision to discontinue a program. Tenured and tenure-track faculty will be given opportunities to join the faculties of other programs, and, if appropriate, will be assisted by the institution through retraining and professional development opportunities. Procedures and safeguards will parallel those provided for termination of appointment in the face of financial exigency, where applicable (see [Section 2.9.1](#)).

2.9.3 Termination of Appointment of Tenured, Tenure-Track, and Term Faculty Members for Cause

Termination of appointment for cause is the involuntary termination of the employment of faculty members for reasons directly and substantially related to their professional conduct. Terminations will not be used to restrain faculty members in their exercise of their Constitutional rights. Tenure does not protect an individual from removal for cause.

Adequate cause may include, but is not restricted to: (i) violations of professional ethics; (ii) inability to perform assigned duties satisfactorily because of incarceration; (iii) exploitation of the power a faculty member may have over other members of the academic community (e.g., improper sexual advances, financial reward or punishment); (iv) failure to carry out professional obligations or assigned responsibilities; (v) falsification of information relating to professional qualifications; (vi) violation of institutional rules regarding outside employment; (vii) abusive or violent conduct toward members of the university community; (viii) retaliation for exercise of

free speech and/or association.; and (ix) a finding of research or scholarship misconduct ([University Policy 4007: Misconduct in Research and Scholarship](#)).

The following procedures are designed to ensure due process in termination of appointment proceedings:

- a. If the conduct of a faculty member comes into question, the President or the Provost will discuss the matter with the faculty member personally.
- b. If the matter is not resolved in this conference, it will be referred by the President to the University Grievance Committee. This committee is charged to initiate an inquiry into the matter and to recommend whether or not the situation requires that formal proceedings for termination be instituted. This recommendation is confidential and advisory to the President of the University. The Grievance Committee must complete its work and report to the President within fourteen calendar days of receipt of the President's letter referring the matter to the committee.
- c. The President must decide if formal termination proceedings are to begin. If so, the President will draw up the charge within fourteen calendar days from receipt of the committee's report. If the committee concurs in this decision it should join in the formulation of the statement.
- d. The President will initiate the termination proceedings with a written communication to the faculty member (the "Notice"). The Notice shall include:
 1. The charge that has been formulated.
 2. The procedural rights, in detail, of the faculty member (as outlined below).
 3. A statement that the faculty member may request a hearing within fourteen calendar days of receipt of the charge.
 4. A statement that if the faculty member fails to respond, the President will make a recommendation for termination to the Board of Visitors without benefit of a committee hearing or report.
 5. A statement that if the faculty member timely responds, waives the right to a hearing, but denies that adequacy of cause for termination exists, the University Grievance Committee which conducted the inquiry will make a recommendation to the Board of Visitors on adequacy of cause on the basis of available evidence.
- e. Within (14) calendar days of the date the President transmits the Notice, the faculty member must respond to the President and must either: (i) acknowledge in writing the validity of the charges and agree that they constitute an adequate cause for termination; (ii) deny that adequacy of cause for termination exists, but waive the right to a hearing; or (iii) deny that adequacy of cause for termination exists, and request a hearing. If the faculty

member denies that adequacy of cause for termination exists and requests a hearing, the President will notify the Faculty Senate and the Faculty Senate will nominate an ad hoc committee (the Hearing Committee) within seven (7) calendar days of receipt of the faculty member's response by the President. The Faculty Senate shall nominate nine full-time faculty members to serve on the Hearing Committee. These faculty members should be nominated on the basis of their objectivity and competence and of the regard in which they are held in the academic community; they will be determined to have no bias or untoward interest in the case and to be available at the anticipated time of hearing. Administrators, members of the University Grievance Committee, department chairs, and other faculty of the same local academic unit as the faculty member are ineligible to serve on this committee. The faculty member and the President will each have a maximum of two challenges from among the nominees without stated cause. The President will then name a five-member Hearing Committee from the remaining nominees. The Hearing Committee will elect its own chair. All materials and evidence the parties wish to have considered must be made available to the parties and to the committee.

f. The Hearing Committee shall conduct a hearing no sooner than 14 calendar days and no later than 28 calendar days following the establishment of the Hearing Committee. The Hearing Committee will observe the following procedures:

1. The faculty member may choose an academic and/or legal representatives to be present at the hearing. The administrative representative will enjoy the same rights.
2. At the request of either party or on the initiative of the Hearing Committee, representatives of one or more recognized educational associations may be present as observers.
3. The faculty member decides whether the hearing will be open or closed.
4. A verbatim record of the complete hearing will be made. If the faculty member so requests, a copy will be provided without cost.
5. The parties will make every reasonable effort to assure the availability of witnesses and documents under their control.
6. The hearing will be adjourned when necessary to enable either party to investigate newly disclosed evidence.
7. Both parties have the right to examine all documents and question all witnesses.
8. Witnesses may include, but are not limited to faculty members or administrators from any institution of higher education accredited by a regional accrediting association.
9. The faculty member, the administration, and the Hearing Committee are to avoid publicity about the case until the proceedings have been completed by the Board of Visitors. Only necessary announcements such as hearing time and place are permitted.

10. All the evidence should be duly recorded. It is not necessary to follow formal rules of court procedures.

11. In the interest of avoiding unnecessary expense and to promote prompt resolution of matters, the Hearing Committee may set reasonable time limits on the hearing, and appropriately limit testimony, witnesses, or introduction of other evidence.

g. The decision of the Hearing Committee must be based only on the complete record of the hearing considered as a whole. The burden of proof that adequate grounds exist for termination rests with the Administration. The Hearing Committee reports to the President, normally with one of the following recommendations:

1. cause has not been established and the faculty member should not be terminated.

2. cause has been established and the faculty member should be terminated.

3. cause has been established, but a lesser penalty than termination is appropriate.

h. If the President accepts the recommendation of the Hearing Committee that no cause has been established, then the process is concluded.

i. If the President accepts the recommendation of the Hearing Committee that cause has been established and the faculty member should be terminated, then the President's recommendation of this action to the Board of Visitors must include a record of the case.

j. If the President accepts the recommendation of the Hearing Committee that cause has been established but a lesser penalty than termination is appropriate, then such lesser penalties will be determined administratively.

k. Should the President reject the recommendation of the Hearing Committee that cause for termination or other disciplinary action has not been established, then the President must state the reasons for rejection in writing to the Hearing Committee and the faculty member. In addition, all parties must be afforded an opportunity to respond to this statement before the President forwards a recommendation for termination to the Board of Visitors.

l. Should the President reject the decision of the Hearing Committee that cause has been established and therefore a recommendation for termination will not be forwarded, then the President must state the reasons for rejection in writing to the Hearing Committee and the faculty member.

m. If the faculty member wishes to appeal the President's decision, the Board of Visitors will evaluate the President's recommendation for termination, using the record of the hearing. It may at its discretion also afford an opportunity for the parties to present their arguments orally or in writing. If the Board of Visitors rejects the President's recommendation for termination, then the hearing process is concluded. The Board of Visitors renders the final decision.

n. Normally the faculty member will remain at their usual duties until the final decision is reached by the Board of Visitors. The faculty member may be suspended only if the President determines that continued work threatens immediate harm to self or others (see [Section 2.10.9](#)) or in situations where the faculty member has been found guilty by a court of a felony crime. Any such suspension is to be with pay. When termination charges are brought against a faculty member who fails to perform specified duties during the course of termination proceedings, the President can withhold a portion of the faculty member's salary prorated to the duties not performed.

2.10 Faculty Duties and Responsibilities

2.10.1 University Policies

Faculty are responsible for complying with a wide range of university policies (see University Policies: <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/>).

Of particular importance are:

1104 Copyrighted Materials

<http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/use-and-reproduction-of-copyrighted-materials/>

1114 Data Stewardship

<http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/data-stewardship/>

1201 Non-Discrimination Policy

<http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/non-discrimination-policy/>

1202 Sexual and Gender-Based Misconduct and Other Forms of Interpersonal Violence

<http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/sexual-harassment-policy/>

1203 Non-Discrimination and Reasonable Accommodation on the Basis of Disability

<http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/non-discrimination-and-reasonable-accommodation-on-the-basis-of-disability/>

1301 Responsible Use of Computing

<http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>

1406 Environmental Health and Safety

<http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/environmental-health-and-safety/>

4007 Misconduct in Research and Scholarship

<http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/misconduct-in-research-and-scholarship/>

4001 Conflict of Interests

<http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/financial-conflicts-of-interest-in-university-contracts-with-businesses-under-virginia-law/>

4021 Outside Professional Activities and Conflict of Commitment

<https://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/outside-professional-activities-and-conflict-of-committment/>

2.10.2 Professional Ethics

Although no set of rules or professional code can guarantee or take the place of a scholar's personal integrity, the University believes that the "Statement of Professional Ethics" and the "Statement on Plagiarism" promulgated by the American Association of University Professors at <http://www.aaup.org/aaup> serve as a reminder of the obligations assumed by all members of the professoriate. Faculty members must also adhere to the ethical standards of their respective professional associations and to university policies related to professional ethics (e.g., Research and Scholarship Misconduct, Responsible Use of Computing) while employed by the University. Please see University Policies at <https://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/>. In addition, unethical or unprofessional conduct may include, but is not limited to, repeated instances of workplace bullying, intimidation, harassment, verbal abuse, sabotage, and threatening behavior.

Generally accepted standards of professional ethics require faculty members who plan to resign or retire to give notice in writing to their local unit administrator no later than May 15. Only in personal emergencies or for other compelling reasons should faculty members leave the institution during the academic year, except when this coincides with the expiration of their contractual obligations.

Allegations of unethical or unprofessional conduct may be brought to the attention of the Provost, President, employee relations specialists in the Human Resources and Payroll office, or the appropriate University or local academic unit grievance committee (see [Section 2.11.2.1](#) and [Section 2.9.3](#)). In all cases, all parties have a right to procedural due process.

2.10.3 Faculty Work Assignments

Faculty work assignments include some combination of teaching, research and scholarship, and/or service.

The faculty of each local academic unit prepares and maintains a plan for the equitable allocation of teaching, scholarly and service activities that will be components of the individual work assignments of its faculty. For the purposes of meeting institutional needs while ensuring fairness and equity throughout the University, the plan of each local unit is prepared in consultation with the appropriate Dean and/or the Provost.

Faculty may use relevant grievance procedures to address disputes about work assignments. If the grievance is against the chair, the LAU's grievance committee is advisory to the Dean. If the grievance is against the Dean, the university grievance committee is advisory to the Provost or designee. In all cases, the Provost's decision is final.

2.10.4 Faculty Absences from Class

Except for sudden illnesses and other emergencies, faculty members must arrange in advance for absences and notify their local unit administrator. Faculty members should arrange for qualified colleagues to assume their duties temporarily and/or leave appropriate assignments for their students. In emergencies they should make every effort to notify promptly class members and the local academic unit or program office as soon as practicable.

2.10.5 Faculty Responsibility Under the Honor Code

Since the founding of the University, the Honor Code has been and remains a part of the educational process at George Mason. Although the students are primarily responsible for preserving and enforcing the code, the faculty share common interests with the students in matters of academic integrity.

Faculty are expected to have a strong commitment to the Honor Code, and to support and to encourage students in their pursuit of its goals.

2.10.6 Political Candidacy

Faculty who run for elective office must inform the President in advance and must be aware of possible conflicts of interest and comply with applicable laws and university policies.

2.10.7 Full-Time Faculty Teaching at Other Institutions

Full-time faculty are expected to teach their assigned course loads (as determined by their respective unit) unless they are granted release time for research, administrative and service functions or "buy down" their effort through sponsored program activities. This precludes teaching as "instructor of record" for another educational institution during the academic year (exceptions require the permission of the Provost). Full-time faculty who are teaching part-time at another institution may not at the same time teach overload courses.

This policy does not pertain to summer employment for nine-month faculty.

Requests for exceptions, generally for reasons of professional growth, must be submitted well in advance to the local academic unit head and the respective Dean. Approval, if granted, will normally apply only for one or two semesters. Approval would be made with the understanding that the outside teaching effort does not compromise the faculty member's professional responsibilities to George Mason University or create a conflict of interest.

2.10.8 Temporary or Short-Term Relief of Faculty from Duties and Responsibilities

Preserving the safety and well-being of students and faculty is a paramount concern. On occasion it might be determined that a faculty member is unable to carry out their duties or responsibilities, including classroom instruction. If at any time a faculty member's performance of their responsibilities or duties, including classroom instruction, is judged by the Provost or a designated representative to constitute an immediate danger or serious threat of substantial damage to self or others, the faculty member will be immediately relieved of their duties and responsibilities, including exclusion from the classroom, until such time as they can safely re-assume them. Re-assumption may entail a reassignment of primary duties and responsibilities

within the local academic unit or university. “Temporary relief of duties” for documented medical reasons is described in more detail in [Section 2.10.10](#) The Family and Medical Leave Act. “Permanent termination of appointment for cause” is described in [Section 2.9.3](#) Termination of Appointment of Tenure, Tenure-Track, and Term Faculty Members for Cause.

Unless waived by the faculty member, the grievance committee of the college/school will be convened within three days after any such relief of duties, responsibilities, or classroom exclusion. To safeguard against abuse of this emergency authority, this committee will conduct a brief but careful, confidential, and thorough examination of the particulars of the case and report within three days to the Provost or designated representative. Should the committee’s findings not support the relief of duties, responsibilities, or classroom exclusion, this committee will also report its findings to the President of the Faculty Senate.

2.10.9 The Family and Medical Leave Act

Relief from faculty duties or responsibilities for medical reasons may be governed by the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Details can be found at the website: <https://hr.gmu.edu/benefits/leave/family-and-medical-leave-act-fmla/>.

The FMLA describes the federal regulations regarding job-protected leave to eligible employees for certain family and medical reasons. In consideration of instructional faculty duties and responsibilities related to workloads and the university’s academic calendar, whenever possible the university will attempt to adapt application of the FMLA to the academic calendar and the faculty member’s needs. The federal regulations pertaining to the FMLA can be found at: <http://www.dol.gov/dol/topic/benefits-leave/fmla.htm>. Faculty members may also be eligible, depending on their medical condition, for either long-term or short-term disability benefits. For details see: <http://hr.gmu.edu/benefits>.

2.11 Faculty Rights and Privileges

2.11.1 Academic Freedom and Civil Liberties

One of the vital activities of a university is the critical examination of ideologies and institutions. It is essential that faculty members have the right to express their views and the University is committed to upholding the principles of academic freedom to protect the expression of faculty members without fear of censorship or retaliation. The University defines academic freedom as:

1. the right to unrestricted exposition of subjects (including controversial questions) within one's field and professional obligations, both on and off the campus, in a professionally responsible manner; and
2. the right to unrestricted scholarly research and publication within one’s field and professional obligations, in a professionally responsible manner within the limits imposed by the resources of the institution.

The University is fully aware that faculty members must enjoy, in addition to academic freedom, the same civil liberties as other citizens. In the exercise of their civil liberties or academic

freedom, faculty have an obligation to make clear that they are not representing the institution, its Board, or the Commonwealth of Virginia. All employees have an obligation to avoid any action which appears or purports to commit the institution to a position on any issue without appropriate approval.

Faculty personnel actions, including initial appointment, reappointment, annual performance evaluations, and promotion and tenure will not be affected by considerations such as the exercise of academic freedom and civil liberties.

2.11.2 Grievances

2.11.2.1 Policies Concerning Grievances

This section does not apply to the resolution of (1) research and scholarship misconduct allegations, which are governed by [University Policy 4007 –Misconduct in Research and Scholarship](#); (2) allegations of discrimination, which are governed by procedures published by the Office of Access, Compliance, and Community; (3) allegations of violation of University or Commonwealth workplace policy, which are governed by the procedures published by Human Resources and Payroll; or (4) alleged violations of academic freedom related to reappointment, promotion or tenure, for which [Section 2.8](#) applies.

The university and each college/school are required to have a standing committee charged to investigate internal grievances in a timely manner concerning (i) alleged violations of academic freedom; (ii) other conditions of employment, such as work assignments, salaries, facilities, and support services (except for grievances related to Discontinuation of Degree Programs ([Section 2.9.2](#)) and Termination for Cause ([Section 2.9.3](#)); and (iii) charges of unprofessional or unethical conduct brought by one faculty member against another.

College/school committees hear grievances from faculty whose primary affiliation is within the college/school. The University Grievance Committee hears grievances that involve faculty from more than one college/school as well as other grievances mandated in the committee charge. The University Grievance Committee hears all grievances against academic administrators at or above the level of Dean. See [Section 2.11.2.2](#).

The University Grievance Committee and each college/school grievance committee will establish, publish, and disseminate their grievance procedures. Upon receipt of a grievance that includes an allegation of violation of federal or state law, or discrimination in violation of federal or state law or University policy, the grievance hearing shall be held in abeyance until the Office of Access, Compliance, and Community has investigated the allegation and has submitted a report to the committee.

In addition to hearing specific cases, the committees may initiate, as they deem necessary, discussions with appropriate administrators about any matters that fall within the committees' purview. In the course of such discussions, however, they may not commit the faculties of their units to changes in grievance policy unless specifically authorized to do so.

At their discretion, academic departments may also establish grievance committees. Their procedures should be similar to those of the collegiate committees.

2.11.2.2 Grievance Procedures

1. Grievance procedures for all Grievance Committees must adhere to the following basic elements.

- a. The faculty member initiates a grievance by filing a written statement of the grievance, along with supporting documentation, with the Chair of the relevant grievance committee. No grievance may be heard on behalf of a third party or group.
- b. Before the grievance itself is considered, the committee must conclude that the petitioner's case appears to have merit.
- c. The faculty member may withdraw the grievance at any time without the grievance committee's approval. In such case, the grievance committee will not make a decision or recommendation.
- d. No member of the committee with a conflict of interest in the grievance case may participate in the proceedings.
- e. Committees are particularly charged to be alert to instances of inequitable treatment and retaliation against colleagues who have filed grievances.

2. Within a college/school, grievances against fellow faculty members and academic administrators below the level of Dean are heard by the local grievance committee.

- a. If the grievance is against a fellow faculty member, the committee is charged to investigate the facts of the case and determine an appropriate resolution. The grievance committee's decision is final.
- b. If the grievance is against an academic administrator below the level of Dean, the committee is charged to investigate the facts of the case and to recommend a resolution, which is then forwarded to the Dean, whose decision is final.

3. Grievances against academic administrators at or above the level of Dean are heard by the University Grievance Committee.

- a. If the grievance is against a Dean, the committee's recommendation is forwarded to the Provost, whose decision is final.
- b. If the grievance is against the Provost, the committee's recommendation is forwarded to the President, whose decision is final.
- c. If the grievance is against the President, the committee's recommendation is forwarded to the Rector of the Board of Visitors, whose decision is final.

2.12 Department Chairs

Department chairs serve in a dual capacity: as representatives of their faculty colleagues to the administration and as spokespersons of the administration to their faculty colleagues.

Normally, chairs serve in twelve-month instructional faculty appointments and are subject to all university policies pertaining to twelve-month appointees, including annual leave policies. Their specific responsibilities, including teaching assignments, are negotiated with the administration at the time of appointment. The term of appointment for a department chair is four years; appointments are renewable. Chairs who serve two or more consecutive terms receive at the end of their last term a study leave equivalent to one-half year's pay for a full academic year's leave or full pay for a semester's leave. If they elect to take such a study leave, however, they may not succeed themselves in an additional term as chair.

During an unforeseen vacancy or during illness or temporary absences of an incumbent chair, the Dean or Provost may appoint an acting chair to serve until such time as the regularly appointed chair assumes or reassumes the position.

2.12.1 Duties and Responsibilities

The duties and responsibilities of department chairs are to:

1. Represent the unit to the university community and serve as a channel of communication on program, personnel, and budget matters;
2. Encourage and foster excellence in teaching, research and scholarship, professional and university service and provide leadership in the pursuit of the University's commitment to affirmative action and equal opportunity;
3. Coordinate, in consultation with the unit's faculty, the unit's academic programs, and plan and administer the unit's budget;
4. Make faculty work assignments;
5. Evaluate faculty for purposes of reappointment, promotion, tenure; and make annual reviews for the purpose of recommending salary increases;
6. Supervise staff and part-time faculty and provide an environment that, within the limitations of available resources, is supportive of faculty professional activities and goals;
7. Consult regarding fair employment practices with the Office of Access, Compliance, and Community;
8. Consult with Human Resources and Payroll as appropriate on faculty and staff matters.

2.12.2 Policies on Appointment and Renewal

Department chairs are appointed by the Provost on the recommendation of the departmental faculty and the Dean in accordance with the following guidelines:

- a. Since department chairs function in a dual administrative/faculty capacity, their selection requires substantive involvement of both the administration and the department faculty. Except under unusual circumstances, the final candidate must be acceptable to both.
- b. Procedures for the selection of department chairs therefore foster joint faculty/administrative appraisals of candidates.
- c. Similar criteria for reviewing incumbent chairs and searching for new chairs are applied, with the following clarifications:
 - i. Incumbent chairs under review for renewal are kept fully apprised of the methods adopted by the review committee and are supplied a copy of the committee's report at the time of its submission to the Dean. Chairs have the same rights with regard to their personnel files as other faculty members.
 - ii. An acting chair is considered as a possible candidate for a vacant position rather than as a candidate for renewal of their term.
 - iii. Incumbent chairs who are not reappointed by the Provost because of negative recommendations and action at the department, college/school, or university level will receive a prompt account in writing as to the reasons for this non-renewal, if they request it.

2.12.3 Procedures for Appointment and Renewal

2.12.3.1 Search Procedures

Search procedures are initiated after the incumbent chair has declined to seek reappointment, or after the Provost has notified the incumbent chair of the decision not to reappoint, or when the position is vacant. A search committee is constituted no later than December 10th. This committee consists of five faculty, all of whom have held a full-time instructional appointment for at least one year: (i) a chair, appointed by the Dean, from among the faculty of the college/school but not of the department; (ii) two faculty appointed by the Dean from among the faculty of the department; and (iii) two faculty elected from among and by the faculty of the department. The department elects its members of the committee after the appointments by the Dean have been made known. The four department faculty members must include at least one representative from each of the faculty groups (tenured, tenure-track, instructional term) who have appointments in the department. If the qualifications for faculty membership cannot be met, the Dean will consult with the department faculty before appointing another faculty member.

The search committee:

1. consults with the faculty of the department and other persons it deems appropriate about the qualities to be sought in a new chair;

2. seeks qualified candidates from inside or, if the Dean has given notice that external candidates can be considered, from outside the department;
3. requests dossiers, including references, from candidates outside the University, when appropriate;
4. consults regarding fair employment practices with the Office of Access, Compliance, and Community;
5. evaluates qualifications and dossiers of candidates;
6. supervises departmental discussion of candidates and balloting to determine the wishes of the department faculty; and
7. submits to the Dean reports including a general assessment of the several candidates, a summary of departmental discussions, the results of departmental balloting, and its own recommendations.

The Dean makes a recommendation with an accompanying justification in writing to the Provost and the departmental faculty, including in that recommendation the full report of the committee. If the committee and the departmental faculty are not in agreement or if the Dean does not endorse the recommendation of a majority of the committee and/or the department faculty, the Dean meets with the committee and/or the faculty to seek committee and faculty perspectives and try to reach consensus before submitting the Dean's recommendation to the Provost.

If the committee and/or the departmental faculty and the Dean have remained in disagreement, or if the Provost does not endorse the joint recommendation of the committee and the Dean, the Provost meets with the committee and the Dean to seek each party's perspectives and to try to reach consensus. The final decision rests with the Provost.

The Provost apprises the Dean, the search committee, and the faculty of the decision. Upon notification of the Provost's decision, the Dean extends a formal invitation to the person chosen.

If the vacancy is not filled nor an offer extended by May 1st, the Provost, after consultation with the Dean and the faculty of the department, appoints an acting chair and so notifies members of the department by July 1st.

2.12.3.2 Renewal Procedures

The Dean of the appropriate college/school writes to the incumbent chair before the last day of classes of the spring term of the academic year preceding the chair's final year of appointment. In this letter, the Dean states that the chair will be considered a candidate for reappointment unless the chair withdraws from consideration in writing before September 1st.

If the incumbent chair wishes to be a candidate for reappointment, the Dean constitutes by September 15th a committee to elicit and formulate the views of the faculty of the department.

The committee is constituted according to the specifications governing the composition of the search committee described in [Section 2.12.3.1](#).

To begin the process for chair renewals, the committee consults with the department faculty and other persons it deems appropriate concerning the past performance of the chair and the desirability of the chair's renewal. The committee ascertains the will of the department faculty through an anonymous ballot and makes recommendations in writing to the Dean no later than October 15th. LAU bylaws should specify who has voting rights. The report includes the division of departmental and committee balloting by numbers only.

The Dean makes a recommendation to the Provost by November 1st. The Provost decides whether or not to reappoint the incumbent chair by December 1st and promptly communicates this decision and supporting reasons in writing to the Dean, the committee, the departmental faculty, and the chair.

2.12.4 Removal

The faculty of a department, under extraordinary circumstances, may petition the Dean to remove a chair who no longer enjoys the trust and confidence of the faculty. A petition of this type will be conveyed to the Dean only if supported by at least two-thirds of the full-time instructional faculty of the department. Upon receipt of such a petition, the Dean, after having inquired into the circumstances which have resulted in the petition, will make a recommendation to the Provost whether or not the removal of the chair is in the best interests of the department and/or the University. The Provost will make the final determination.

The Provost, under extraordinary circumstances, and in consultation with the Dean and the faculty, may remove a chair who is failing to perform at an acceptable level, even when the chair is covered by a multi-year contract. The Provost will give the chair at least thirty days notice.

2.13 Directors of Academic Programs Spanning More Than a Single Academic Unit

Administratively, directors of programs that are not internal to a single local academic unit are regarded as the equivalent of department chairs. They have the same duties and responsibilities as department chairs except that, since faculty members are not appointed to primary affiliation in a program faculty, they do not make primary evaluations of faculty for purposes of reappointment, promotion, and tenure, and they do not make primary annual reviews for the purpose of recommending salary increases.

Policies on appointment and renewal of directors of academic programs are the same as those described for department chairs in [Section 2.12.2](#) and [Section 2.12.3](#). These procedures may be modified as appropriate to the size and complexity of the program to be directed. Program directors are subject to removal in accordance with the provisions set out for department chairs in [Section 2.12.4](#).

CHAPTER III. FACULTY COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

3.1 Faculty Salaries

State colleges and universities in the Commonwealth of Virginia do not have a common salary schedule. The General Assembly determines appropriations for state colleges and universities, which includes funding for faculty salaries.

The University attempts to be as competitive as possible in its recruitment and retention of faculty. The differences that are found among disciplines and departments with regard to salary ranges within a given academic rank partially reflect supply and demand in the marketplace.

Faculty salaries for the current academic year appear on the Faculty Senate website.

3.2 Salary Increases

Subject to the availability of funding, salary increases are given annually and are based chiefly on performance. All faculty with an overall satisfactory annual evaluation (see [Section 2.6.1](#)) will receive at least a minimum salary increment. Salary increases may also reflect efforts to achieve equity. In the case that funding from the state is designated as a cost-of-living adjustment, it is the responsibility of the University to ensure such funds are disbursed accordingly.

Because annual evaluations are the primary basis for determining merit-based salary increases, local unit administrators will include the faculty member's performance evaluations over multiple years in making a recommendation if salary adjustments were not made in the preceding year(s).

The salary recommendation, including a justification and the amount of the increase, will be given to the faculty member in writing at the time it is transmitted to the next level.

Faculty members who are dissatisfied with a salary increase normally seek recourse within their local academic unit. If dissatisfaction persists, grievance procedures outlined in [Section 2.11.2](#) may be followed.

3.3 Summer Salary

The University offers a summer program consisting of several sessions. Full-time faculty members assigned to teach a summer course shall be paid 3.33% per credit hour (10% per three-credit course) of their nine-month salary. If a course is valued at a higher or lower amount for workload purposes during the academic year, the summer payment will be assigned by the academic unit accordingly. All full-time faculty who wish to teach in the summer shall be afforded an opportunity to teach one 3-credit course (or equivalent) at 10% of their annual nine-month salary, assuming they are qualified to teach the course and that the course meets minimal enrollment criteria and appropriate scheduling, curricular, and pedagogical needs. Furthermore, full-time faculty should not be excluded from teaching additional courses at 10% of their annual nine-month salary when no demonstrated financial constraints exist. Grievances over what constitutes financial constraints should be resolved at the local level, but if no agreement can be

reached, then the Provost and the Faculty Senate's Executive Committee will be the designated body to resolve the disagreement. Summer teaching is optional, and in no case may it be required of a faculty member. Faculty may be paid no more than one third of their prior academic year salary for all summer work, regardless of funding sources.

Faculty members whose contracts end in the spring semester prior to the start of summer, or whose contracts begin in the fall semester after the summer semester, will be paid for summer teaching according to the salary matrix. Exceptions can only be granted by the Provost Office.

Faculty and LAU administrators on 12-month contracts who teach during the summer do not earn additional pay for teaching unless the teaching assignment is an overload assignment. Overload teaching is paid according to the salary matrix and must be approved by the Provost.

3.4 Salary Matrix

Most adjunct faculty and full-time faculty teaching overload courses are paid on the salary matrix. Faculty in highly competitive areas of instruction may be paid above matrix rates. These exceptions are considered on an individual basis and in light of the prevailing job market.

3.5 Faculty Benefits

As employees of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Mason faculty members are provided with health insurance, retirement plans, life insurance, and medical and child care flexible spending accounts. In addition, the University offers certain employee-funded benefits. All such benefits are described in more detail on the Human Resources and Payroll web site (<http://hr.gmu.edu/>), along with a Total Compensation Calculator.

3.6 Faculty Development

The quality of the institution depends on the vitality of its faculty. Faculty members have a responsibility to continue to grow as scholars and educators so that they remain contributing members of the intellectual community. The University recognizes its responsibility to foster faculty growth by providing a variety of opportunities for professional development. These may include, among other opportunities, departmental study leaves, competitive awards in the form of summer stipends and University study leaves, opportunities to consider new approaches to teaching and the assessment of teaching (e.g. portfolio development), and assisting faculty with the application of new technologies to instruction.

3.6.1 Study Leave for Tenure-Track Faculty

All tenure-track assistant and associate professors will be granted a release from teaching responsibilities in the form of a one-semester study leave at some point during the first five years of their tenure-track appointment. The leave is at full pay and benefits. This leave is designed to assist tenure-track faculty in advancing their research, scholarly, or creative activities. The timing of this leave will be subject to approval by both the respective local academic unit head and the appropriate Dean. The timing of a leave may be delayed if in the judgment of the LAU administrator, the faculty member's services are needed for a particular semester.

Colleges and schools will notify the Provost of those faculty who have been approved for a study leave. A faculty member who receives a tenure-track study leave must agree to remain a full-time employee of the University for at least one academic year after the conclusion of the leave.

3.6.2 Leave Program for Instructional Faculty

The purpose of this leave program is to support professional development initiatives designed to advance scholarly research, teaching, and/or creative activity, including the development of innovative teaching approaches and methods. Leaves are for one semester at full pay and full benefits or an academic year at half pay with full benefits (based on 50% of base salary).

Faculty must be tenured or on a term multi-year contract, with six years of service at Mason, and have completed six years of such service since a previous study leave (not including tenure-track study leaves, see 3.6.1). This six-year period includes time spent on leave of absence, unless such leave includes time worked at another agency or institution, in which case an exception must be approved and granted by the Vice President for Research.

Colleges and schools establish and publish the procedures, criteria and deadlines for submission and review of leave proposals. The timing of a leave may be delayed if in the judgment of the LAU administrator, the faculty member's services are needed for a particular semester. Colleges and schools will notify the Provost of those faculty who have been approved for a study leave.

A faculty member who receives a study leave must agree to remain a full-time employee of the University for at least one academic year after the conclusion of the leave.

A faculty member who accepts a study leave must agree to serve as a reviewer of future applications at least once.

3.7 Retirement

From time to time the University, and particular academic units, may develop programs to assist faculty with the transition to retirement. Faculty contemplating this transition should discuss their options with their Dean and with the Human Resources and Payroll department.

3.8 Conversion Factors

Instructional faculty who convert from an administrative or professional faculty contract are governed by the policies of the Administrative Faculty Handbook. Consult this source for information on related matters such as Section IV. Compensation Policies.