



Faculty Handbook Committee

2025-2026 Report

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Charge 1

Work from the 2024-25 Faculty Handbook Committee Final Report recommendations on 2024-25 Charge 3 to **update the grievance process sections of the Faculty Handbook** to present to the Senate in January 2026. The committee and SAC liaison will work with the Office of the Provost and the Office of General Counsel to turn prior recommendations into granular resolutions that can be implemented. The committee shall also consult with the Senate Agenda Committee on complex grievance situations. Draft resolution language is provided in the 2024-25 FHBC final report. The following grievance process matters are top priorities for revision:

- Grievance timeline and faculty member contract status at time of filing (1Ai and 1Aii)
- The role of the grievance committee (1B)
- The role, if any, of HR in the grievance process (1C)
- The role of the SAC liaison (1D)
- Clarify the process for grievances filed against the Provost or a member of the Provost's Office to address conflicts of interest (1E)

Grievance timeline (1Ai)

Current Status/Rationale: The Faculty Handbook (FH) timeline for the Full-time Faculty Grievance Procedure is cumbersome, and the section is in need of improved flow and clarity.

Related FH Passages: Full-time Faculty Grievance Procedure (the whole section).

FHC Recommendation: The Full-time Faculty Grievance Procedure section of the Faculty Handbook should be split into four distinct subsections with content updated and/or reorganized to improve clarity and flow. The proposed four distinct subsections are as follows:

1. Definitions and Eligibility
2. Grievance Process and Details
3. Typical Grievance Process Timeline
4. Grievance Process Timeline Exceptions

Faculty Member Contract Status at Time of Filing (1Aii)

Current Status/Rationale: FH does not specifically address how to manage grievances that are submitted when faculty are not on contract (or they are on an approved leave) except for related language that filing a grievance (*Step One*) must still occur within three months after the grievant became aware of the grievable event(s) (2.a.1.) AND that the time limit for filing a grievance may be extended beyond three months with written agreement of the Provost, the grievant, and SAC grievance officer (2.e.1.a.) AND that the time limits for subsequent steps may be extended by mutual agreement if it is difficult to form an ad hoc mediation committee due to time of year (2.e.1.b.) AND that due to the potential difficulty in forming an ad hoc Mediation Committee during summer months, *Step Two and Three* of the Grievance Procedure will normally be suspended during summer terms (2.e.1.c.).

Related FH Passages: Sections 2.a.1, 2.e.1.a, 2.e.1.b, 2.e.1.c. See the report.

Faculty Member Contract Status at Time of Filing (1Aii) con't

FHC Recommendation: FH should be more explicit about how a faculty grievant's off-contract status or being on an approved leave at the time of filing the grievance affects the timeline. The timeline should proceed as written in the Grievance Procedure unless the faculty grievant is unable to fulfill such a commitment. In such a case, the faculty grievant shall provide a written statement to the Senate Agenda Committee, and the Grievance Procedure should be paused (except for the formation of the ad hoc Mediation Committee) and resumed when the faculty grievant is back, but no longer than 15 weeks.

The Role of the Grievance Committee (1B)

Current Status/Rationale: The *ad hoc* Mediation Committee determines if the grievance falls within the definition of a grievance and/or whether it is insubstantial or frivolous. Throughout the grievance process, the *ad hoc* Mediation Committee serves a neutral, mediation purpose. The committee can suggest ways to resolve the dispute and invite input from all parties that could aid in resolving the conflict; however, it cannot make formal findings with respect to the grievance itself. As such, the role of the *ad hoc* Mediation Committee appears clear. However, there is an opportunity to improve contextual wording for better clarity and flow.

Related FH Passages: Section 2.b.2 and the whole section. See the report.

FHC Recommendation: The role of the *ad hoc* Mediation Committee appears clear. The Grievance Procedure section and its wording associated with the *ad hoc* Mediation Committee should be updated for improved clarity and flow only.

The Role, if any, of Human Resources (HR) Department in the Grievance Process (1C)

Current Status/Rationale: HR involvement in the grievance process is not explicitly mentioned in the FH, but its possibility can be inferred from wording allowing the grievant to “be accompanied by a member of the Northeastern University community” (2.b.3. and 2.b.5.) AND the ad hoc grievance committee “may require the attendance of ... and any other persons who might be of aid in resolving the grievance” (2.b.3.b and 2.b.5.) At any meeting where the grievant is present, the grievant may be accompanied by a member of the Northeastern University community (2.b.3.). As such, FH does not exclude the involvement of HR in the grievance proceedings.

Related FH Passages: Sections 2.b.3, 2.b.3.b, 2.b.5. See the report.

FHC Recommendation: FH should be inclusive but not limiting in who should be included in the grievance proceedings. The grievant should not be limited to only having one member of the Northeastern University community accompany them. Similarly, the ad hoc Mediation Committee should be able to request attendance and/or input by the party whose action occasioned the grievance and/or other involved individuals, who may help resolve the grievance.

The Role of the SAC Liaison (1D)

Current Status/Rationale: The Senate Agenda Committee liaison is not specifically mentioned in the Full-time Faculty Grievance Procedure of the FH. For clarity purposes, the “grievance coordinator” should be removed to minimize confusion about yet another inherent role for the grievance process vs. suggesting a process at discretion of the Senate Agenda Committee.

Related FH Passages: Section 2.a.2. See the report.

FHC Recommendation: FH should include the role of the Senate Agenda Committee Liaison for transparency and clarity purposes. It may be helpful to include it under *Step One: Filing a Grievance*.

Clarify the Process for Grievances Filed Against the Provost or a Member of the Provost's Office to Address Conflicts of Interest (1E)

Current Status/Rationale: FH does not specify how to handle grievances against upper administration. When a grievance is filed against the Chancellor, an administrator within the Chancellor's office, the President, or an administrator within the President's office, the existing grievance involving the Provost's role (see below) should be adequate. However, when a grievance is filed against the Provost or an administrator within the Provost's office, the existing procedure is problematic, as the Provost's office is an active participant in the currently stated grievance procedure.

Related FH Passages: Sections 2.a.2, 2.a.3, 2.b.5, 2.c.1, 2.c.2, 2.d.1, 2.d.2, and 3. See the report.

Clarify the Process for Grievances Filed Against the Provost or a Member of the Provost's Office to Address Conflicts of Interest (1E) con't

FHC Recommendation: When a grievance is filed specifically against the Provost, an administrator within the Provost's Office, or the Office of the Provost, another party must replace the role of the Provost's Office within the typical grievance procedure. If a matter rises to the level of a grievance against the Provost, an administrator within the Provost's Office, or the Office of the Provost, then it is the responsibility of the Elected Senators as the representatives of the whole faculty body to officiate the grievance process. The Senate Agenda Committee (SAC) shall serve as the Mediation Committee. A three-member Elected Senator Grievance Subcommittee shall be appointed after a nomination and vote by the Elected Senators. Each Elected Senator Grievance Subcommittee member shall be from a different College, and none shall be from the grievant's College(s). SAC members are not eligible to serve on the Elected Senator Grievance Subcommittee, but they retain voting rights in the nomination process.

Resolution: Faculty Handbook Grievance Procedure Process, Timeline, and Exceptions to Timeline and related updates

WHEREAS The Faculty Handbook's timeline for the Full-time Faculty Grievance Procedure is cumbersome, and the section is in need of improved flow and clarity.

WHEREAS The Faculty Handbook does not specifically address how to manage grievances that are submitted when faculty are not on contract or they are on an approved leave.

WHEREAS The role of the ad hoc Mediation Committee appears clear; however, there is an opportunity to improve contextual wording for better clarity and flow.

Resolution: Faculty Handbook Grievance Procedure Process, Timeline, and Exceptions to Timeline and related updates con't

WHEREAS Human Resources (HR) Department involvement in the grievance process is not explicitly mentioned in the FH, but its possibility can be inferred. FH should be inclusive but not limiting in who should be included in the grievance proceedings, and such an opportunity and support should be offered fairly to both sides.

WHEREAS The Senate Agenda Committee liaison is not specifically mentioned in the Full-time Faculty Grievance Procedure of the FH.

WHEREAS Faculty-related grievances filed specifically against the Provost, an administrator within the Provost's Office, or the Office of the Provost, are infrequent; they may happen, and as such, the FH should have a process in place for such instances, ensuring accountability at all levels of the University.

Resolution: Faculty Handbook Grievance Procedure Process, Timeline, and Exceptions to Timeline and related updates con't

- **BE IT RESOLVED** THAT The Full-time Faculty Grievance Procedure in the Faculty Handbook should have four distinct subsections: (1) Definitions and Eligibility, (2) Grievance Process and Details, (3) Typical Grievance Process Timeline, and (4) Grievance Process Timeline Exceptions, and shall be updated and amended as follows:

[FHC_Final Report 2025-2026_FINAL_updated_03122026_2.pdf](#)

Charge 2

Draft a sustainable, **regular Faculty Handbook update process** and create a resolution/set of resolutions to bring to the Faculty Senate

Draft a sustainable, regular Faculty Handbook update process and create a resolution/set of resolutions to bring to the Faculty Senate

Current Status/Rationale: FHC carefully considered if FH should be reflective of a "birds-eye-view" guidance vs. be reflective of all granular changes to practice/process. FHC discussed the impact on workload for FHC and other committees, which should be considered in rolling out such reviews. FHC also considered a question if FHC has the expertise/know-how for knowing what is wrong with each section of the FH vs. if the FHC member representation from multiple colleges is a sufficient sample for "screening" of FH modules for clarity and aligning with recently passed FS resolutions. FHC members agreed that there should be some boundaries for the scope and roll out. Still, FHC members recognize the need for a routine "screening" review (each section of the FH q5 years: Governance; Appointment, Promotion, and Tenure (APT); Rights in Teaching, Research and Scholarship; Personnel Policies; and Academic Organization) and a priority-based review (coming from the prior year's screening review, survey results, and/or SAC) while considering the workload of FHC and other committees and potentially not enforce it through a resolution yet but rather suggest a pilot as a recommendation.

Faculty Handbook Update Process (Charge 2)

Related FH Passages: The whole FH.

FHC Recommendation: The FHC proposes a pilot "screening" review of each of the five FH sections (Governance, APT, Rights in Teaching, Research and Scholarship, Personnel Policies, and Academic Organization) on a 5-year review cycle with a primary purpose to address the section clarity, readability, and alignment with recently passed FS resolutions AND suggest the need for formal FH updates that should be charged to SAC-appointed committees (as relevant) for the following academic year. FHC proposes to start with the review of the first section of the FH on Governance during the academic year 2026-2027 with a plan for review of other FH sections following sequentially. In addition, the priority-based FH updates still need to happen and should be driven by specific FH concerns brought to SAC or FHC (e.g. FHC would suggest joint appointments to be reviewed/addressed in FH next year with SAC deciding to what committee(s) the charge would go to).

FHC Resolution: None yet.

Collaboration with Other Committees

Academic Policy Committee

- Review of proposed language for the FH for the implementation of an approved APC Resolution #13 (approved by Office of the Provost, 5/3/2024) on active participation of faculty in their workload determination and collaborative process for workload adjustments (details in FHC report).
- Refer to APC report to FS.

Global Education Committee

- Review of proposed language on Faculty-Led Programs (FLP) as a module for consideration for implementation into the FH (details in FHC report).
- Refer to GEC report to FS.

Academic Freedom Committee* (new)

- Review of proposed language for FH to implement approved AFC Resolution #5: Resolution to Edit the Faculty Handbook's "Statement on Free Expression."

Faculty Survey

Question 25-1: Priority-based FH issues that should be addressed in AY 2026-2027

- 97/591 substantive responses (16.4% substantive response rate)
- Most frequently mentioned: Promotion & Tenure clarity, NTT Faculty protections, Leave policies affecting sabbatical; Administrative accountability; Academic freedom
- Some responses related more to specific, more granular policy issues vs. FH.

Question 25-2: How important is it to update FH re Joint Appointments (hiring, tenure, promotion)?

- 424/591 responses (71.7% response rate)
- From the faculty who responded to this question, 75.4% (320/424) consider updating FH in relation to joint appointments moderately (95/424), very (115/424), or extremely (110/424) important

FHC Recommendation: FHC would suggest to SAC to have faculty joint appointments as a priority-based item to be reviewed/addressed in FH next year and decide to what committee(s) the charge would go to.



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