I. Purpose

This policy provides a definition of the term “regular, full-time faculty”, describes the roles and responsibilities of faculty, and distinguishes between the various types of faculty appointments available at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU or University). Further, this policy describes the continuation of employment criteria and the promotion process for non-tenurable faculty.

II. Definitions and Applicability of Policy

A. Faculty. Limited to regular, full-time personnel whose regular assignments include teaching, research/scholarship/creative activity, and/or service as a principal activity, and who hold academic rank as professor, associate professor, assistant professor, master instructor, senior instructor, instructor, or lecturer.

B. Regular, Full-Time Personnel. As used in the definition of faculty, is limited to those persons whose appointments are for a complete semester, academic year, or fiscal year.

C. Principal Activity. As used in the above definition shall mean that the person’s regular assignment in the areas of teaching, research/scholarship/creative activity, and/or service must be at least fifty percent (50%) of the total assigned duties.

D. Teaching, Research/Scholarship/Creative Activity, and Service. Limited to those academic activities properly assignable to the University’s current fund expenditure accounts designated as “Instruction,” “Research,” “Public Service,” and “Academic Support.” The terms exclude those activities properly assigned to accounts for “Student Services”, “Institutional Support,” “Operation and Maintenance of Plant”, etc. (College and University Business Administration, Chapters 5:2 and 5:6 (NACUBO, 1974)).
E. Faculty. Shall not, for the purposes of this policy, include instructional personnel defined as part-time adjunct faculty, part-time teachers, post-doctoral fellows, visiting scholars, and graduate assistants. Part-time adjunct faculty are defined as professional staff members of businesses, industries and other agencies and organizations who are appointed on a part-time basis to carry out teaching, research, or service functions.

F. If not otherwise included within the above definition of faculty, the term faculty may include, provided they hold academic rank, academic department chairs or school directors, academic deans, Provost/Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, Presidents, who have direct line authority over faculty as hereinabove described, and associates or assistants for the above positions. In addition, the term faculty may include persons previously designated as members of the faculty who are assigned to other positions at the university.

III. Roles and Responsibilities of Faculty

A. The responsibilities of faculty members generally include the following three (3) primary functions: teaching, research/scholarship/creative activity, and service. The responsibilities will vary based upon the faculty appointment type. See definitions of these functions in Policy 205 Promotion of Tenured and Tenurable Faculty.

B. The faculty play a vital role in academic and governance matters.

1. Academic matters. The creation, change, and approval of curricula and new programs begin with the faculty. Faculty participate in the creation and development of the curriculum through membership on appropriate department or school curriculum committees, college-level curriculum committees, and the University Curriculum Committee and/or the Graduate Faculty Curriculum Review Committee in the case of changes in the curriculum that involve graduate credit. Each department, interdisciplinary major, or school assigns faculty to oversee curriculum development and review.

2. Governance matters. The University recognizes that faculty participation in institutional governance is fundamental to the development and maintenance of effective academic policies. Through membership on University standing and special purpose committees, faculty members provide advice and expertise to administrators. The Faculty Senate conveys faculty concerns to administrators and provides administrative officers the faculty perspective on University policy.

IV. Academic Rank

A. Academic rank is an element of faculty status. Academic rank may only be assigned to faculty who meet the minimum rank criteria below.
B. Initial appointment in academic rank is based on specific criteria and expectations. In general, each academic rank requires an advanced degree in the academic discipline. Where the degree is from a related area, the Department Chair/Director and Dean must approve the degree as being related to the academic discipline and forward such recommendation to the Provost. Upon receipt of these recommendations, the Provost will determine whether the degree is appropriate to the teaching field, normally at the time of initial appointment of the faculty member.

C. The following are the minimum criteria that distinguish between academic ranks.

1. Lecturer
   a. Demonstrated ability in teaching and student development.
   b. Master’s degree from an accredited institution in the academic discipline or related area.
   c. Evidence of professional integrity.

2. Instructor
   a. Demonstrated ability in teaching and student development.
   b. Master’s degree from an accredited institution in the academic discipline or related area.
   c. Evidence of professional integrity.

3. Senior Instructor
   a. Documented evidence of high quality teaching and contribution to student development with a minimum of six (6) years as an instructor/lecturer.
   b. Master’s degree from an accredited institution in the academic discipline or related area.
   c. Evidence of professional integrity.

4. Master Instructor
a. Documented evidence of teaching excellence; education or commensurate experience; and superior contribution to student development. This rank is not a reward for long service; rather it is recognition of superior teaching and contributions to student development. Must have a minimum of four (4) years of experience at the senior instructor rank or ten (10) years of experience as an instructor/lecturer.

b. Master’s degree from an accredited institution in the discipline or related area. It is desirable that the master instructor has an earned doctorate or terminal degree in an appropriate discipline or equivalent professional experience.

c. Evidence of professional integrity.

5. Assistant Professor

a. Earned doctorate or terminal degree from an accredited institution in the academic discipline or related area.

b. Evidence of potential ability in teaching, if initially appointed at this rank, or documented ability, if promoted into this rank.

c. Evidence of potential ability in research/scholarship/creative activity and service.

d. Evidence of professional integrity.

6. Associate Professor

a. Earned doctorate or terminal degree from an accredited institution in the academic discipline or related area.

b. Six (6) years of full-time collegiate experience in the academic discipline or related area as an assistant professor. Thus, a typical candidate is eligible to apply for promotion to associate professor at the beginning of his/her sixth (6th) year.

c. Evidence of high quality professional performance in teaching.

d. Evidence of continuing direct participation in research/scholarship/creative activity and in service;

e. Evidence of high quality professional productivity in either research/scholarship/creative activity or service and quality professional productivity in the other area.
f. Evidence of professional integrity that will ensure cooperation with colleagues and commitment to the programs and students of the department, the college, and the University.

7. Professor

Since there is no higher rank, promotion to professor will be considered with great care and requires a level of superior achievement within the discipline with every expectation of continuing contribution to the University and larger academic community.

a. Earned doctorate or terminal degree from an accredited institution in the academic discipline or related area.

b. Four (4) years of full-time collegiate experience in the academic discipline or related area as an associate professor. Thus, a typical candidate is eligible to apply for promotion to professor at the beginning of his/her fourth (4th) year as an associate professor.

c. Evidence of sustained excellence in teaching.

d. Evidence of sustained high quality professional productivity in both research/scholarship/creative activity and in service. In one of these categories, the candidate will demonstrate a level of excellence in the academic discipline that is recognized at the national level. National recognition must be defined in department policies with approval at the college level.

e. Evidence of professional integrity that will ensure cooperation with colleagues and commitment to the programs and students of the department, the college, and the University.

D. Exceptions to Minimum Rank Qualifications.

The minimum rank qualifications should be met in every recommendation regarding appointment to academic rank and for promotion in academic rank.

Exceptions to the minimum rank qualifications can be approved by the Provost; however, such exceptions are not favored and should be granted only upon a showing of a candidate’s exceptional merit and/or other extraordinary circumstances, such as an objective need to deviate from these minimum qualifications in filling positions and/or retaining otherwise qualified faculty within certain academic disciplines. This determination will be made at the time of hire.
Petitions for exceptions to promotion criteria may include consideration of the appropriateness of the degree, extraordinary qualities that the candidate may possess, and/or equivalent work experience credit.

When evaluating college level instruction, research/scholarship/creative activities, and service, the University may make its own determination whether or not the number of years of experience from another university is to be accepted in total or discounted in some manner.

The Department Chair/Director, Dean, and faculty are responsible for evaluating a candidate’s professional experience and record of accomplishments and recommending consideration of an exception to the Provost.

V. Terminal Degree Designation

A. MTSU uses national discipline standards to determine which degrees are considered to be terminal within a discipline. The University may also award equivalent work experience credit when a candidate has not obtained a terminal degree, but has a record of extraordinary achievement in a germane field.

As a reference, the University considers the following degrees terminal:


2. Masters: M.F.A. (e.g., Studio Art, Interior Design, Creative Writing, Graphic Art, Theatre/Dramatic Arts); M.I.D., M. Arch., M.L.S., M.L.I.S., M.S.L.S. (i.e., Masters in Library /Information Science); M.M. (certain specialties in music including performance-based); and Masters of Engineering or Masters with major in Engineering Technology, University Level.

The University requires all applicants for tenurable, clinical-track, or research-track positions to have terminal degrees in their academic disciplines and to show proof of such credentials before they are hired. Exceptions must be approved by the Provost. Candidates who have completed all requirements for the terminal degree, with the exception of the dissertation or thesis, may be hired with the understanding that degree completion will take place no more than one (1) year from the date of hire. The candidate will be required to show proof of the degree at that time. The initial rate of pay will reflect the candidate’s degree status, and will be adjusted accordingly when he/she shows proof of degree receipt. Completion of the dissertation or thesis, as agreed upon at hire, is considered a condition of continued employment such that failure to meet the requirement will result in termination of employment.
B. The University may recognize equivalent work experience credit when a candidate has not obtained the terminal degree, but has a record of extraordinary achievement in a given field. The equivalent work experience credit may include relevant teaching experience or other related experiences. These exceptions must be approved by the Provost.

VI. Faculty Appointment Types

Two (2) broad categories of faculty appointments are made at MTSU: tenurable and non-tenurable. The Provost is responsible to maintain a proper balance between the number of tenured/tenure-track faculty and temporary faculty to ensure academic program quality and meet accreditation requirements. Policy 816 Nepotism will apply to all appointments of faculty. The following constitute the types of faculty appointments that are recognized at MTSU. The minimum rank criteria for faculty appointments are outlined in Section IV.

For all faculty appointment types, faculty members who do not plan to return the following academic year are expected to notify the Department Chair and the appropriate Dean of the college in writing as soon as possible but no later than May 1.

A. Tenurable Faculty Appointments

1. Tenure-track appointments are appointments for regular, full-time faculty with academic rank (Assistant, Associate, and Professor) and may be for the academic or fiscal year. Tenure-track appointments are for faculty who are employed in a probationary period of employment prior to consideration for tenure. Appointments will typically be the result of a national search process.

Tenure-track appointments shall not include any right to permanent or continuous employment, shall not create any manner of legal right, interest, or expectation of renewal or any other type of appointment, and shall be subject to annual renewal by the University. Moreover, such appointments do not include assurance of continued employment at any specified salary, position, or employment during Summer sessions.

2. Tenure appointments are appointments of full-time faculty who have been awarded tenure pursuant to the provisions of Policy 204 Tenure. To protect academic freedom, tenure appointments include the assurance of continued employment for the academic or fiscal year for an indefinite period, subject to expiration, relinquishment, or termination of tenure as provided in Policy 204 Tenure. Tenure does not guarantee a specified salary, position, or employment during Summer sessions.

B. Non-Tenurable Faculty Appointments. The University recognizes special needs and circumstances in which non-tenurable faculty appointments can be justified. Non-tenure track faculty positions are primarily assigned to teaching, research, clinical, or
administrative assignments. These faculty are not assigned the tripartite teaching, research, and service responsibilities that characterize tenure-track appointments.

Appointments will typically be the result of a local/regional search process.

Continuation of appointment is contingent on satisfactorily meeting the departmental and college performance standards in accordance with an annual review, which will include a recommendation for continuation of employment. Reviews are due annually, and in the case of non-renewal, thirty (30)-day notice must be provided to the faculty member. This notice is considered as delivered on the date the notice is placed in the U.S. mail. At no time will contract continuation/renewal be deemed de facto tenure. Additionally, continuation is dependent upon the needs and available funding within the academic unit.

1. Lecturer. An initial non-tenure track teaching appointment is typically made at the rank of Lecturer. Ordinarily, lecturers are hired where the permanent and continued need for the position has not been established. This type of position is normally for one (1) year or less to replace regular faculty on leave of absence, faculty employed pursuant to grants or for projects funded in whole or part by non-appropriated funds. These are annual appointments and may not be renewed for a total appointment in excess of three (3) academic years. After that, the position must be re-advertised, and the lecturer can apply again and be hired if he/she is the best candidate. The lecturer position cannot be considered for promotion.

2. Instructor-Track. The instructor-track appointment is appropriate when the need for a full-time teaching position has been established, but the University has not yet determined the need for this position to become tenurable. A combination of financial and strategic needs cause the position to be filled with a non-tenurable person at this time. Teaching is central to the purposes and objectives of the University. Instructors are expected to provide high quality teaching.

Instructor-track faculty members teach five (5) courses per semester or the equivalent of a fifteen (15) credit hour load, primarily at the lower-division level and in general education courses. Their work contributes to the teaching mission of the University. As a rule, their workload does not include service obligations or research requirements as a condition of their employment.

Initial appointments to the ranks of senior or master instructor are discouraged. These appointments are for an unspecified period unless otherwise indicated and shall continue for such time as the University is in need of or desirous of the services. The primary criterion for appointment, continuation of employment, evaluation, and promotion is excellence in teaching. An annual evaluation is required, and continuation of employment is dependent upon a positive evaluation.
These positions may advance in rank. Rank differentiation for the instructor-track is distinguished by years of experience and quality of teaching.

Faculty in these appointments may not participate in tenure or tenure-track personnel decisions.

a. Instructor. The entry rank for the instructor-track category is instructor.

b. Senior Instructor. Six (6) years of full-time collegiate experience in the academic discipline or related area as an instructor or lecturer. Thus, a typical candidate is eligible to apply for promotion to senior instructor at the beginning of his/her sixth (6th) year.

The promotion review will be based exclusively on the candidate’s teaching record and teaching-related activities as described in Section VII. below. In addition to the change of title, promotion in rank should be recognized by a base salary adjustment. The promotion award for senior instructor will be equal to one-third (1/3) of the approved rate for promotion to assistant professor.

c. Master Instructor. Four (4) years of full-time collegiate experience in the academic discipline or related area as a senior instructor. Thus, a typical candidate is eligible to apply for promotion to master instructor at the beginning of his/her fourth (4th) year as a senior instructor.

The promotion review will be based exclusively on the candidate’s teaching record and teaching-related activities as described in Section VII. below. In addition to the change of title, promotion in rank should be recognized by a base salary adjustment. The promotion award for master instructor will be equal to two-thirds (2/3) of the approved rate for promotion to assistant professor.

d. Transition of Current Lecturer to Instructor Rank. This policy permits the transition of a specified number (to be determined) of current full-time temporary lecturers into the instructor rank based upon evaluation criteria set by the department, a satisfactory performance record and a positive recommendation by the Department Chair/Director and Dean to the Provost. The Provost will determine the evaluation procedure to be used to make these decisions, including minimum evaluative criteria to be considered.

3. Coordinator-Track. Coordinators teach and provide administrative services within the academic departments. They devote a preponderance of their time to faculty responsibilities including, but not limited to, teaching, advising, and student mentoring. Coordinators may also have responsibility for administering special academic projects, systems support, and other administrative services. The primary criterion for appointment, continuation of employment, evaluation, and promotion
is excellence in teaching and ability to perform instruction-related administrative responsibilities.

Initial appointments to the ranks of senior or master instructor coordinator are discouraged. These appointments are for an unspecified period of time and may be continued without a search based upon a positive annual evaluation and recommendation of the Department Chair/Director.

Faculty in these appointments may not participate in tenure or tenure-track personnel decisions.

a. Instructor Coordinator. The entry rank for the instructor coordinator-track category is instructor.

b. Senior Instructor Coordinator. Six (6) years of full-time collegiate experience in the academic discipline or related area as an instructor coordinator. Thus, a typical candidate is eligible to apply for promotion to senior instructor coordinator at the beginning of his/her sixth (6th) year.

The promotion review will be based exclusively on the candidate’s teaching record and teaching-related activities and ability to perform instruction-related administrative responsibilities as described in Section VII. below. In addition to the change of title, promotion in rank should be recognized by a base salary adjustment. The promotion award for senior instructor coordinator will be equal to one-third (1/3) of the approved rate for promotion to assistant professor.

c. Master Instructor Coordinator. Four (4) years of full-time collegiate experience in the academic discipline or related area as a senior instructor coordinator. Thus, a typical candidate is eligible to apply for promotion to master instructor coordinator at the beginning of his/her fourth (4th) year as a senior instructor coordinator.

The promotion review will be based exclusively on the candidate’s teaching record and teaching-related activities and ability to perform instruction-related administrative responsibilities as described in Section VII. below. In addition to the change of title, promotion in rank should be recognized by a base salary adjustment. The promotion award for senior instructor coordinator will be equal to two-thirds (2/3) of the approved rate for promotion to assistant professor.

4. Clinical-Track or Professional Practice-Track. Faculty in this classification participate in academic programs by providing professional services, by exposing students to their professional expertise, and by directing students’ educational experiences in clinical/professional settings where the faculty members practice.
Faculty in these positions have distinguished themselves by expertise, achievements, and reputation over a sustained period of time in an area of practice or discipline but may not have substantial academic experience. Appointment or promotion will be recommended largely on depth of knowledge in a particular specialty, and capacity to undertake high quality teaching or service.

Clinical-track/professional practice-track appointments may be supported, in whole or in part, by appropriated funds or funding from grants or contracts, from clinical practice, clinical or professional facilities, or from other sources. The primary criterion for appointment, continuation of employment, evaluation, and promotion is excellence in teaching and service. An annual evaluation is required, and continuation of employment is dependent upon a positive evaluation.

Individual job descriptions developed in the department will further define job duties. Academic ranks for this category of faculty include:

a. Clinical Assistant Professor/Assistant Professor of Practice;
b. Clinical Associate Professor/Associate Professor of Practice;
c. Clinical Professor/Professor of Practice.

These appointments are for an unspecified period of time and may be continued without a search based upon a positive annual evaluation and recommendation of the Department Chair/Director.

Faculty in these appointments may not participate in tenure or tenure-track personnel decisions.

4. Research-Track. Faculty in research-track appointments participate in the academic programs by conducting independent research projects and by mentoring students involved in the research/scholarship/creative activity process. Research-track appointments may be supported, in whole or in part, by appropriated funds or funding from grants or contracts, or other sources. The primary criterion for appointment, continuation of employment, evaluation, and promotion is excellence in teaching and/or research/scholarship/creative activity. An annual evaluation is required, and continuation of employment is dependent upon a positive evaluation.

Individual job descriptions developed in the department will further define job duties. Academic rank for this category of faculty includes:

a. Research Assistant Professor;
b. Research Associate Professor;

c. Research Professor.

These appointments are for an unspecified period of time and may be continued without a search based upon a positive annual evaluation and recommendation of the Department Chair/Director.

Faculty in these appointments may not participate in tenure or tenure-track personnel decisions.

VII. Criteria for Continuation of Employment for Instructor-Track, Coordinator-Track, Clinical-Track, Professor of Practice Track, and Research-Track Positions

All faculty in these appointment types must be evaluated annually. Renewal of such appointments is at the discretion of the department head and the college dean. Renewal of the appointment will be based upon the availability of funds and upon annual performance reviews by the department head in consultation with the dean. Reviews are due annually, and in the case of non-renewal, thirty (30)-day notice must be provided the faculty member. This notice is considered as delivered on the date the notice is placed in the U.S. mail.

To be eligible for continuation of employment a candidate must:

A. Have a degree in an area appropriate for the discipline;

B. Demonstrate quality work appropriate to the appointment type and discipline;

C. Demonstrate a willingness to collaborate with MTSU colleagues to ensure a quality program;

D. If applicable, demonstrate additional skills outside the primary focus area that are required by the position; and

E. If applicable, hold appropriate certifications/licenses required by the position.

VIII. Criteria for Advancement in Rank for Non-Tenurable Faculty Appointment Types

A. For instructor-track and coordinator-track faculty, appointment to a higher rank may occur once the criteria for the higher rank have been met. Advancement in rank will follow the same calendar as promotion for tenured tenure-track faculty and requires a recommendation from the Department Chair/ Director, the department/school review committee, the college review committee, the Dean, the Provost, the President, and the Board of Trustees.

Annual evaluations for instructor-track appointments will be based exclusively on the candidate’s teaching record and teaching-related activities. For coordinator-track appointments, the annual evaluations will include an assessment of the faculty
member’s teaching record and effectiveness in performing the assigned administrative duties. Instructor-track/coordinator-track faculty members will remain current in their area of instruction, and such currency has to be demonstrated during the annual evaluation.

Evaluation criteria will include student evaluations in all courses since the last advancement in rank, peer observations and evaluations, annual departmental evaluations, and additional materials such as syllabi, exams, student papers, etc., letters of commendation from faculty peers, chair/directors or external colleagues, innovations in teaching that have measureable student success results, awards or other recognition for teaching, contributions to student development, etc.

1. All faculty members are expected to demonstrate high quality performance in teaching. Teaching applies to any strategy in which information is imparted so that others may learn, and may include, but is not limited to, a variety of techniques including instruction, student advising and/or mentoring, development of course materials and courseware, and development of innovative approaches to instruction. High quality instruction is found in many different guises; different individuals and different disciplines carry their own distinctive, and sometimes opposing traits. Examples of characteristics of high quality instruction may include, but not be limited to, establishing, applying, and maintaining rigorous expectations for student performance;

2. Facilitating student learning through effective pedagogical techniques;

3. Using instructional materials appropriate to the program and discipline;

4. Providing current information and materials in the classroom and/or laboratory;

5. Engaging students in an active learning process;

6. Constructing appropriate and effective assessment activities;

7. Incorporating collaborative and experiential learning in regular classroom instruction;

8. Providing timely and useful feedback to students;

9. Revising course content and scope as required by advances in disciplinary knowledge or changes in curriculum; and

10. Revising teaching strategies with innovations in instructional technology.

Effective teaching is an essential qualification for promotion, and promotion should not be granted in the absence of clear evidence of a candidate’s teaching ability and potential for continued development.
B. Documentation

1. Supporting materials as described in VII.A.1. above will, at a minimum, include student evaluations, annual evaluations, and evidence of evaluation by faculty peers.

2. Student evaluations for each course section evaluated since initial appointment, if hired within the previous five (5) years, or last five (5) years of course evaluations, if employed longer than five (5) years, or since most recent promotion, will be added to the candidate’s supporting materials by the Department Chair/Director.

3. Other relevant supporting material may be included.

C. For clinical-track/professional practice and research-track faculty, appointment to a higher rank may occur once the criteria for the higher rank have been met. Advancement in rank for the clinical-track/professional practice track faculty is to be based primarily on teaching excellence and excellence in clinical or professional applications performance. Advancement in rank for the research-track faculty is to be based primarily on excellence in teaching and/or research performance.

Advancement in rank will follow the same calendar as promotion for tenured/tenure-track faculty and requires a recommendation from the Department Chair/Director, the department/school review committee, the college review committee, the Dean, the Provost, the President, and the Board of Trustees.

IX. Departmental Review Policies

Academic departments/schools/program units with a faculty member in one of these positions must describe the composition of the review committee and procedures for electing the review committee. (Program units that do not report to an academic department and that have faculty members in one of these positions will create a faculty review committee from one or more pertinent departments/schools for review of their instructor-track, coordinator-track, clinical-track/professional practice, and research-track faculty.) Procedures for review of the faculty in these positions must be developed by each department/school/program unit and must be approved by the Dean, the Provost, and the President prior to use.

Additional or more specific appointment or review criteria may be developed by any department/school/program unit offering one of these positions. Changes to the criteria must be approved by the Dean, the Provost, and the President.

X. Termination of Faculty Appointments

A. Tenure-Track Faculty. See Policy 204 Tenure for terms of non-renewal of probationary tenure-track faculty.
B. Tenured Faculty. See Policy 204 Tenure for terms of termination of tenure.

C. Non-Tenurable Faculty. Termination may occur at any point in the employment term with thirty (30) days’ notice. The University may terminate the employment agreement with seven (7) days written notice if said notice is given before August 1. This notice is considered as delivered on the date the notice is placed in the U.S. mail.

XI. Exceptions to Policy.

The President has the authority to grant exceptions to this policy but delegates such authority to the Provost.

Forms: none.

Revisions: June 5, 2017 (original policy); __, 2017.

References: Policies 204 Tenure; 205 Promotion of Tenured and Tenurable Faculty; 816 Nepotism.