

**MERCER**  
UNIVERSITY

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SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

**Faculty Handbook**

**Revised September 2024**

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## **PREFACE**

The School of Theology is an integral part of Mercer University; therefore, this Faculty Handbook supplements, but does not replace, the Mercer University Faculty Handbook.

## **VISION, MISSION & FOUNDING PRINCIPLES**

### **Vision Statement:**

Our vision is to inspire churches and communities to imagine, discover, and create God's loving and just world.

### **Mission Statement:**

Mercer University's School of Theology forms ministers and cultivates leaders who thrive spiritually, professionally, and academically in service with congregations, communities, and classrooms.

## **FOUNDING PRINCIPLES**

Based on Jesse Mercer's vision, McAfee School of Theology is founded on ten principles that have guided its inception and will continue to guide its formation and character:

1. The School shall be founded upon the belief that Jesus Christ is the Word of God, the center and focus of faith.
2. The School shall spring from Mercer University's conviction about its own vocation as an institution, borne and nurtured by Baptists and Baptist churches and committed to undergirding the work and witness of the church as a community of faith.
3. The School shall seek to educate students who are:
  - literate and disciplined in the study of sacred scripture;
  - articulate in understanding the historical and theological issues of faith;
  - effective preachers and interpreters of the Christian gospel;
  - wise and compassionate in personal and social ministry;
  - prepared to integrate faith and life in the spiritual formation of congregations.
4. The School shall be devoted to the preparation of men and women who combine the call of God's spirit with the intellectual gifts, the emotional maturity and the spiritual discipline to become effective and responsible pastors and leaders in ministry.
5. The School shall be inclusive in spirit and practice, affirming the open search for truth, and fostering tolerance for religious and intellectual diversity.
6. By underscoring both scholarly discipline and the experience of ministry, the School shall seek to break through the dichotomy of theory and practice, claiming both reason and compassion, the mind and the heart as gifts of God and conceiving ministry as bringing the sacred to bear upon every dimension of human experience.

7. The School shall hold steadfastly to the high and defining traditions of Baptists, including the priesthood of believers, the separation of church and state, the autonomy of the local congregations as the context for mission and ministry, the centrality of scripture to the life of faith, and the resolve that neither creeds nor human affirmations of faith should stand as tests of orthodoxy.
8. While holding firmly to its high calling and to its specific responsibility for theological education among Baptists, the School shall also accept its responsibility to embrace the whole world as the creation of God and to serve the wider Christian community as the people of God who are called to live out God's purpose and presence in the world.
9. The School shall embody the historical traditions of Mercer University, valuing both intellectual freedom and the affirmation of faith as the foundations of the University.
10. The School shall serve as a continuing resource to churches, pastors and professionals in ministry for their continuing education and as a reference and placement service for churches, pastors and other church leaders.

## Academic Organization

### 1.1 Board of Visitors

#### CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

#### MCAFEE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY BOARD OF VISITORS

#### ARTICLE I

The purpose of the McAfee School of Theology Board of Visitors of Mercer University, established on August 24, 1999, shall be to promote, assist, and support the McAfee School of Theology in:

- Offering high-quality theological education, within a historic Baptist tradition, at a graduate level;
- Offering programs which provide a needed resource within the Baptist network, enhance the image of the School and strengthen partnerships with Baptist churches and laity;
- Promoting faculty development as a means to achieve national prominence as a quality theological school;
- Obtaining financial support from churches, foundations and individuals throughout the nation;
- Serving the educational, professional development and student/graduate placement needs of local churches;
- Continuing McAfee's critical role in helping to make Mercer University the regional, national and world leader of Baptist scholarship.

In fulfilling this purpose, the McAfee Board of Visitors will:

- Provide counsel to the President of the University regarding the program for theological education;
- Advise the Dean of the McAfee School of Theology and the Provost of the University on matters pertaining to education, research and service through churches/organizations;
- Serve as ambassadors for the University and the McAfee School of Theology;
- Assist the School of Theology regarding the recruiting and placement of students;

- Advise the Senior Vice President for University Advancement & External Affairs and assigned development officers on the planning and conducting of campaigns for financial support of the McAfee School of Theology;
- And, through the President, provide counsel to the Board of Trustees on issues pertaining to the operation and governance of the McAfee School of Theology.

## ARTICLE II MEMBERSHIP

The McAfee Board of Visitors is elected by the Board of Trustees upon recommendation by the President and the Dean of the McAfee School of Theology. The term of appointment shall be for three years renewable at the discretion of the President and the Dean of the McAfee School of Theology. The President and the Chairman of the Board of Trustees shall be ex-officio members of the McAfee Board of Visitors.

Nominees for membership will normally be from those persons holding leadership positions within Baptist churches throughout the nation, Baptist laity from supporting churches throughout the nation and alumni. A reasonable effort will be made to maintain a desirable balance of member interest and participation of the Board. In addition, alumni from Mercer's colleges and schools will be highly sought after for membership.

The procedure for nominations to the Board will normally be processed through the Board Chair, the Dean, and the President for appointment.

## ARTICLE III OFFICERS

The officers shall consist of a Chair, Vice Chair and Past Chair. The Chair and the Vice Chair will be elected for two-year terms by the Board. The officers, together with the President, the Dean and the Senior Vice President for University Advancement & External Affairs, shall constitute the Executive Committee and Nominating Committee. The election of officers shall occur at the Annual Meeting (see Article IV). The Recording Secretary's duties will be performed by the Executive Assistant to the Dean.

ARTICLE IV  
MEETINGS

There shall be one meeting of the McAfee Board of Visitors each year. It shall occur in the Spring semester, and typically coincides with the William L. Self Preaching Lectures. Special meetings may be called by the Chair of the Board of Visitors or by the President of the University. One-third of the membership shall constitute a quorum. Regular attendance by each member is expected; however, it is recognized that unplanned absences will occur. Two consecutive absences, unsatisfactorily explained, will constitute a voluntary departure from the Board.

ARTICLE V  
MINUTES

Following each regular meeting, minutes of the discussion and actions of the Board of Visitors will be prepared by the Vice Chair and Recording Secretary and distributed to regular and ex-officio members.

ARTICLE VI  
AMENDMENTS TO THE BY-LAWS

This constitution and by-laws, or any part thereof, may be amended, revised or repealed by majority vote of the Board at any regular meeting, provided that notice of the proposed change, repeal or amendment has been submitted, in writing, to the Board of Visitors as least 30 days prior to the annual meeting.

## **1.2 Functions of the Dean**

As the principal academic officer of the School, the Dean is responsible for the full range of program development within the School. The Dean reports to the Provost. The responsibilities of the Dean include the following:

1. To lead in the design, development, and implementation of the educational program and to promote the effectiveness of the curriculum and instructional procedures.
2. To provide for the recruitment and selection of qualified faculty and to foster faculty development.
3. To review faculty eligibility for promotion and tenure, to conduct systematic evaluation of faculty performance, and to make recommendations to the Provost and the President concerning faculty appointments, rank, tenure, and salary.
4. To preside over the faculty, to assure the effective organization of the faculty, and to foster faculty collegiality.
5. To develop plans for the continued development of the School.
6. To develop recommendations to the Provost and the President regarding the operating budget for the School.
7. To foster the recognition and accreditation of the School by Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and the Association of Theological Schools.
8. To represent the school in the Academic Council and to collaborate with administrative officers of the University in the refinement, development, and revision of University policies.
9. To promote understanding and support of the School by its constituents.
10. To promote the effectiveness of library and instructional support services for the School.
11. To promote the effectiveness of student personnel services and to enhance the well-being and safety of students.
12. To promote the effectiveness of institutional support services, plant operation and maintenance programs, and security services for the School.
13. To prepare the budget for the school operation and assure adherence to the approved budget of the School within the framework and limits of the University fiscal policy.

## **1.3 Functions of the Associate Dean**

The chief responsibility of the Associate Dean is to coordinate the academic programs of the



School. This involves administering all areas of academic policy as applied to students, reviewing and recommending changes in academic and attendance policies, giving direct oversight of the Master of Divinity and Master of Arts in Christian Ministry programs, and serving as the coordinator and chairperson of the Academic Council. The members of the Academic Council include the Director of the Doctor of Ministry program, the Director of the Master of Theological Studies program, the Director of Academic Success and Assessment, the Director of Distance Learning, and the Director of Admissions.

Further responsibilities are to oversee the programs, activities, and services for the support of student development, and to guide the processes for student appeals and discipline. The Associate Dean represents the Dean as needed. When the Dean is absent from the campus, the Associate Dean acts with the full authority of the Dean's office.

## **1.4 Functions of the Faculty**

### 1.4.1 Authority

As members of the faculty of Mercer University (See the Mercer University Faculty Handbook, Section 1.02.1 "Authority and Responsibility of the Faculty"), the faculty of the McAfee School of Theology is authorized to:

1. Consider any matter touching the effectiveness and quality of the educational program or the professional welfare of the faculty and make recommendations to the President, the administrative officers of the University, or faculties of other schools and colleges within Mercer University.
2. Recommend to the President by-laws and rules for its own organization and governance, and such procedures as necessary to fulfill its mission within the University.
3. Adopt regulations concerning curriculum, conferring of degrees, admission or exclusion of students and standards of academic performance.
4. Consider any matter touching the operation of McAfee and make recommendations to the President, the administrative officers of the University or the faculties of other colleges or schools within the University.

### 1.4.2 Responsibilities

As members of the faculty of Mercer University (See the Mercer University Faculty Handbook, Section 1.02.1 "Authority and Responsibility of the Faculty"), the responsibilities of the faculty include the following:

1. To develop, organize, and conduct educational programs and courses of instruction in accordance with the policies of the Board of Trustees.
2. To admit candidates for degrees in accordance with the policies of the Board of Trustees.

3. To determine academic policies which effectively carry out the mission of the University within the policies of the Board of Trustees.
4. To evaluate student academic progress and to recommend candidates for degrees.
5. To assist in organizing and conducting programs and services for the support of student development.
6. To review the effectiveness of programs of instructional support and to make recommendations to the President for the improvement of these programs.
7. To contribute to the advancement of knowledge through open inquiry.
8. To make recommendations to the President concerning revision of the scope of educational programs and educational policies of the Board of Trustees.

As members of the faculty of the McAfee School of Theology, the responsibilities of the faculty also include the following:

1. To strive to adhere to the gospel and leadership of the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed through the scriptures.
2. To contribute to the mission of the church and its ministries.
3. To maintain an exemplary moral and personal life.
4. To contribute to the fulfillment of the mission of the McAfee School of Theology in the spirit of its Founding Principles.
5. To work at maintaining a high level of collegiality with other members of the faculty and staff.

## **I. Policies and Procedures Related to Instruction**

### **2.1 Calendar and Class Schedule**

The official calendar for the McAfee School of Theology is compiled and approved by the Office of the Dean.

### **2.2 Class Attendance**

#### **2.2.1 Faculty**

Faculty members are expected to attend every scheduled classroom session. Faculty may make substitute provisions for an anticipated absence from class. Absences from class should be made known to the Associate Dean and the students as promptly as possible, and faculty members who intend to be absent must make every effort to provide satisfactory alternative arrangements. If a faculty member plans to miss more than three hours of scheduled classroom instruction per course, per semester, they must notify the Dean and Associate Dean in advance. Repeated absences may constitute a conflict of commitment.

### 2.2.2 Students

Regular attendance in scheduled class sessions is important to the learning process and especially crucial to the interactive nature of the courses within the School of Theology. Each professor will outline attendance policies for their classes in the course syllabi. Students, however, must attend at least 75% of the scheduled class meetings in order to receive credit for a course. An absence is non-attendance of a scheduled class for any reason, including but not limited to, other courses, illness, work schedule, conferences, interviews, social events, church related activities, or other activities.

Attendance in fully online courses is defined as regular and continuous online presence and participation. The following indicators, based on Federal Student Loan policies, will guide an instructor's determination that a student has been in regular and continuous attendance in a fully online course:

- Timely student submission of an academic assignment or online activity;
- Student submission of an exam or quiz
- Documented student participation in and engagement with computer-assisted instruction (evidence of logging in alone will not satisfy this requirement);
- Participation in a required discussion forum, a blog posting, or online journal entry showing engagement with course content;
- Attendance in required synchronous sessions;
- Participation in required group work;
- An email from the student or other documentation showing the student initiated contact with the instructor for the purpose of discussion or clarification of course content;
- Any other indicator of attendance that is identified in the syllabus.

\*The instructor will determine the configuration for attendance based upon the indicators above. If a student shows no online activity for 25% of the term (4 weeks for a semester; 2 weeks for a summer course, etc.), the student will fail the course. Grades will be reduced for not turning in assignments or participating in online sessions.

Because the programs are professional level, the School assumes that students have high level of motivation and responsibility. Accordingly, it is expected that students will attend class unless there are significant reasons for being absent. Professors are required to check attendance and keep attendance records. Each professor has the discretion to indicate in the syllabus their policy on absences, late arrival at class, or leaving before the class is over. Repeated lateness or leaving early may be counted as an absence, and the professor may penalize a student's grade for absences, if the professor's policy is stated in the syllabus. If a student is in doubt about the number of absences they have for a given course, it is the student's responsibility to check with the professor.

## 2.3 Examinations and Grading

2.3.1 Examinations are conducted at scheduled times at the end of each semester. Students must report to the examination at the time scheduled. Changes in the examination schedule may be authorized only by the Associate Dean or Dean. Permission for a make-up examination due to illness or other emergency may be permitted at the discretion of the instructor.

The method and manner of evaluation for course grades are left to the discretion of the course instructor as outlined in the course syllabus. A student may take an examination or submit an assigned project at other than the scheduled time only under extenuating circumstances and with permission from the instructor.

2.3.2 Cumulative grade point averages are computed on a quality point system. The interpretation of the letter grades and their quality point values is as follows:

		Quality Points Per Credit Hour	
A	Excellent	4.0	93%-100%
B+	Good	3.5	89%-92%
B	Good	3.0	82%-88%
C+	Average	2.5	78%-81%
C	Average	2.0	70%-77%
F	Poor	0	Below 70%
FQ	Failure-Quit Attending/Never Attended	0	
S	Satisfactory	*	
U	Unsatisfactory	*	
ABX	Absent from Final Exam (Excused)	*	
IC	Incomplete (Excused)	*	
IP	In Progress	*	
AU	Audit	*	
W	Withdrawal	*	
Z	Grade not Reported	*	

### 2.3.3 ABX and Incomplete Policy

The grade of ABX denotes that the student was absent from the scheduled final examination because of sickness or another valid and compelling reason that is satisfactory to the instructor. A special examination, to take the place of the one missed, must be taken no later than mid-term of the next semester, or the ABX grade will be changed to the grade of F.

The grade of IC (incomplete) means the student is passing the class but some relatively small part of the semester's work remains incomplete because of illness or another valid and compelling reason that is satisfactory to the instructor.

A grade of "Incomplete" will be assigned if, due to exceptional extenuating circumstances and with the prior approval of both the instructor and Associate Dean, a student is not able to complete the required course work during the semester. All work must be completed by the date set by the professor, but no later than the end of the first full semester following the assignment of the "Incomplete" grade. At that time, the "IC" will be replaced with a letter grade. If the student has not completed the work by the date set by the professor, but no later than the end of the first full semester following the assignment of the "Incomplete" grade, the "IC" will be replaced with a letter grade of

“F.”

It is the student’s responsibility to contact the professor and the Associate Dean in writing prior to the scheduled date of final examinations, request an “incomplete,” and agree on a schedule for completing the work, if the instructor and Associate Dean think that circumstances warrant the giving of an “incomplete.” Otherwise, work that is not turned in will be given an “F.” A student who receives an “incomplete” should adjust the course load for the next semester in order to allow for time to complete the course work from the previous semester. If a student begins to develop a pattern of requesting “incompletes,” requesting “incompletes” in consecutive semesters or on a recurring basis, they may be placed on probation.

If the student does not re-enroll in the University after receiving a grade of IC and the work for that class is not completed within 12 months after the IC was assigned, the IC will be changed to a grade of F. All ABX and IC grades must be replaced with traditional grades before degrees can be awarded.

#### 2.3.4 In Progress (IP)

The IP (in progress) grade is assigned only in courses that require completion of the assigned work beyond the end of the semester. An IP grade may not be given in place of a grade of “incomplete” (IC). To qualify for an IP grade, courses must be approved by the appropriate Dean’s office. All grades of IP will be converted to F (failure) if the work is not completed in one calendar year from the time the IP grade is assigned.

## 2.4 Academic And Non-Academic Student Grievances

### 2.4.1 GRIEVANCE, ACADEMIC

Students have the right to bring grievances against a faculty member or an administrator concerning academic matters. A “grievance” is typically a complaint relating to some allegedly improper action or behavior. An “appeal” is typically a request for review of a routine judgment or decision. Such matters may include, but are not limited to failure to abide by requirements described in the course syllabus, arbitrary awarding of grades, discrimination based on race, color, national origin, disability, veteran status, sex, sexual orientation, genetic information, age, or religion (except in limited circumstances where religious preference is both permitted by law and deemed appropriate as a matter of University policy).

#### Time Frame

For grievances and appeals of any kind, students are required to initiate them with the appropriate faculty member no later than thirty (30) days from the completion of the term in which the course was offered. Grievances or appeals received after this period will not be honored.

#### Informal Resolution Procedure

Student grievance and appeal procedures encourage each student to handle complaints as

close to the source as possible. If a student has a complaint against a faculty member, the student should first attempt to resolve the issue by an informal meeting with the faculty member involved. If this is not satisfactory, or if the student believes that he or she cannot discuss the complaint with the instructor, the student may follow the Formal Resolution Procedure.

#### Formal Resolution Procedure

The following protocol should be followed:

The student should meet with the Associate Dean after submitting to this person a formal written account of the grievance or appeal. This narrative must be submitted no later than thirty (30) days from the date on which the student was formally notified of the instructor's decision.

If the grievance or appeal is not satisfactorily resolved by the Associate Dean, the student should meet with the Dean after submitting to the Dean a formal written account. This narrative must be submitted no later than thirty (30) days from the date on which the student was formally notified of the Associate Dean's decision.

If the grievance is not satisfactorily resolved by the Dean, the student should meet with the Provost after submitting to the Provost a formal written account of the grievance or appeal. This narrative must be submitted no later than thirty (30) days from the date on which the student was formally notified of the Dean's decision.

If the student has a grievance or appeal involving a Dean, he or she should schedule an appointment with that Dean in an attempt to resolve the matter. If the matter is not resolved or if the student believes that he or she cannot discuss the issue with that Dean, the student may address the grievance or appeal to the Provost. In all academic grievance and appeal procedures, the decision of the Provost is final.

#### Graduate Appeals

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If an appeal is not resolved within the school, forwarding an appeal to the Office of the Provost is the last step of the formal academic grievance process. The complainant would need to provide written documentation of their communication with each college/school administrator (program director/department chair, Assistant/Associate Dean, and the Dean), including the student's requests and the administrators' responses, not just a narrative of the student's complaint.

### 2.4.2 GRIEVANCE, NONACADEMIC

#### Policy Statement

Mercer University recognizes the importance of providing an efficient procedure for a timely and fair resolution of a nonacademic grievance. Students are encouraged to use the process to resolve allegations concerning (1) a University employee, (2) administrative policies or procedures, (3) a University program, service, or activity.

Non-academic grievances involving student conduct issues fall under “University Regulations and Judicial Programs” section of this handbook.

## Procedure

### Informal resolution

Many grievances may be resolved via informal personal meetings, phone calls, or e-mails directly with the employee or office responsible for the grievance. Whenever possible, students are encouraged to exercise these avenues of communication first. However, should these avenues not rectify the grievance, or the student wishes to bypass the informal resolution process, then the formal grievance process below should be implemented.

### Formal Grievance

When a student wishes to file a formal complaint that is nonacademic in nature, he or she should follow these procedures:

The student should submit the complaint in writing to the University employee responsible for the action or event that forms the basis of the grievance. This statement should be titled “Formal Grievance” and contain a brief statement of the grievance and the remedies sought. A copy of the statement must also be presented to the employee’s supervisor and the Associate Vice President of Human Resources. The complaint should be submitted to the employee within ten (10) days of the action or event that forms the basis of the grievance. The employee respondent will then meet with the student along with their supervisor or the Associate Vice President of Human Resources to discuss the complaint within ten (10) days of receipt of the written formal grievance. The employee respondent will reply in writing to the student with the results of the discussion at the meeting and plans for further action, if any, within ten (10) days of the meeting. A copy of this reply will be provided to the Associate Vice President of Human Resources.

If a student is not satisfied with the results of the discussion and/or with the reply and wants the formal grievance to be considered further, the student may appeal in writing to the employee respondent’s supervisor. A copy of this appeal must be sent to the Associate Vice President of Human Resources. This appeal to the supervisor must begin within ten (10) days after the student receives the written reply from the employee responsible for the action or event that forms the basis of the grievance. A written reply indicating the results of the appeal including further action, if any, to be taken will be sent to the student by the employee’s supervisor within ten (10) days of the meeting between the student and the employee’s supervisor. A copy of this response will be sent to the Associate Vice President for Human Resources.

If the student is not satisfied with the results of the appeal to the supervisor and wants the formal grievance to be considered further, the student will have an opportunity for further appeal as follows:

In the case of complaints concerning employees, policies, procedures, or programs of a nonacademic nature *within a specific school or college*, the student may appeal to the Dean with responsibility for the employee’s unit and request a meeting in order to seek a resolution. This appeal must begin within ten (10) days after the employee’s supervisor has completed consideration of the grievance and responded in writing to the student. A written reply from the Dean indicating the results of the meeting and including further action, if any, to be taken will be sent to the student within ten (10) days after consideration of the formal

grievance. A copy of the appeal and the response from the Dean must be provided to the Associate Vice President of Human Resources.

If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the Dean, the student may appeal in writing to the Provost with responsibility for the school or college and request a meeting. The appeal must begin within ten (10) days of the date the Dean has completed consideration of the formal grievance and responded in writing to the student. A written reply by the Provost indicating the results of the meeting and including further action, if any, to be taken will be sent to the student within ten (10) days after consideration of the grievance. The decision of the Provost with responsibility for the employee's unit will be the final University decision on the grievance. A copy of the appeal to the Provost and the Provost response will be copied to the Associate Vice President of Human Resources.

In the case of complaints concerning employees, policies, procedures, or programs of a nonacademic nature *outside of the administrative organization of a specific school or college*, the student may appeal to the Vice President with responsibility for the employee's unit and request a meeting in order to seek a resolution. This appeal must begin within ten (10) days after the employee's supervisor has completed consideration of the formal grievance and responded in writing to the student. A written reply from the Vice President indicating the results of the meeting and including further action, if any, to be taken will be sent to the student within ten (10) days after consideration of the grievance. The decision of the Vice President with responsibility for the employee's unit will be the final University decision on the formal grievance. A copy of the complaint to the Vice President and their response will be submitted to the Associate Vice President of Human Resources.

The Dean of students or student affairs designee on each campus serves as a resource for students seeking assistance with grievance procedures.

## **2.5 Academic Integrity**

Mercer University strives to be a Community of Respect that includes respect for academic integrity. Students operate under an honor system and will exhibit the values of honesty, trustworthiness, and fairness regarding all academic matters. Students, faculty, and staff are expected to report any violations in the forms of, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and academic dishonesty to the honor council appropriate for their campus and program.

Procedures related to Honor Systems and Academic Integrity are outlined in the specific handbooks for each campus and can be found on the Provost website at <http://provost.mercer.edu/handbooks>.

Mercer University is dedicated to the advancement of knowledge and learning and to the development of ethically responsible persons. The University is an academic community that believes honesty is essential to learning. Academic integrity at Mercer is advanced through the Honor System. The Honor System is maintained through various Honor Codes within colleges and schools of the University.



Participation in the Honor System is not optional. By the act of entering Mercer University, each student consents to Mercer's Honor System and thereby agrees to be governed by its rules. Students are expected to read and familiarize themselves fully with the Honor Code and to cooperate completely with the System.

Students at McAfee School of Theology are required to abide by both the University Honor Code located online at <http://provost.mercer.edu/handbooks/integrity.cfm> and the McAfee School of Theology Honor Code located below.

## AI POLICY

The Mercer University Policy on AI is located here:

<https://policies.mercer.edu/www/mu-policies/upload/AI-Policy-8-01-24-opt.pdf>

### Generative AI

Students in the School of Theology may use generative AI to brainstorm ideas, clarify concepts, identify examples, or contextualize their learning in their courses. The output of a generative AI tool may not be included in any submitted work. Students may not copy/paste the output; this includes outlines of an essay or argument, as well.

The only exception to this policy is that students are permitted to use generative AI tools (such as Grammarly) to improve the language or readability of their submission. If a student does this, they must include a statement with their submission disclosing the tool used and a short description of how it was used. E.g. "I used Grammarly to check and improve my spelling and grammar."

## CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM

Mercer University's Graduate Student Honor Code addresses the issues of cheating and plagiarism. It defines cheating as "the taking of credit for work which has been done by another person." Plagiarism is "the use of ideas, facts, phrases, or additional material such as maps and charts from any source without giving proper credit for such material." Examples include, but are not limited to the following:

- Using information from any source, including internet sources, without giving proper acknowledgement to the original author of the material;
- Submitting the same, or nearly the same, paper for academic credit in two classes without the consent and approval of both instructors;
- Submitting another student's work as one's own or allowing one's work to be submitted by another student;
- Turning in late assignments without clearly indicating that the work is submitted late;
- Giving or fabricating false citations and references in any material submitted for grading.

## MCAFEE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY HONOR CODE POLICY

I, a student of the McAfee School of Theology, pledge to conduct myself with honesty, integrity and understanding. I believe as a student, I can take responsibility in maintaining these and other Christian standards of behavior. I will promote the idea of community, interacting and learning from each other in a way that protects personal freedom and community standards.

I will ensure that all work is my own, and I will properly give credit where credit is due.

I will respect and honor all property, persons and facilities.

I will honestly report my participation in all classroom activities and student requirements.

I will uphold the stipulations and underlying values of the honor code.

**I will ensure that all work is my own, and I will properly give credit where credit is due.**

Any material without proper citation is assumed to be the author's original work.

Plagiarism and related offenses are defined as, but not limited to:

Using information from any source without giving proper acknowledgment to the original author of the material;

Submitting the same, or nearly the same, paper for academic credit in two classes without the consent of both professors;

Submitting another student's work as one's own or allowing one's work to be submitted by another student;

Turning in assignments after the deadline without clearly indicating that the work is submitted late;

Giving or fabricating false citations and references in any material submitted for grading.

**I will refrain from cheating.**

Cheating includes, but is not limited to:

Attempting to give or receive unauthorized assistance during an examination;

Using testing materials from past testing periods as a study guide unless authorized by the professor;

Discussing examination contents with any other student while taking an examination or test;

Offering or receiving assistance to/from another student during an examination or test;

Copying ideas or facts from another's papers during an examination

Obtaining or providing specific information regarding an examination before the exam is administered without the professor's permission;

Copying answers or ideas either verbally, or in writing, from another person during a testing situation;

Obtaining test questions or specific information included on an exam before a test without the professor's permission.

Using unauthorized materials during an examination, quiz or other graded assignment. This includes notes, textbooks, or any unapproved translation of a biblical language;

Exceeding the time limits of an exam or an assignment without the professor's permission, nor attempt to turn in an assignment after due date without clearly indicating the lateness of the work;

Failing to indicate clearly to the instructor that my written work was submitted after the announced deadline for such submissions;

I will respect and honor all property, persons and facilities.

Students, faculty, and staff engaging in the activities below will be considered in violation of the honor code. This includes, but is not limited to:

Disrupting or interfering with the orderly conduct or operation of any university activity, failing to obey the lawful instruction of the person in charge of such activity, or preventing others from freely engaging in the activity;

Disrupting or interfering with any university facility, failing to obey the lawful instruction of any

person in charge of such a facility, or preventing others from freely using the facility;  
 Interfering with or denying free access to or egress from, or use of the university buildings,  
 facilities, streets, or other property;  
 Engaging in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, misrepresentation, or misappropriation  
 of property that causes harm to a registered or sponsored student organization;  
 Engaging in conduct that threatens, endangers, or harms the life or safety of any persona;  
 Interfering with, injuring, damaging, destroying, or taking without lawful authorization any  
 property belonging to other persons or the University;  
 Employing force or violence, or the threat of force or violence against any person or property;  
 Possessing any operable firearm or explosive material or device on University property or at a  
 University sponsored activity without express written authorization from the Dean of Students  
 and Chief of Student Affairs;  
 Engaging in conduct intended to obstruct access to potential evidence, or to alter, destroy, or  
 conceal potential evidence connected with an Honor Code investigation or proceeding;  
 Filing a frivolous complaint (one without basis in fact) of an Honor Code violation with the  
 intent to harass another student;  
 Attempting to intimidate or deter complainants, witnesses, or other participants in an Honor  
 Code investigation or proceeding;  
 Preventing the discovery of prohibited conduct.

I will honestly report my participation in all classroom activities and student requirements.  
 It will be breaking the honor code if at any time a student engages in falsifying or misleading  
 conduct in the areas of class attendance and participation. This would include, but is not limited  
 to, the following:

Signing the roll on behalf of another person who is not present;  
 Having another person sign a roll for you when you are not present;  
 Answering a roll call on behalf of someone not present;  
 Having someone answer a roll call on your behalf when you are not present;  
 Signing the roll and then departing before the end of class;  
 Holding on to a roll call sheet so late arriving students may sign it;  
 Misrepresenting your presence or participation in outside class requirements by:  
 Saying you were present when you were not;  
 Turning in material from an activity of which you were not a part;  
 Using previous experiences to fulfill the requirements of a current assignment, unless permission  
 by the professor has been granted;  
 Misrepresenting the presence or participation of another student in outside class requirements by:  
 Claiming their presence when they were absent;  
 Gathering material for them to turn in for credit, unless permission by the professor has been  
 granted.

I will uphold the stipulations and underlying values of the honor code.

The reliability of the honor code is dependent on the student's full cooperation in adhering to the  
 principles of integrity therein as well as reporting any infraction that one witnesses. The student  
 assumes such a responsibility upon entering the McAfee School of Theology. Failure to report a  
 violation either directly or indirectly is a failure to adhere to the code entirely.  
 As a member of the McAfee student body and as one preparing for Christian ministry students

will conduct their lives with honesty, integrity, and character. A student shall be held in violation of said behavioral expectations only when the student's conduct does not constitute an infringement of any specific stipulation of the honor code.

### **PROCESS AND PENALTIES**

If a student infringes on the code or witnesses another student or party infringing upon the honor code, he or she must immediately report the infringement to the professor concerned and/or to the Associate Dean. Students will not inaccurately or falsely report their activities concerning the above regulations when questioned by a professor, Associate Dean, or Dean.

**At McAfee School of Theology, all faculty and adjunct instructors must report any violation of the honor code to the Associate Dean.**

**Any McAfee student accused of a violation of the Honor Code will be notified in writing by the Associate Dean.** If convicted, on the first offense, students will receive a "0" on the assignment and must meet with the Associate Dean to discuss the violation of the Honor Code. A subsequent offense, in any class, will result in an "F" in the course(s) and immediate expulsion from the McAfee School of Theology. Expulsion is the permanent removal of student status. Additionally, any student receiving scholarship funds convicted of an Honor Code violation will automatically forfeit his/her scholarship for the duration of their degree program. For more on this subject, please see the Graduate Honor System at <http://provost.mercer.edu/handbooks/integrity.cfm>.

In the event of a conviction, the accused may request the Dean to review a finding of guilt and/or the propriety of the penalty. The request must be made in writing within four school days and should enumerate the grounds on which the appeal is based. The Dean will review the request for an appeal to determine whether there are sufficient grounds to warrant reconsideration. If the Dean determines that reconsideration of the conviction or penalty is appropriate, he or she should consider questioning or hearing:

the accused

any witness that the accused or the Dean wishes to question

the faculty member in whose class the violation is alleged to have occurred

any written evidence used in the Associate Dean's decision-making process

any records, notes, or recordings kept by the Associate Dean.

If after reconsideration the Dean believes that there are adequate grounds for changing the decision of the Associate Dean, he or she may reverse the conviction or, if additional evidence was presented after the original decision by the Associate Dean, refer the matter back to the Associate Dean for further deliberation.

The Dean will determine whether the incident should be managed within the academic unit or forwarded to the Graduate Council. If the decision is to forward to the Council, then such notification shall be immediately made to the Chairperson of the Graduate Council.

If the Dean determines that reconsideration of the conviction or penalty is not appropriate, the accused may appeal the finding of guilt and/or the propriety of the penalty to the Graduate Council.

## **PROCEDURES FOR APPEAL TO THE GRADUATE COUNCIL**

The Graduate Council will select two members of the Honors Panel for an Honor Committee and request that the Dean name the remainder of the Committee by: (1) selecting two members of the Graduate Honor Panel, and (2) naming one additional member of the Graduate Faculty. The Dean will appoint one member of this group as chairperson.

The Chairperson of the Honors Committee will notify the accused student(s) and will serve as an investigator to determine the facts of the case. The Honors Committee will conduct the case according to the procedures described in the following section.

Policies and procedures regarding graduate student infractions of the *Honor Code* are established by the Graduate Council of Mercer University. To this purpose, the Graduate Council shall establish and maintain a panel of members of the Graduate Faculty who are available to adjudicate cases of infractions reported to the Council. The members of this Panel may be called upon to serve as an Honors Committee to judge violations of the *Honor Code* and to recommend penalties for those found guilty of infractions. Each college or school which offers graduate programs falling under the jurisdiction of the Graduate Council shall select three members of its Graduate Faculty to serve on the Honor Panel. The Honor Panel members shall serve for staggered terms, so as to provide for continuity of experience.

## **GRADUATE HONOR COMMITTEE PROCEDURES**

### **RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **OF THE ACCUSED**

The accused shall have following rights in the event that he or she shall face a hearing:

A right that the charges against him or her be served on him or her by some member of the GRADUATE HONOR COMMITTEE at least 24 hours prior to the hearing. This right may be waived by joint consent of the accused and COMMITTEE.

A right to summon witnesses and to testify on his or her own behalf.

A right to be present when the witnesses testify and to question them at the designated time.

A right to examine written work or other exhibits where the evidence consists in part or whole of same.

A right to an acquittal unless the COMMITTEE believes that the charge or charges against him or her have been proved beyond any reasonable doubt.

A right to request the Dean of the School or College to review a finding of guilt and the propriety of the penalty. This right must be exercised within four school days after the hearing.

The accused shall have the full right of free speech as regards his or her trial.

The Accused shall have the following responsibilities in the event that he or she shall face a hearing:

A general duty to cooperate fully with the COMMITTEE in all matters pertaining to case procedure.

A duty to be present at the hearing. If the accused fails to appear or to notify the COMMITTEE, the hearing shall proceed in his or her absence.

A duty to answer all relevant questions frankly, fully, and honestly, remembering that intentional omission is as serious an offense as willful distortion of the truth.

## OF WITNESSES

A witness shall have the following rights in the event the accused shall face a hearing:

The right to be presented with a summons at least 24 hours prior to the hearing.

The right that neither his or her person nor property shall be insulted, molested, threatened, or damaged because of his or her part in the hearing.

A witness shall have the following responsibilities in the event that the accused shall face a hearing:

A general duty to cooperate fully with the COMMITTEE in all matters pertaining to case procedure

The duty to be present at the hearing

The duty to answer all relevant questions frankly, fully, and honestly, remembering that intentional omission is as serious an offense as willful distortion of the truth

## CONDUCT OF THE HEARING

### PARTICIPATION IN THE HEARING

Every hearing shall be conducted by a GRADUATE HONOR COMMITTEE appointed by the Graduate Council and the Dean of the School or College; the Committee chairperson appointed by the Dean shall preside.

The clerk of the COMMITTEE shall take minutes of the proceedings. Recording devices may be used if they are under the control of the COMMITTEE. The accused may listen to the recordings after the hearing in the presence of at least two members of the COMMITTEE. In those cases which result in a conviction, a complete record of the hearing proceedings shall be retained by the COMMITTEE until the graduation of the accused. In cases which result in an acquittal, only the number of the case, the name of the student, and the statement of acquittal shall be retained by the COMMITTEE.

A member of the COMMITTEE shall disqualify him or herself in a case in which he or she is called as a witness.

The proceedings of the case shall be held in utmost confidence before, during, and after the hearing.

### CALL COMMITTEE TO ORDER

The clerk will record the committee members present.

The Chairperson of the COMMITTEE will give a review of the facts involved in the case.

### CALL THE ACCUSED BEFORE THE COMMITTEE

Prayer by a member of the COMMITTEE.

Swear accused in as he or she stands, raises right hand, and rests left hand on the Bible.

Remind the accused that perjury and willful omission of evidence are a violation of the *Honor Code*.

Ask the accused whether he or she has been afforded all the rights as stipulated by the *Honor System*.

Ask the accused how he or she pleads.

#### CALL WITNESS(ES) BEFORE THE COMMITTEE

Swear witness in as he or she stands, raises right hand, and rests left hand on the Bible.

Remind witness that perjury and willful omission of evidence are a violation of the *Honor Code*

#### QUESTIONING OF WITNESSES AND ACCUSED

Questioning will be carried out by the Committee Chairperson to be followed by questions from other committee members.

#### QUESTIONING OF WITNESSES BY THE ACCUSED

The accused will now have an opportunity to question the witnesses if he or she so desires.

#### RESUME BY THE ACCUSED

The accused will now have an opportunity to give an uninterrupted resume of his or her defense.

#### RECESS FOR DELIBERATIONS

Following the resume by the accused, the Committee will recess the Hearing and retire to confer and discuss the case. They will reach a verdict of guilt or acquittal and, in the event of a verdict of guilt, determine the appropriate penalty.

#### PROCEDURE OF BEING RECALLED

Any witness or the accused may be recalled by the COMMITTEE. If special circumstances warrant, witnesses may also be recalled by the Committee at the request of the accused prior to the presentation of the verdict. The hearing will be reconvened for this purpose.

#### REPORT OF THE ACCUSED

If Guilty

Give the verdict to the accused.

Give penalty to the accused.

Advise accused that the decision may be appealed to the Dean of the respective School or College within four school days.

Advise accused that all GRADUATE HONOR COMMITTEE procedures are kept in strictest confidence.

If Acquitted

Give verdict.

Advise accused that all GRADUATE HONOR COMMITTEE procedures are kept in strictest confidence.

#### POST HEARING PROCEDURES

If the finding be one of guilt, the decision will be recorded in the GRADUATE HONOR COMMITTEE file and the accused will be notified of the decision and informed of the right to appeal. Files pertaining to the hearing will be maintained by the Office of the Dean of the academic unit.

If the finding be one of acquittal, the accused shall be notified of that finding and cautioned that the hearing may be reopened for good cause by the COMMITTEE within a period of four school days

## **PENALTIES FOR INFRACTION**

IF THE ACCUSED IS FOUND GUILTY OF CHEATING OR PLAGIARISM, THE COMMITTEE SHALL DETERMINE THE PENALTY BY MAJORITY VOTE.

### **TYPES OF PENALTIES:**

Class I penalty: expulsion from the graduate program or suspension for a specified period.

Class II penalty: failure in the course in which the violation occurs.

Class III penalty: failure on the work in which the violation occurs.

### **DISCRETIONARY penalty:**

A censure or penalty other than the above indicating to the student that the conviction is the result of improper conduct and/or dishonesty on his or her part. A notation of the offense shall be recorded in the GRADUATE HONOR COMMITTEE file of the student in the form of a letter which will be removed upon departure of the student from the University.

Upon the unanimous agreement of the GRADUATE HONOR COMMITTEE, a penalty may be suspended with the stipulation that no letter be placed in the GRADUATE HONOR COMMITTEE file but that the decision shall be considered a conviction.

IF THE ACCUSED IS FOUND GUILTY OF ACADEMIC NEGLIGENCE, THE COMMITTEE SHALL DETERMINE THE PENALTY BY MAJORITY VOTE.

### **PENALTY:**

A censure indicating to the student that the conviction is a result of academic negligence or bad judgment on his or her part. A record of the conviction will be kept in the GRADUATE HONOR COMMITTEE file and be removed when the student leaves the University. The COMMITTEE will have the discretion to extend the penalty to not more than a failure on the work. Examples of extended penalties include rewrites on papers and retaking exams.

IF THE ACCUSED IS FOUND GUILTY OF PERJURY OR WILLFUL OMISSION OF EVIDENCE IN TESTIMONY DURING A GRADUATE HONOR COMMITTEE HEARING, THE COMMITTEE SHALL DETERMINE THE PENALTY BY MAJORITY VOTE.

### **TYPES OF PENALTIES:**

Class I penalty: immediate expulsion from the graduate program or suspension for a specified period

Class II penalty: censure or written rebuke. A record of the conviction shall be kept in the GRADUATE HONOR COMMITTEE file and will be removed upon the departure of the student from the University.

## **APPEAL PROCEDURES**

In the event of a conviction, the accused may request the Provost to review a finding of guilt and/or the propriety of the penalty. The request must be made in writing within four school days and should enumerate the grounds on which the appeal is based.

The Provost will review the request for an appeal to determine whether there are sufficient grounds to warrant reconsideration.



If the Provost determines that reconsideration of the conviction or penalty is appropriate, he or she should consider questioning or hearing:

the accused

any witness that the accused or the Provost wishes to question

the faculty member in whose class the violation is alleged to have occurred

any written evidence used in the Committee hearing

any records, notes or recordings kept by the Committee.

If after reconsideration the Provost believes that there are adequate grounds for changing the decision of the Committee, he or she may:

reverse the conviction or lower the penalty or

if additional evidence was presented after the original Honor Committee decision, refer the matter back to the Committee for its further deliberation.

If the Provost determines that reconsideration of the conviction or penalty is not appropriate, the accused may appeal the finding of guilt and/or the propriety of the penalty to the President. The decision of the President shall be final.

## **2.6 Teaching Load**

The standard teaching load for full-time McAfee School of Theology faculty is six courses during the two semesters. For faculty teaching in the DMin program in the summer, their semester load will be adjusted accordingly. The load also may be adjusted for Associate Deans, Senior Professors, or individuals who carry an unusual administrative load.

## **2.7 Class Rolls and Grade Reports**

The faculty works closely with the Office of the Registrar in the verification of class rolls. Attendance must be posted for the first three weeks of each term. The timely validation of these rolls is a significant duty of the faculty. In addition, the Registrar requests the cooperation of the faculty in prompt reporting of grades at the end of each semester or term.

## **2.8 Course Evaluations**

All faculty will conduct student evaluations in a majority of their courses each year using the university's online evaluation form adopted by the faculty for this purpose. Faculty may supplement the form with additional questions or instruments. The results of student evaluations may be used by the Dean in annual assessment of faculty and in tenure and promotion processes.

## **2.9 Academic Advising**

The Associate Dean assigns entering students to faculty members who serve as advisors for the student's entire academic program. Faculty advisers are responsible for ensuring that the student registers for courses that are appropriate to their course of study and their stage in the program. The faculty advisor also serves as a faculty mentor, guiding the student's personal and professional development.

## 2.10 Academic Freedom

The Mercer University Faculty Handbook (Section 2.04 “Academic Freedom and Tenure”) declares that Mercer University assures all faculty members, whether tenured or untenured, of full protection of academic freedom. The University’s understanding of academic freedom is consistent with the definition contained in the “Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure” formulated in 1940 by the Association of American Colleges and the American Association of University Professors. The relevant sections of the “Statement” state:

“Institutions of higher education are conducted for the common good and not to further the interest of either the individual teacher or the institution as a whole. The common good depends upon the free search for truth and its free exposition.

“Academic freedom is essential to these purposes and applies to both teaching and research. Freedom in research is fundamental to the advancement of truth. Academic freedom in its teaching aspect is fundamental for the protection of the rights of the teacher in teaching and of the student to freedom in learning. It carries with it duties correlative with rights.

“(a) Teachers are entitled to full freedom in research and the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of their other academic duties; but research for pecuniary return should be based upon an understanding with the authorities of the institution.

“(b) Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject. Limitations of academic freedom because of religious or other aims of the institution should be clearly stated in writing at the time of the appointment.

“(c) College and university teachers are citizens, members of a learned profession, and officers of an educational institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations. As scholars and educational officers, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. Hence, they should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution.”

An earlier statement of principles concerning academic freedom, which was developed in 1925 at a conference of higher education organizations and endorsed by the Association of American Colleges and the American Association of University Professors, declares:

“(a) A university or college may not place any restraint upon the teacher’s freedom in investigation, unless restriction upon the amount of time devoted to it becomes necessary in order to prevent undue interference with teaching duties.

“(b) A university or college may not impose any limitation upon the teacher’s freedom in the exposition of his [or her] own subject in the classroom or in addresses and publications outside

the college, except in so far as the necessity of adapting instruction to the needs of immature students, or in the case of institutions of a denominational or artisan character, specific stipulations in advance, fully understood and accepted by both parties, limit the scope and character of instruction.

“(c) No teacher may claim as his [or her] right the privilege of discussing in his [or her] classroom controversial topics outside of his [or her] field of study. The teacher is morally bound not to take advantage of his [or her] position by introducing into the classroom provocative discussion or irrelevant subjects not within the field of his [or her] study.

“(d) A university or college should recognize that the teacher in speaking and writing outside of the institution upon subjects beyond the scope of his [or her] own field of study is entitled to precisely the same freedom and is subject to the same responsibility as attached to all other citizens. If the extra-mural utterances of a teacher should be such as to raise grave doubts concerning his [or her] fitness for his [or her] position, the question should in all cases be submitted to an appropriate committee of the faculty of which he [or she] is a member. It should be clearly understood that an institution assumes no responsibility for views expressed by members of its staff; and teachers should, when necessary, take pains to make it clear that they are expressing only their personal opinions.”

Mercer University is firmly committed to the tradition of academic freedom in American colleges and universities and seeks to maintain conditions which are conducive to open inquiry.

*The following statements in the Founding Principles of the McAfee School of Theology articulate the importance of academic freedom for the fulfillment of its mission:*

“5. The School shall be inclusive in spirit and practice, affirming the open search for truth, and fostering tolerance for religious and intellectual diversity.

“7. The School shall hold steadfastly to the high and defining traditions of Baptists, including the priesthood of believers, the separation of church and state, the autonomy of the local congregations as the context for mission and ministry, the centrality of scripture to the life of faith, and the resolve that neither creeds nor human affirmations should stand as tests of orthodoxy.

“9. The School shall embody the historical traditions of Mercer University, valuing both intellectual freedom and the affirmation of faith as the foundations of the University.”

## **2.11 Termination, Resignation, or Dismissal of a Faculty Member**

The University Faculty Handbook provides for due process for “Termination of Appointments by the University” (Section 2.06); “Termination of Appointment by the Faculty Member” (Section 2.07); “Dismissal Procedures” (Section 2.08); and “Review Procedures: Allegations of Inadequate Consideration” (Section 2.09).

The section on “Termination of Appointment by the Faculty Member” (2.07) reads: A faculty

member may terminate his or her appointment effective at the end of an academic year, provided that he or she gives notice in writing at the earliest possible opportunity, but not later than 30 days after receiving notification of the terms of his or her reappointment for the coming year. The faculty member may properly request a waiver of this requirement of notice in case of hardship or in a situation where he or she would otherwise be denied substantial professional advancement or other opportunity. Faculty members are expected to give due notice of their intentions not to accept reappointment so as to assist the University in procuring a qualified replacement.

## **II. Policies Related to Faculty Recruitment, Development, Conflict of Interest, Rank, Tenure, and Promotion**

### **3.1 Appointment of Faculty**

1. The Dean will announce faculty vacancies whenever there is a need to create a new position or fill a vacancy in a current position.
2. The Dean may appoint a person to the faculty for a non-tenured, contract or visiting professor position when circumstances warrant such an appointment. All other full-time faculty appointments require the participation and support of the faculty.
3. When a vacancy is declared, it will be advertised through appropriate channels. Applications and resumes will be solicited and collected from interested applicants regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background, or disability.
4. Candidates for a faculty appointment are evaluated on the basis of:
  - a. academic credentials,
  - b. teaching experience and ability,
  - c. experience in ministry,
  - d. commitment to the gospel, the church, and theological education, and
  - e. collegiality.
5. The normal procedure is for a search committee appointed by the Dean to review the applications and invite three candidates to campus for an interview. When the faculty reaches agreement on the best candidate for the position, the Dean will extend an invitation for the candidate to accept the position, negotiate matters of rank and salary, and write a contractual letter on behalf of the President of the University.
6. Faculty rank and salary for new appointments will normally be determined on the basis of
  - a. the candidate's rank at their institution prior to appointment to the Mercer faculty,
  - b. years of teaching experience,
  - c. years in ministry, and
  - d. publication record.

#### **3.1.1 Adjunct Faculty**

The Dean appoints adjunct faculty, taking into consideration the need for additional instruction in the coming semester, faculty sabbaticals, and the need to offer courses not being taught by the full-time faculty. As a rule adjunct faculty are expected to hold a Ph.D. or equivalent degree, but experience, expertise, and reputation are also considered. .

### 3.1.2 Non-Tenured Faculty—See Mercer Faculty Handbook, “Non-Tenured Appointments” (Section 2.04.3)

Non-tenured faculty appointments may be for one year or for other stated periods (but not in excess of three years), and are renewable at the option of the University. The duration of certain non-tenure-track appointments (e.g., research faculty positions) may be tied to the availability of funding from specified sources rather than to a fixed time period.

Non-tenured faculty members will be advised of the terms and conditions of their appointment, in writing, at the time of initial appointment and each year thereafter.

### 3.1.3 Tenure-Track Faculty—See Mercer Faculty Handbook, “Tenured Appointments” (Section 2.04.2)

Tenure-Track faculty will be reviewed for tenure and notified of the outcome during the sixth year of full-time faculty service. At the time of a professor’s initial appointment, credit toward tenure may be given for teaching at another institution, and a shorter probationary period may be specified. Where the candidate’s experience and distinction warrant it, the President may make the appointment with tenure. See McAfee Faculty Handbook “Tenure and Promotion” (Section 3.5).

## 3.2 Faculty Development

The faculty may expect support from the University for their professional development. In return, the University may expect enhanced performance in scholarship and teaching and deeper commitment to the University.

### 3.2.1 Attendance at Professional Meetings

Faculty members are expected to attend and become active participants in the regional, national, and (when possible) international professional meetings of their disciplines. Faculty members pay their own dues for membership in professional organizations. The School will pay for travel and registration at the annual meetings to the limits set by the Dean in view of budgetary constraints in any given year.

### 3.2.2 Sabbatical Leave

The purpose of the program of sabbatical leave is to provide opportunity for continued professional growth and intellectual development through study, research, or writing. Normally travel away from campus is involved.

## 1. Eligibility

A professor is eligible for a one-semester sabbatical leave after six years of full-time service as a faculty member in the University. Any previous time spent on leave is not considered in determining years of service. A faculty member is expected to teach for at least a year following a sabbatical leave. A sabbatical leave is not considered a form of deferred compensation, a faculty right, or an automatic benefit. See the University Faculty Handbook, "Sabbatical Leaves and Leaves of Absence" (Section 2.17).

## 2. Application Procedure

No later than November 1 in the year prior to the expected leave, the faculty member must submit to the Dean a letter of application and a documented proposal that states the purposes of the leave and a plan of action for the period of the leave. The application must be approved by the Dean, who may require the approval of a faculty committee. The application must also be approved by the Provost. Special consideration will be given to applications which hold promise of enhancing the applicant's professional effectiveness and future service to the institution.

Notification of those selected for sabbatical leaves will be made by February 1, and the specific terms of the leave, including salary, will be agreed upon by all parties by April 1.

## 3. Duration and Terms

Ordinarily, sabbatical leaves are for one semester at full salary or for one year at one-half salary. If a recipient of a sabbatical leave accepts income from other sources during the sabbatical leave, the President may require adjustment of the University salary.

Acceptance of a sabbatical leave will not interfere with the normal opportunity for annualized increases in salary. The period of the leave will be counted toward eligibility for promotion on the same basis as a period of on-campus instruction. A faculty member on sabbatical leave retains the rights, benefits, and privileges of a full-time faculty member, including retirement and insurance benefits based upon the salary actually being paid during the sabbatical period, housing, and tuition credit for dependents.

## 4. Institutional Limitations

No more than 10% of the full-time faculty may be on sabbatical leave in any given year. In addition, the academic department must be able to cover the essential workload of the faculty member during the period of their absence. Any faculty member who accepts a sabbatical leave is expected to return to the University for at least one year or repay the University for the compensation received during such leave.

## 5. Evaluation

Within 3 months of returning from a sabbatical leave, a faculty member shall submit to the Dean of the college or school a written account of the work accomplished during the leave and an evaluation of the extent to which the objectives of the leave have been achieved.

### 3.3 Conflict of Interest

The faculty and staff of the McAfee School of Theology strive to maintain and exemplify the highest standards of integrity in every aspect of their professional activities. For that reason, the following guidelines have been adopted by the faculty to ensure that there shall be no misunderstanding in areas of potential conflict of interest, specifically in questions of work for outside sources, honoraria and reimbursements, and remuneration of non-faculty personnel for teaching.

When the University issues appointment letters to the faculty of the McAfee School of Theology each spring, faculty are required to submit a “Conflict of Interest – Disclosure Form for Theology Faculty” report along with their signed appointment letter, in which they disclose any ongoing work they are undertaking outside of the McAfee School of Theology, including but not limited to: editorial work, service on boards, interim and full-time pastorates, and staff positions in churches.

#### 3.3.1 Work for outside sources

As a basic principle it is expected that no employee of the McAfee School of Theology shall take another job that takes up time that they are expected to give to Mercer University. Therefore, a full-time employee may not serve as a minister in a local church or hold any other continuing employment without approval by the Dean. It is expected that if such employment is requested a reduction in responsibilities, teaching load, and salary at the University will be negotiated.

Members of the faculty and staff of the McAfee School of Theology regularly have opportunities to engage in a variety of activities that both remunerate them personally and contribute to the work of the School of Theology. When that is the case particular care must be taken that their position with the School of Theology is neither exploited for personal gain nor neglected in the pursuit of such activities. Specifically, members of the faculty may respond to invitations to preach and teach for local churches and denominational organizations. They may serve as interim pastors, and they may appropriately engage in editing, research, and writing for which they receive income in royalties or stipends. Such activities contribute to the reputation and stature of the School of Theology. Nevertheless, the following guidelines should be observed:

1. Time spent in teaching, preaching, editing, writing, and research should not interfere with the faculty member’s performance in classroom teaching.
2. A faculty member may miss three hours of scheduled classroom instruction per course, per semester.
3. All professional and University related activities should be listed in the faculty member’s annual report. Routine professional activities such as those listed below do not need to be reported or approved in advance. Any extended or continuing obligations or contractual relationships should receive prior approval by the Dean.
4. Whenever the Dean or the individual faculty member is concerned that such activities are excessive, they should be discussed with and approved by the Dean.

5. Faculty members may not make use of the University's name or resources (including space, facilities, equipment, and support staff) in connection with outside activities other than the routine activities (listed below, a-d) that are connected with their role as a faculty member.
  - a. *Supply preaching.* When the general principles stated above are met, supply preaching is encouraged.
  - b. *Interim pastorates and staff positions.* Members of the faculty and staff of the Mercer School of Theology may serve as interim pastor or in other interim positions for a period of six months. An extension of an additional three months may be granted after consultation with the Dean. As a rule the faculty or staff member should schedule a period of three months between interim pastorates.
  - c. *Writing and editing.* Research and publication are a normal part of a professor's professional activities, subject to the general principles stated above (1).
  - d. *Teaching.* Short-term teaching in churches is encouraged. Professors may also teach courses for lay persons in church or Mercer University related programs, but teaching for other schools or universities must be negotiated with the Dean.

### 3.3.2 Honoraria and reimbursements

Honoraria and stipends for professional activities rightfully belong to the individual employee. There may be occasions, however, for which faculty members donate their time representing the school, and such activities may occasionally raise money for the school. In such instances, employee business or travel expense will be reimbursed by the school. Employees will not be reimbursed for travel expense for activities for which they receive an honorarium or other reimbursement.

### 3.3.3 Remuneration of non-faculty personnel for teaching

If staff or other non-faculty personnel are asked to teach a course or segment of a course, that teaching will normally be compensated over and above the staff member's normal salary unless teaching responsibilities are included in their contract or job description.

### 3.3.4 Accountability

No faculty or staff person should ever be allowed to determine their own compensation for University related activities.

### 3.3.5 Policy on Conflicts of Interest and Commitment in Research

*The Mercer University Faculty Handbook (Section 3.02) provides complete and comprehensive information on Faculty Engaged in Research.*

## 3.4 Faculty Rank

### Adjunct Professor.



An adjunct professor is one who is appointed for a semester to meet specific instructional needs in the School. Adjunct professors are part-time and temporary, typically teaching one or two courses in a given semester. They are paid by the course at the end of the semester, after all responsibilities to the University are complete.

### Visiting Professor

A visiting professor is given an annual contract for one year that may be renewed for an additional year. A visiting professor brings experience and abilities that enrich student experience at the School.

### Assistant Professor

An assistant professor is normally a non-tenured professor with a three-year contract, and an assistant professor may or may not be on a tenure track. The contract period allows the Dean and the faculty to assess the assistant professor's abilities and fit with the needs of the School. Successful performance in teaching and course development is a prime consideration, as are the assistant professor's scholarship and publications, commitment to the church, and collegiality. In the third year a decision will be made about renewing the contract for a second three years. Typically, in the professor's sixth year of teaching a decision concerning tenure will be made by the Dean in consultation with the faculty.

### Associate Professor

An associate professor should have demonstrated ability in teaching and course development and established collegiality with their faculty colleagues. In addition, an associate professor should be building a reputation as a teacher, preacher or resource person for the church, and demonstrate evidence that they are beginning to make an intellectual contribution to the church or to their discipline through conference presentations, presentations at professional societies, articles in refereed journals, and books. An associate professor may be hired without tenure, but a tenure decision must be made by the sixth year of employment.

### Professor

A full professor should have attained recognition and distinction in their field as demonstrated by leadership in their discipline, including publications, grants, lectureships, elected offices, and/or membership on boards.

### Senior Professor

A senior professor is a special status for contract professors who come to teaching after an extended career in ministry or teaching. A senior professor will normally be given a three-year contract that may be extended year by year thereafter by mutual agreement between the Dean and the professor.

## **3.5 Tenure and Promotion**

### 3.5.1 Procedure for Tenure and Promotion to Associate Professor

NOTE: The Mercer University Faculty Handbooks states, “Review and notification for tenure occurs during the sixth year of full-time faculty appointment in the University and may not be deferred beyond that year, subject only to the conditions of the appeals process” (Section 2.05). Tenure becomes effective at the beginning of the seventh contract year. Subject to specific qualifications in the guidelines of the different colleges and schools as approved by the President, shorter or longer probationary periods may be established” (Section 2.04.2).

1. The Dean will distribute to the faculty a faculty roster listing years in rank for every assistant, associate, and non-tenured faculty member at the annual August faculty workshop.
2. All faculty who wish to be reviewed for promotion and/or tenure must submit their portfolio to the Dean by October 15. If possible, the portfolio should be submitted as electronic documents.

The portfolio for consideration for promotion from Assistant Professor to Tenured Professor/Associate Professor will include the following, not listed in any particular order of importance, and with the recognition that the applicant will excel in some areas more so than others. All areas, however, must be addressed.

NOTE: The Mercer University Faculty Handbook states, “Tenure-relevant experience is counted only for full-time service at the rank of assistant professor or above” (Section 2.04.2).

- A three-to-five- page self-evaluation of one’s development as a teacher-scholar-practitioner (teaching, research, service in ministry) that includes
  - a reflective statement of one’s teaching philosophy and strategies
  - a description of one’s research agenda
  - a narrative statement of one’s active service to local congregations, denominational and ecumenical organizations, and/or community, including a description of how such activity enriches one’s teaching and scholarship
  - a description of one’s goals for the next five years
- Annual faculty activities reports, including statements of goals and reports on progress toward meeting goals
- A teaching portfolio that includes
  - course syllabi
  - peer evaluations of the candidate’s teaching
  - student course evaluations
- A research portfolio that may include
  - publications
    - books, articles, chapters, and educational curricula (including those under contract)
  - professional presentations
  - published reviews of one’s work
  - grants and awards
- A statement of Ministry/Community Service that may include
  - teaching
  - preaching
  - leading retreats
  - serving on ordination councils

- interim pastorates
  - serving on advisory boards or committees
  - Letters of evaluation from two outside reviewers
- (The candidate will submit a minimum of four possible reviewers to the Dean no later than September 1, and the Dean will determine appropriate reviewers and solicit the evaluations.)
- Other pertinent supporting materials
3. By no later than October 15, the Dean will appoint a chairperson to form an ad hoc committee of tenured professors, who will function as the promotion and tenure committee for the candidate(s).
  4. The committee will review the candidate's portfolio. The chairperson will convene a meeting of the committee after the portfolio has been available for review by the committee for a period of no less than two weeks, but no later than November 15.

The candidate will attend the review meeting in order to briefly present their case for promotion and/or tenure and to answer questions, after which the committee will meet in executive session. After discussion and consideration of each candidate, secret ballots will be distributed to each committee member. Each ballot will include five voting options:

- Strongly endorse promotion/tenure
- Endorse for promotion/tenure
- Not endorsed at this time
- Against promotion/tenure
- Strongly against promotion/tenure

Each ballot will also contain space for explanatory comments related to the evaluative areas of teaching, research/scholarship, and service to church and community.

Committee members will return their ballots to the committee chair no later than seventy-two hours after the completion of the meeting. If they do not, their ballots will not be considered in the count. The chair and one additional member of the committee will open and count the ballots. The chairperson will report the results to the committee and to the Dean by December 1.

5. After consideration of the committee's recommendation and review of the portfolio, the Dean will report the committee's recommendation and submit their recommendations for promotion and/or tenure to the Provost by the January deadline for recommendations. The Dean will also notify the candidate in writing of the recommendation. The numerical vote and the opinion of each committee member will be kept in confidence by all participants in the process and not made known to the candidate.

In the event that the promotion and tenure committee chooses not to recommend an application for promotion or tenure, the Dean will report this decision to the candidate in writing. Upon request, the faculty member shall be advised of the reasons that contributed to the decision. The candidate can request an in-person meeting with the Dean of the McAfee School of Theology to discuss the rationale for the denial. The meeting would be an informational only and would not be considered an appeal.

NOTE: For procedures for filing a formal appeal regarding tenure or promotion decisions, see the Mercer Faculty Handbook, Section 2.09.

### 3.5.2 Procedure for Promotion to Full Professor

1. The Dean will distribute to the faculty a faculty roster listing years in rank for every assistant, associate, and non-tenured faculty member at the annual August faculty workshop.
2. All faculty who wish to be reviewed for promotion to full professor must submit their portfolio to the Dean by October 15. If possible, the portfolio should be submitted as electronic documents.

NOTE: The higher the faculty rank, the greater the level of expectation in terms of performance and leadership. A full professor is one who has a distinguished record of excellence in teaching, consistent service to the university and its constituency, and a body of research, presentation, and publication that is recognized as excellent by authorities in one's own field. And one's record of performance and leadership is expected to continue after promotion to the rank of full professor. An administrative position (such as Dean, Associate Dean, or Department Chair) is not, in itself, an adequate basis for promotion the rank of full professor.

The portfolio for consideration for promotion from associate professor to full professor will include the following, not listed in any particular order of importance, and with the recognition that the applicant will excel in some areas more so than others. All areas, however, must be addressed.

- A three- to five-page evaluative summary of one's professional identity as a teacher-scholar-practitioner (teaching, research, service in ministry) that includes
  - a reflective statement of one's basic philosophy of teaching
  - a description of one's research agenda
  - a narrative statement of one's involvement in appropriate professional societies
  - a listing of one's publications
  - a narrative statement of one's service to congregations, denominational groups, and/or community organizations
  - a description of one's future career goals
- Annual faculty activity reports since one's last promotion, including statements of goals and reports on progress toward meeting goals.
- A teaching portfolio that includes
  - three or four course syllabi from one's courses over the past three years
  - corresponding student evaluations
- A research portfolio that may include
  - publications
    - books, articles, chapters, and educational curricula (including those under contract)
  - professional presentations
  - published reviews of one's work
  - grants and awards
- A ministry/community service portfolio that may include
  - teaching
  - preaching
  - leading retreats
  - serving on ordination councils

- interim pastorates
  - serving on advisory boards or committees
  - Two to three letters of support from persons familiar with one's research, guild involvement, and service to congregations and community (The candidate will submit the names of three to five possible supporters to the Dean no later than September 1, and the Dean will determine appropriate supporters and solicit the letters.)
  - Other pertinent supporting material
3. By no later than October 15, the Dean will appoint a chairperson to form an ad hoc committee of tenured, full professors, who will function as the promotion committee for the candidate.
  4. The committee will review the candidate's portfolio. The chairperson will convene a meeting of the committee after the portfolio has been available for review by the committee for a period of no less than two weeks, but no later than November 15.

The candidate will attend the review meeting in order to briefly present their case for promotion and to answer questions, after which the committee will meet in executive session. After discussion and consideration of each candidate, secret ballots will be distributed to each committee member. Each ballot will include five voting options:

- Strongly endorse promotion
- Endorse for promotion
- Not endorsed at this time
- Against promotion
- Strongly against promotion

Each ballot will also contain space for explanatory comments related to the evaluative areas of teaching, research/scholarship, and service to church and community.

Committee members will return their ballots to the committee chair no later than seventy-two hours after the completion of the meeting. If they do not, their ballots will not be included in the count. The chair and one additional member of the committee will open and count the ballots. The chairperson will report the results to the committee and to the Dean by December 1.

5. After consideration of the committee's recommendation and review of the portfolio, the Dean will report the committee's recommendation and submit their recommendations for promotion to the Provost by the January deadline for recommendations. The Dean will also notify the candidate in writing of the recommendation. The numerical vote and the opinion of each individual faculty will be kept in confidence by all participants in the process and not made known to the candidate.

In the event that the faculty promotion committee chooses not to recommend an application for promotion, the Dean will report this decision to the candidate in writing. Upon request, the faculty member shall be advised of the reasons that contributed to the decision. The candidate can request an in-person meeting with the Dean of the McAfee School of Theology to discuss the rationale for the denial. The meeting would be informational only and would not be considered an appeal.

NOTE: For procedures for filing a formal appeal regarding promotion decisions, see the Mercer

Faculty Handbook, Section 2.09.

### **3.6 Post Tenure Review**

#### **3.6.1 Procedures for Post Tenure Review**

Post-tenure review is established in support and recognition of the University's commitment to promoting the continued high-quality teaching, scholarship, and service of its tenured faculty, and thereby enhancing the educational environment for its students and the larger community. Post-tenure reviews do not result in any change in academic rank or tenure status.

Full-time, tenured faculty shall undergo a comprehensive post-tenure review within five years of the awarding of tenure and at least once every five years thereafter. Annual performance reviews with the Dean may inform the post-tenure review process but are not a substitute for a comprehensive post-tenure review. Comprehensive evaluations conducted for other purposes, such as a review for promotion, may be substituted for or combined with the post-tenure review. The review period starts with the first full academic year after hire into a tenured position or upon successful completion of a comprehensive review for tenure, promotion, or post-tenure review. Faculty due for a post-tenure review shall receive at least six months' notice of intent to review.

The post-tenure review will focus on three areas of responsibility: teaching, scholarship, and service. Faculty will be notified of evaluation six months prior to the evaluation process. The evaluation will occur over a two-to-three-week period. The evaluation process will include review of publications, University service, and evaluation of classroom lectures. The criteria of post-tenure review will be evaluated as exceeds expectations, meets expectations, or does not meet expectations. An evaluation regarding post-tenure review shall be reached by the Dean with the advice of a faculty advisory committee. The faculty advisory committee is composed of the Associate Dean and at least one other tenured professor. The recommendations of the advisory committee shall be presented to the Dean, who shall then prepare the evaluation. The Dean shall then provide the evaluation, in writing, to the faculty member.

#### **Procedures for Evaluation**

Below are the three areas of responsibilities and criteria for faculty evaluation:

##### **Teaching**

- A sample of online and in-person course syllabi will be reviewed and evaluated by the McAfee Academic Council, using an evaluation rubric approved by faculty.
- Student evaluations will be reviewed by the Associate Dean and discussed with the faculty member in order to generate ideas for improving or changing syllabi, assignments, or pedagogy. Student evaluations are typically part of the annual review, unless the Associate Dean determines that there are pressing issues needing to be addressed with the Dean.

- A peer-review of an in-person class session will be conducted by the Associate Dean and one other tenured faculty member, appointed by the tenure and promotion committee. Feed back will be given to the faculty member in order to identify areas of teaching excellence and to improve or change the syllabus, course assignments, or pedagogy. The Associate Dean will submit a report to the Dean.

## Service

### University Service activities include but are not limited to:

- University Committee Assignments
- School of Theology Committee Assignments
- Attendance at and support of University and School of Theology Events (Ex: Faculty meetings, graduation, chapel, lecture series, faculty retreat, student retreat)
- Administrative Assignments (Ex: Academic position, committee chair, degree program director, student committee advisor, student advisor)

### Community/Ministry Service activities include but are not limited to:

- Preaching in churches, denominational meetings, religious gatherings
- Teaching in churches, denominational meetings, religious gatherings
- Leading Retreats
- Serving on Ordination Councils
- Serving as an Interim Pastor
- Serving on Denominational Advisory Boards or Councils
- Serving on Non-profit Community Organization Boards or Councils

Evidence of service to the University and to community and ministry activities will be documented in Watermark.

## Scholarship

- Attending Academic and Professional Conferences (Ex: AAR/SBL, ACPE)  
**\*Contingent upon the school's financial support**
- Participating in University Professional Development and Continuing Education Opportunities (Ex: Canvas training, Training for developing Online Courses)
- Attending Conferences at Accrediting Agencies
- Publishing (Ex: books, chapters, articles, educational curricula)
- Presenting at Professional/Academic Meetings
- Receiving Grants and Awards for Academic Work
- Promoting and Guiding Student Research

Documentation of work done in each of these three areas must be compiled into a portfolio, for the review process and will also be submitted to the Dean for discussion and evaluation at the annual review.

What distinguishes the Post Tenure Review from the Annual Review is PTR involves peer-review evaluations of class instruction and syllabi.

Should a faculty member not meet expectations in one or more areas, the faculty member will be placed by the Dean on a developmental support plan within 30 days of receiving the written evaluation. The developmental plan is to be established collaboratively by the Dean and the faculty member. A developmental plan shall respect academic freedom and professional self-direction, and shall be flexible enough to allow for subsequent redirection. Establishing a developmental plan is not a disciplinary action. It is an instrument for committing to specific short-term and long-term professional development goals and strategies. The faculty member will have the right to provide a written response regarding how the written developmental support plan is formulated, the plan's content, and any resulting evaluation. Please refer to Section 2.5.2 of the Mercer University Faculty Handbook for subsequent action.

<https://provost.mercer.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/51/2023/01/University-Faculty-Handbook-amended-11.14.22.pdf>

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