

**Academic Affairs Policy #6**  
**Admissions and Progression Standards in Restricted Programs**

**Date of Current Revision: September 2023**

**Primary Responsible Officer: Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs and Curriculum**

**1. PURPOSE**

James Madison University values students' freedom to select their majors and would ideally allow any student into any academic program. Resource constraints and accreditation standards, however, sometimes require the university to restrict enrollment in academic majors, minors and pre-professional programs. This policy is designed to establish the rules concerning restrictions on admission and progression in an academic program.

Program restrictions are actions that limit students from being part of an academic program. These restrictions can be front-end admissions standards, mid-stream admissions standards or progression standards.

**2. AUTHORITY**

The Board of Visitors is authorized to set rules for the university, and where it has not acted, it has delegated authority to the president. In matters concerning the Division of Academic Affairs, the president has delegated authority to the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs.

**3. DEFINITIONS**

**Academic Program**

An academic program of study offered by the university, including majors, minors and pre-professional programs.

**Academic Program Restrictions**

Conditions that limit students from being part of an academic major, minor or pre-professional program.

**Accreditation Standards**

External requirements for particular program issued by their external accrediting body. These standards must be met in order for the academic program to retain its accreditation or licensure.

**Admission Standards - Front End**

Requirements for the small number of majors, minors or pre-professional programs that do not allow a program to be declared without advance approval, i.e., the arts.

**Admissions Standards - Mid-stream**

Requirements that allow students to declare the program initially, but only permit them to become fully admitted after a clearly defined decision point.

**Modifications**

Includes changes to existing standards or the elimination of some or all of the current admission and/or progression standards.

**Progression Standards**

Requirements and benchmarks that students must meet at multiple times during their progress through the program.

**Resource Limitations**

Restrictions of resources that dictate a cap on the number of students that may be served. These could include physical resources, such as lab space or options for clinical placements, or human resources, such as severe staffing limitations.

**Restricted Program Advisory Group (RPAG):**

A committee chaired by the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs and Curriculum (or their designee) and composed of one associate dean from each college and representatives from Student Academic Success and Enrollment Management, the Faculty Senate, the Office of the Registrar, University Advising, and University Studies, which reviews admissions and progression standards proposals and makes recommendations to Academic Council and the provost. The provost makes the final decision on program restrictions.

**4. APPLICABILITY**

This policy applies to all undergraduate majors, minors and pre-professional programs offered by the university in all academic units, schools, and colleges.

**5. POLICY****5.1 Implementing Standards**

- a. No academic unit may implement or modify admission and/or progression standards for an academic program (including undergraduate majors, minors and pre-professional programs), unless the procedures set out herein are followed.
- b. Proposals for new or modified standards must be submitted by December 1 of the fall semester of the year prior to their proposed implementation.

**5.2 Existing Standards**

All academic units with programs that have admission and/or progression standards must submit them for review at least once every five years. Existing program standards that are not submitted and approved may not be enforced.

**5.3 Approval Required**

Academic units must receive formal approval before implementing new standards or modifying and/or using existing ones.

## 5.4 Limitations

- a. Standards must be narrowly tailored to requirements and the abilities needed to succeed in the academic program.
- b. Overall GPA cannot be used in admission or progression standards, unless a minimum overall GPA is required by accreditation/licensure program standards. No program is allowed to establish an absolute overall GPA score as a disqualification for admission or progression.
- c. Admission to programs must be offered twice a year (fall and spring semesters). Generally, admission offers are made prior to the pre-registration period for the following semester. Programs that review students for admission after final grades are posted must make an offer of admission prior to the beginning of the following semester.
- d. VCCS transfer students with approved associates' degrees enter JMU as juniors and need to make progress toward degree completion. Therefore, programs must review transfer students with associates' degrees after one semester of course work and must inform successful students of admission decisions in time for them to join the program in their second semester at JMU.

Exceptions to these limitations may be made with the approval of RPAG and the recommendation of the college dean if it can be demonstrated that such limitations would harm students.

## 5.5 Criteria

- a. Circumstances that may necessitate the implementation of program admission and/or progression standards are limited to the following:
  1. The need for students to demonstrate special talent and preparation (e.g., in fine arts programs)
  2. Limitations on program resources that cannot meet student interest in the program (i.e., labs or clinical placements)
  3. Accreditation standards for programs (i.e., nursing)
  4. Professional standards for students enrolled in programs
- b. If a minimum GPA in a course or courses is required, the academic unit should review the grade distribution from that course to provide data as part of their proposal. The academic unit making the proposal should provide a narrative rationale that includes the efforts the AU makes to ensure consistency in its approach to grade distribution.
- c. The following actions do not require RPAG review and approval:
  1. Requirement of a grade of "C" or "C-" in a prerequisite course does not become a program restriction *unless* there are restrictions on the number of times students can take the prerequisite course.
  2. Prerequisites or restrictions on upper division electives in a major are not program restrictions.
  3. Minors that cannot accommodate all interested students are not subject to review unless they establish standards by which some students are allowed to declare the minor but not others. Minors with limited enrollment space that admit students on a first come, first served basis do not require RPAG review.

## **6. PROCEDURES**

### **6.1 Initiation**

- a. Proposals to add or modify academic program admission and/or progression standards must be initiated at the academic unit level by the administrative unit housing the academic program.
- b. Proposers should review the cover sheet, then consult with the associate dean who is the RPAG representative from their college before beginning the formal application process.

### **6.2 Approvals**

- a. Proposals for additions or modifications must be approved by the academic unit head and college dean, unless the program is not administratively assigned to a single college, in which case all appropriate deans and/or vice provosts must approve.
- b. Proposals must be sent to the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs and Curriculum, who will forward the proposals to the RPAG for review.
- c. The RPAG will make a recommendation to the Academic Council concerning the approval of the proposal.
- d. The Academic Council is advisory to the provost.
- e. The provost will make the final determination on the implementation or modification of all admission and progression standards.

### **6.3 Implementation and Modification**

Requests to implement or modify program admission and/or progression standards must be submitted in writing and should address the following:

- a. A description of the proposed admission policy and/or progression standards
- b. The rationale for implementing and/or modifying standards supported by quantifiable data over at least four years (i.e., number of majors/minors, full-time faculty, teaching loads, etc.)
- c. The impact of the implementation or modification on students
- d. Specific strategies for regular communication with students about the standards and student progress toward meeting them
- e. The impact on other university programs, to the extent that it can be ascertained
- f. Other alternatives that have been considered

## **7. RESPONSIBILITIES**

The academic program is responsible for initiating proposals to implement and/or modify any admission and progression standards for that program, following the procedures herein.

The academic unit is responsible for the administrative preparation and submission of proposals to implement and/or modify any admission and progression standards for academic programs it houses, following the procedures herein.

The academic unit head is responsible for approving any proposals to implement and/or modify

any admission or progression standards in the academic unit.

The dean is responsible for approving any proposals to implement and/or modify any admission or progression standards that arise within their college.

The Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs and Curriculum is responsible for coordinating the approval process and forwarding proposals to the RPAG for review.

The RPAG is responsible for making recommendations on proposals to the Academic Council.

Academic Council is responsible for advising the provost on all proposals.

The provost is responsible for approving any implementation or mediation of admission and progression standards.

All departments, offices and employees that generate, receive, or maintain public records under the terms of this policy are also responsible for compliance with Policy [1109](#) – Records Management.

## **8. SANCTIONS**

Sanctions will be commensurate with the severity and/or frequency of the offense and may include termination of employment.

## **9. EXCLUSIONS**

This policy does not apply to non-credit or graduate courses and programs offered by the university.

## **10. INTERPRETATION**

Generally, this policy is interpreted by the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs and Curriculum.

Previous version: September 2020

Approved by the Provost: October 2022