

Policy 1345
Legal and Chosen Names

Date of Current Revision: May 2024

Primary Responsible Officer: Registrar; Director of Human Resources

Secondary Responsible Officers: Director of Payroll Services; Assistant Vice President for Information Technology

1. PURPOSE

The university recognizes that students, employees, and affiliates may wish to use chosen names other than their legal names to identify themselves. Where feasible and when institutional and technical capabilities permit, the university wishes to allow its community members to choose the chosen name they will use in their interactions with the university and other community members.

2. AUTHORITY

The Board of Visitors has been authorized by the Commonwealth of Virginia to govern James Madison University. See Code of Virginia section 23.1-1600; 23.1-1301. The Board has delegated the authority to manage the university to the president.

3. DEFINITIONS

Chosen Name

First, middle, and/or last name(s) someone chooses to use to identify themselves in the university community that is different from the individual's legal name. Our current IT systems are configured to use the label PREFERRED rather than CHOSEN. From an IT systems and policy perspective, PREFERRED = CHOSEN.

JACard

The James Madison University Access Card (JACard) is the official photo identification card of the university and identifies members of the JMU community.

Legal Name

The name an individual uses for government documents, such as government issued driver's license, identification card, and U. S. Social Security Card. Change of an individual's legal name requires a legal process. From an IT Systems and policy perspective PRIMARY=Legal.

4. APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all current students, employees, and affiliates of James Madison University.

5. POLICY

The university will recognize that students, employees, and affiliates may use chosen names other than their legal names to identify themselves. Except when the use of an individual's legal name is necessitated by legal requirement, university business, or policy, individuals will be identified in university systems with their chosen name as designated in accordance with this policy.

6. PROCEDURES

6.1 Legal Name Change

The university is required to record a student, employee, or affiliate legal name on certain documents. If an individual effectuates a legal name change, all university records bearing the individual's former name must be changed, where feasible. Employees must submit an [Employee Information Form](#) and students must complete a Maintenance form available at the Office of the Registrar. Affiliates must contact Payroll Services directly. All processes require supporting documentation to reflect the new legal name. A legal name change request will be processed by the Registrar (for students), and Payroll Services (for employees) and a record of such name change will be maintained in the individual's official university records, for historical and tracking purposes.

6.2 Chosen Name Designation

a. Chosen Name Designation Process

Chosen names shall not be employed for the purpose of misrepresentation, confusion, disruption (including use of obscene, lewd, profane, or derogatory names, or names that reference illegal acts), avoidance of legal obligations, or in any manner that violates the university's policies or federal, state, or local laws. As such, the university may deny the requested use of a chosen name that violates these guidelines. Chosen names that are not administratively possible to implement, including, without limitation, symbols or images, are prohibited. The University reserves the right at any time to discontinue the use of a chosen name without prior notice to the individual in the event of a policy violation. At a minimum, IT systems require a first and last name and if none are chosen, then legal name will be used.

Students, employees and affiliates may designate and use a chosen name, except when use of a legal name is required by university policy or law. The lists provided in policy are partial lists.

A chosen name **may** be used for the following:

- Academic advising reports
- Class rosters
- Departmental personnel records
- Diplomas
- Certificates awarded by the School of Professional and Continuing Education
- Directory listing
- Grade reports
- JACard
- MyMadison (NOTE: Employee Leave Records will be listed by Legal Name)
- Other databases and systems when institutional and technical capabilities permit

A chosen name **may not** be used for the following:

- Any legal document (informed consent forms, emergency contact forms, health forms: to include immunization records, insurance information, and medical records)
- Affiliate forms
- eID

- ePARs
- Financial aid
- Governmental reporting forms
- Immigration documents
- Official and unofficial transcripts
- Official state records
- Official university employment forms
- PAR forms
- Pay checks and pay advices
- Retirement or benefits records
- Student accounts
- Tax documents
- Employee Leave Records within MyMadison

A person seeking to use a chosen name that is different from their legal name must enter their chosen name in MyMadison in the respective places. Individuals may indicate their desire to use a chosen name regardless of whether they have legally changed their name or not. In accordance with this policy, except when the use of an individual's legal name is necessitated by legal requirement, university business, or policy, individuals will be identified in university systems with their chosen name.

The Office of the Registrar will determine if a student's chosen name is authorized under this policy and will notify the student of authorization. If a chosen name is not authorized, the individual will be notified, and the legal name will continue to be used.

b. JACards

Upon request, an individual's chosen name may be printed on the front their JACard. The legal name will then appear on the back of the JACard. Individuals requesting a replacement JACard may be required to pay a fee for reissuance of a card.

c. Privacy

Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) a student's name, including one's chosen name, may be disclosed to the public as "directory information" unless the student opts not to permit such disclosure by completing a Request to Withhold Directory Information form, available at the Office of the Registrar.

d. Misuse

Misuse of chosen names will be handled in accordance with existing policies and procedures.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of individuals (students, employees, or affiliates) who wish to go by a chosen name to update their personal information in MyMadison.

It is the responsibility of campus community members to understand that misuse of chosen names will be handled in accordance with existing policies and procedures.

The Office of the Registrar will process name changes for currently enrolled students only. Former students are not eligible to change their university records to a chosen name.

Payroll Services will process legal name changes effectuated by current employees only. Former employees are not eligible to change their name for university records.

All departments, offices, and employees that generate, receive, or maintain public records are 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 expulsion from the university or termination of employment or affiliation with the university. In addition, the university reserves the right to remove chosen names that violate this policy and suspend the individual's privilege to designate a chosen name.

9. EXCLUSIONS

Former students and employees are not covered by this policy. University alumni wishing to change their name – chosen, legal, or otherwise – must contact University Advancement at 855-568-4483 for the purposes of correspondence with that office.

10. INTERPRETATION

The authority to interpret this policy rests with the president and is generally delegated to the Registrar and the director of human resources.

Previous version: July 2021

Approved by the president: July 2021