



# Policy on Departments and Department-Like Academic Units Definition, Privileges, Responsibilities, and Process for Approvals

Approved by University Committee on 8/30/2019 and the University Academic Planning Council on 9/19/2019.

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## Context

Academic departments are defined in Chapter 5 of Faculty Policies and Procedures (FPP)

[https://secfac.wisc.edu/governance/faculty-legislation/fpp\\_ch\\_5/](https://secfac.wisc.edu/governance/faculty-legislation/fpp_ch_5/).

FPP Chapter 5 sets out guidelines for formal departments and “other groups as equivalent to departments”. FPP Ch 5 also specifies that departments and other groups equivalent to departments are governed in consultation with the University Academic Planning Council (UAPC), which is chaired by the provost (FPP Ch 6.52).

This document fills a policy gap by operationalizing the criteria and information that the UAPC will use in considering department creation, restructuring or discontinuation, and the creation, restructuring, or discontinuation of department-like units. Such guidance is of value as faculty and deans’ offices plan for changes in departmental structures or seek to establish units that are not departments as homes for academic programs or course offerings. This document also outlines the approval steps for these changes, all in keeping with FPP Chapter 5.

FPP CH 5.01. DEPARTMENT.

A. A department shall consist of a group of faculty members recognized by the faculty and chancellor, and the Board of Regents, as dealing with a common field of knowledge or as having common or closely related scholarly interests. A department shall be created, substantially restructured, or discontinued by the chancellor after consultation with the University Academic Planning Council, subject to the approval of the Board. Substantial restructuring includes, but is not limited to the merger of departments, the transfer of groups of faculty in or out of departments, and the establishment of department-like bodies. The University Academic Planning Council shall not make any recommendations to the chancellor without obtaining and considering the recommendations of the relevant college/school academic planning councils and deans. The school/college academic planning councils will seek recommendations and approval from affected departmental executive committees and affected individuals a minimum of six months in advance of the proposed actions. Recommendations concerning the establishment of new departments or the substantial restructuring or discontinuance of existing departments shall be reported to and discussed by the senate. Criteria applied to restructuring shall be developed (5.02.) and related to the missions of the university and relevant schools and colleges.

B. Other groups may be designated by the chancellor, after consultation with the University Academic Planning Council and subject to approval by the Board, as equivalent to departments for any of the purposes of these rules.

C. Schools or colleges defined in 3.01. that are not organized into departments shall operate as departments or may, by vote of the school or college faculty, organize in other ways to fulfill the objectives of this chapter.

## Definitions and Key Features of Departments and Department-Like Academic Units

FPP Ch 5 defines the academic department and makes allowance for “other groups equivalent to departments”.

This document names “other groups equivalent to departments” as “department-like academic units”.

This document specifies that a unit that supports enrollment of students in for-credit courses or academic programs is required to be approved as a department or as an academic unit that meets standards for supporting students.

Definitions are as follows, and see Table 1:

Department (defined in FPP Ch 5.01.A). “A group of faculty... dealing with a common field of knowledge or closely related scholarly interests.” Departments serve as tenure homes for faculty, exercise a broad range of functions and duties in relation to faculty academic life, and may also house academic programs and course Subject listings.

Department-Like Academic Unit; Tenure Home (referenced in FPP Ch5.01.B, FPP Ch 5.40). A group of faculty who are not all in the same department but who share responsibilities for departmental functions. They exercise a broad range of functions and duties in relation to faculty academic life, and generally house at least one academic program (degree/major or certificate) or course Subject listing. Department-like academic units usually do not serve as tenure homes, but for cases when department-like academic units are approved to serve as tenure homes, each faculty member’s tenure home will be approved on a case-by-case basis by the University Committee.

Department-Like Academic Unit; Not a Tenure Home (referenced in FPP Ch5.01.B, FPP Ch 5.40). A group of faculty who are not all in the same department but who share responsibilities for departmental functions. They exercise a broad range of functions and duties in relation to faculty academic life, and house at least one academic program (degree/major or certificate) or course Subject listing. These units do not serve as a tenure home for faculty.

Note that for administrative purposes, all school/college deans’ offices also function as departments in terms of approving and administering academic programs and subjects. In addition, some division-level schools are structured as a single department with the dean serving in the chair role (in addition to their dean role), and thus have a functionally equivalent role to departments under these guidelines.

**Table 1. Features of Departments and Department-Like Academic Units**

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Department-like academic unit; can be a faculty tenure home</b>	<b>Department-like academic unit; NOT a faculty tenure home</b>
Common Use	Department serves as a tenure home. Supports the scholarly work of faculty. Houses academic programs and subjects (courses) for enrolling students. Supports the research/scholarship and outreach/public service missions of the university. Has sufficient numbers of faculty and infrastructure to support faculty mentoring and development.	An academic unit at a level equivalent to a department (not a subdepartment). May serve as a tenure home; assignment of faculty to the unit as a tenure home requires UC approval. Houses academic programs and subjects (courses) for enrolling students. Supports the research/scholarship and outreach missions of the university. Like a department, has a adequate governance structures to support participating faculty and staff, and enrolled students.	An academic unit at a level equivalent to a department (not a subdepartment). Does NOT serve as a tenure home. Houses academic programs subjects (courses) for enrolling students. Supports the research/scholarship and outreach/public service missions of the university. Like a department, has a adequate governance structures to support participating faculty and staff, and enrolled students.
Faculty Tenure Home	Yes	Yes. UC approves the assignment of any faculty member to this kind of unit as a tenure home.	No
Approval Path	S/C → UAPC → (UC) → Faculty Senate University Committee is consulted; Faculty Senate is reading only.	S/C → UAPC → (UC) → Faculty Senate University Committee is consulted; Faculty Senate is reading only.	S/C → UAPC Follows same path as a academic program or subject; University Committee is notified.
Faculty Leadership; selected as per FPP Ch 5.30	CHAIR (tenured faculty in the department; appointed as chair in HRS) or ACADEMIC PROGRAM DIRECTOR (holds tenure or joint executive appointment).	ACADEMIC PROGRAM DIRECTOR, at least 0%. Has tenure home in the academic unit, or in a department and holds joint executive appointment in the academic unit.	ACADEMIC PROGRAM DIRECTOR, at least 0%. Holds joint executive appointment in the academic unit.
Governance and Faculty Oversight	EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - Tenured faculty (FPP 5.20.) and joint executive appointees (FPP 5.12.)	Faculty with joint executive appointments and instructional academic staff (Cat B Instructional) as defined by the unit's governance documents approved by UAPC and UC, and consistent with FPP Chapter 5, as applicable.	Faculty with joint executive appointments and instructional academic staff (Cat B Instructional) as defined by the unit's governance documents approved by UAPC and UC, and consistent with FPP Chapter 5, as applicable.
Tenured faculty may have joint executive app'ts (FPP 5.12.)	Yes	Yes	Yes

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Department-like academic unit; can be a faculty tenure home</b>	<b>Department-like academic unit; NOT a faculty tenure home</b>
Faculty and academic staff may have joint dept app'ts (FPP 5.12.)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Faculty and academic staff may have affiliate app'ts (FPP 5.13.)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Research mission	Expected	Expected	Depends on mission
Outreach/ public service mission	Expected	Expected	Depends on mission
Teaching/ instructional mission	Expected	Expected	Expected
Home for academic degree/major or certificate programs	Allowed	Allowed	Allowed
Home for Subjects (courses)	Allowed	Allowed	Allowed
Responsible to maintain necessary records required by the university in regard to teaching, research, and public service	Yes	Yes	Yes
Follow any requirements set by school/college, university or external agencies with respect to teaching, research and public service	Yes	Yes	Yes
Name Format	Department of --- School of --- (within a College)	Center of/for --- --- Program (does not use word "Department")	Center of/for --- --- Program (does not use word "Department")
Identified by Department ID – UDD	Yes	Yes	Yes

Feature	Department	Department-like academic unit; can be a faculty tenure home	Department-like academic unit; NOT a faculty tenure home
<p>Note: The focus of FPP is primarily on faculty roles and responsibilities and the governance of academic units; UAPC practice and policy is more focused on academic programs and on structures and standards related to student success.</p> <p>FPP 5.40. (“Department-like Bodies”) is understood to apply to ALL academic units that are not departments, some of which may not be included above. The main example of units subject to FPP 5.40 but not listed here would be research centers; they are not included because they do not serve students through academic programs or subjects/courses.</p> <p>Governance approval is required for an department or other unit to serve the functions listed here.</p>			

## Proposal Guidelines

### Proposals to UAPC to establish or restructure Departments or Department-Like Academic Units include:

- A. Proposed name of new or restructured department or department-like academic unit
- B. Home school/college (occasionally division) of new or restructured department or academic unit
- C. Succinct statement of proposal, including antecedent units if relevant (e.g., establish new department of XYZ, merge Department of MNO and Department of ABC into a new Department of RST, establish the DEF Program to house a new academic program in DEF)
- D. Succinct statement of the common field of knowledge or closely related scholarly interests that define the proposed department or academic unit.
- E. Timeline of planning and proposed implementation, showing approvals of affected departmental executive committees and affected individuals, usually a minimum of six months in advance of the proposed actions. Information should include meeting dates and vote tallies by departmental executive committees of existing departments or proposed participating faculty for proposed new departments.

Include a summary of consultation with faculty, staff, students, and other important stakeholders such as alumni or community groups (FFP Ch 5.02.B.2).

Timeline should include summary of dates of discussion by college/school academic planning councils. See Approval Steps section for more information.

- F. An explanation of the precipitating circumstances or rationale for the proposal. For example, circumstances may be based in the unit's mission/focus and consequent realignment of resources with those changes; substantial changes/redirection of fields/courses of study; declining faculty and student interest in the field of study; negative assessment of program quality and concern about the ability to deliver programming of acceptable quality to students; budgetary considerations; restructuring considerations; or other forces (FFP Ch 5.02.B.1). Include information on new opportunities created by the proposed department or academic unit.
- G. Faculty membership of the department. Provide a description of the faculty membership of the academic unit (FFP Ch 5.10).

For departments, provide a description of faculty appointments that comprise the faculty, allowances for tenure appointments shared with other departments, allowances for joint executive appointees, allowances for joint departmental appointees, allowances for affiliations, and any other information related to who comprises the faculty of the department. If relevant, describe how academic staff participate in governance.

For department-like academic units that serve as tenure homes, provide a description of faculty appointments that comprise the faculty, allowances for tenure appointments shared with other departments, allowances for joint executive appointees, allowances for joint departmental appointees, allowances for affiliations, and any other information related to who comprises the faculty of the

department. If relevant, describe how academic staff participate in governance. Describe the reasons for requiring this particular arrangement, which is generally acknowledged to be atypical. Describe process for consulting with the University Committee when the department-like academic unit will become the tenure home for a faculty member and any criteria associated with assignments as tenure home.

For department-like academic units that are not tenure homes, faculty may have joint executive appointments or joint departmental appointments. Describe how these appointments are made and how instructional academic staff participate in governance.

In all cases, consult FPP Ch 5.12 for information on joint governance appointments, which include both the joint executive appointment, the joint departmental appointment, and allowance for academic staff to participate in governance. Consult FPP Ch 5.13 for description of affiliations.

H. Structure of the Executive Committee (FPP Ch 5.20)

Describe the membership of the executive committee, in keeping with FPP Ch 5.20. For department-like academic units without tenure, membership will only be faculty who are joint executive appointees, and these faculty will oversee academic programs and courses/curriculum. Describe criteria for faculty with joint executive appointments and process for appointment and renewal. For this section, the department-like academic unit may provide a summary from a more complete governance structure document that can be appended.

Affirm that in planning the participating faculty have reviewed executive committee functions as described in FPP Ch 5.21 and FPP Ch 5.22 and have the capacity to fulfil the stated functions.

I. Selection of Department Chair (for departments) or Academic Program Director (for academic units) (FPP Ch 5.30)

Describe the process the department will use in selecting the department chair or the academic unit will use to select the academic program director.

Affirm that in planning, the participating faculty have reviewed the plan for selection of the chair and chair duties as described in FPP Ch 5.30 and FPP Ch 5.31 and have the capacity to fulfil the stated functions and duties.

(Note that this faculty leader – either department chair or academic program director – must be identifiable in HRS by their appointment as chair or academic program director in the UDD of the department/academic unit; a zero dollar appointment is acceptable. This assignment in HRS is required for the proper functioning of automated processes that draw on the department chair or academic program director appointment in HRS.)

J. An overview of the capacity and infrastructure to support the hiring, mentoring, promotion, and post-tenure review of faculty

K. A list of the degree/majors, certificates, BSE minors, PhD minors, honors programs or other transcribed academic programs as well as any Subjects that are associated with the department or academic unit described in the proposal (FPP Ch 5.02.B.6) and a plan for each of the academic components. If academic programs are being moved, the transition should be clearly explained in the proposal.

For complete listings of academic components associated with any school/college or department/academic unit, contact Academic Planning and Institutional Research.

For all academic program changes that may result of a department/academic structure restructuring, such as change of academic home, program renaming, mergers or discontinuations (for degree/major, certificate, options, Subjects, etc.), the appropriate academic program proposal must be completed separately. Such changes may also need to take place on a different timeline than the timeline for the academic unit change.

L. Description of capacity and infrastructure to support students in academic programs and courses/curriculum

Given that the department/academic unit serves as the academic and administrative home for transcribed academic programs and Subjects, include in the proposal a description of the capacity to support students and fill the following roles:

- i) originate all program and curricular changes following standard faculty governance processes.
  - ii) assure that the curriculum is appropriate for the program, fulfills the learning goals, and is sufficiently robust and that courses offered on a regular basis to support student progress to degree.
  - iii) responsible for student support services such as advising and accurate communication to students and the public about the program or Subject.
  - iv) prepare all content for the *Guide* and assure that academic programs and Subjects are represented accurately.
  - v) oversee the course evaluation process for courses and fulfil responsibilities for course scheduling and qualifications of instructors.
  - vi) fulfil responsibilities for student learning outcomes assessment and program review for academic programs.
  - vii) is the department/academic unit to which academic activity (program enrollments, degrees, certificate awards, credits) are allocated in the information systems.
- M. For a department/academic unit restructuring proposal that is associated with the discontinuation of an academic program, a short summary of plans for supporting students through teach out should be included in the department restructuring proposal (FPP Ch 5.02.B.4). In addition, a separate proposal for the discontinuation of the degree/major or certificate in question must also be submitted for approval according to UAPC policy and through standard governance approval.
- N. Memos of concurrence or support from any existing departments or schools/colleges that may have an interest in the restructuring proposal, i.e., units with substantial overlapping interests in faculty or for academic programs or curriculum.
- O. Department ID Action Request Form. This form is used by Business Services to create, delete and/or replace, and change a department's accounting structure by unit, department, and subdepartment. Additions and changes require the name, activities, budget classes, and funding by budget year (formerly UDDS Action Request Form). See <https://www.bussvc.wisc.edu/acct/forms.html>.



- P. A cover memo from the relevant dean(s) with formal recommendation and endorsement of the dean(s) and school/college(s) to the provost.

### **Approval Steps (FPP Ch5.02.C.)**

- A. The faculty of the affected departments develop the proposal. The faculty or proposed faculty take a formal vote for approval of the proposal. Vote summaries and faculty role and rank must be documented, and a summary of the vote tallies must be included in the proposal document, Section E.

For new departments, votes include all current tenured and tenure-track faculty who are proposed to be members of the new department (full or partial tenure home) and any faculty who the proposal names as seeking a joint executive/departmental appointment.

For restructuring of academic units, votes will include all faculty with tenure and all faculty who are joint executive/departmental appointees and all instructional academic staff who are part of the department governance, following procedures for governance identified in the proposal.

- B. The governance body of the participating schools/colleges (usually their academic planning council) considers and approves the proposal. Typically, this vote takes place at least six months in advance of the effective date of the action; effective dates are typically the beginning of a fiscal year, July 1.
- C. The Graduate Faculty Executive Committee, for proposals related to departments and department-like units that include graduate programs (that is, programs that enroll students in the “GRAD” career) will have an opportunity for a reading of the proposal for information.
- D. The University Academic Planning Council considers and approves proposals related to departmental and department-like academic unit restructuring. The UAPC is the body that makes the formal recommendation to the provost and chancellor for approval. Either at this step or earlier in the planning process, there is consultation between the director of academic planning in the provost’s office and the Secretary of the Faculty and the University Committee.
- E. For departments, the Faculty Senate hears the proposal for discussion after UAPC approval. The proposal timeline should be such that the proposal is scheduled for presentation no later than the April meeting before the July 1 effective date.  
For department-like units that serve as tenure homes, the University Committee must approve the proposal following UAPC approval. Tacit approval from the UC should already be in place before UAPC consideration. There is no Faculty Senate reading.  
For department-like units with no faculty tenure homes, there is no additional UC or Senate approval unless review is requested by the chair of the University Committee.
- F. Finally, proposals that have completed all approval steps are reported by Academic Planning and Institutional Research/Provost’s Office to all interested UW-Madison offices, and to UW System Administration. By UWSA policy, no Board of Regent action is required for department restructuring per se; UAPC policy will be followed for academic program changes that are proposed in tandem with the department restructuring proposal.