Creating & Changing UW Seattle Undergraduate Degrees Majors, Options, & Minors

Introduction

At the University of Washington, departments, programs, and colleges can create four kinds of academic programs: a degree, a major, an option which offers a specialization within one (or more) majors, and a minor.   Designing an academic program is the responsibility of faculty in departments and colleges. Providing oversight at the university level for undergraduate education is, however, established in the faculty code as the duty of the Faculty Council on Academic Standards (FCAS).

Per the Faculty Code, Sec 42-34, FCAS is responsible for matters of University Policy relating to the academic affairs of the University, such as admissions policy, scholastic standards, university graduation requirements, and inter-institutional academic standards. FCAS does not oversee intellectual content of a program, or specify a teaching method, but rather looks at whether a program adheres to general university academic standards policies.   Mostly these concern accessibility of the program, amount of credits required, rules for satisfactory progress, and expectations for graduation.   In administering this process, FCAS consults with the Office of Admissions, the Registrar's Office, students, advisers and other stakeholders.   The process also helps assure there is an accurate record of the university's offerings for the catalog and assures that the program will appear on a student's transcript.   Providing a record is important, as students, future employers, and other institutions of higher education use them to document the student's academic achievements.

These instructions are intended to provide an overview of how to create new undergraduate degrees, majors, options and minors, and how to modify existing programs. They are intended to be comprehensive, but <u>not</u> exhaustive.   If you have a question about your proposal, these guidelines, or any other rules mentioned on this website, you should email Curriculum Office staff at uwcr@uw.edu.

- **Submitting UW Form 1503 Best Practices**
- **1503 Curriculum Approval Bodies and Timing Estimates**

Below is a list of programmatic actions that require the approval of FCAS:

- **Creating a New Academic Program**
  - New Degree or Major
  - New Option, within one or more majors
  - New Minor

- **Changing an Existing Academic Program**
  - Adding or Revising Admissions Requirements
  - Changing Program Requirements
  - Changing general education requirements
  - Adding or changing a continuation policy (competitive admission academic programs <u>require</u> a continuation policy)
  - Adding or changing electives required for completion of the major
- **Changing Administrative Policies**
  - Changing the name of an academic program
  - Extending a program through distance learning or at an off-campus site
  - Suspension of admission to a program
  - Elimination of a program

Submitting UW Form 1503

Submission of UW form 1503 is required for all new degrees, majors, options, and minors and all changes to existing programs. The original form, including signatures of all that apply including: the chair or program director, college curriculum committee and Dean, and any supporting documents, must be submitted to the University Registrar, Box 355850. An electronic copy of the form and the supporting documents should be sent to Registrar's Curriculum Office by email at uwcr@uw.edu.

The following are "best practices" for reducing delays in the review process for the 1503:

- Submit a clean typed copy of form 1503 and supporting documentation. Avoid strikeouts and revisions in pen and pencil on the submitted form.

- For proposed changes to admission and program requirements, provide all of the current catalog copy to provide context for the change.

- Except for signatures, it is a good practice to also submit a completed 1503 and supporting documentation electronically.

- Courses that will be required by a new academic program or are proposed as part of a changed admission or program requirement must be approved or be in the process of approval by the University Curriculum Committee.

- If a new program or a proposed course requirement will affect another department, that department must be consulted. Form 1503 includes spaces for the signature(s) of the chair(s) of the department affected. If appropriate, memo(s) from affected department(s) can be included in the proposal.
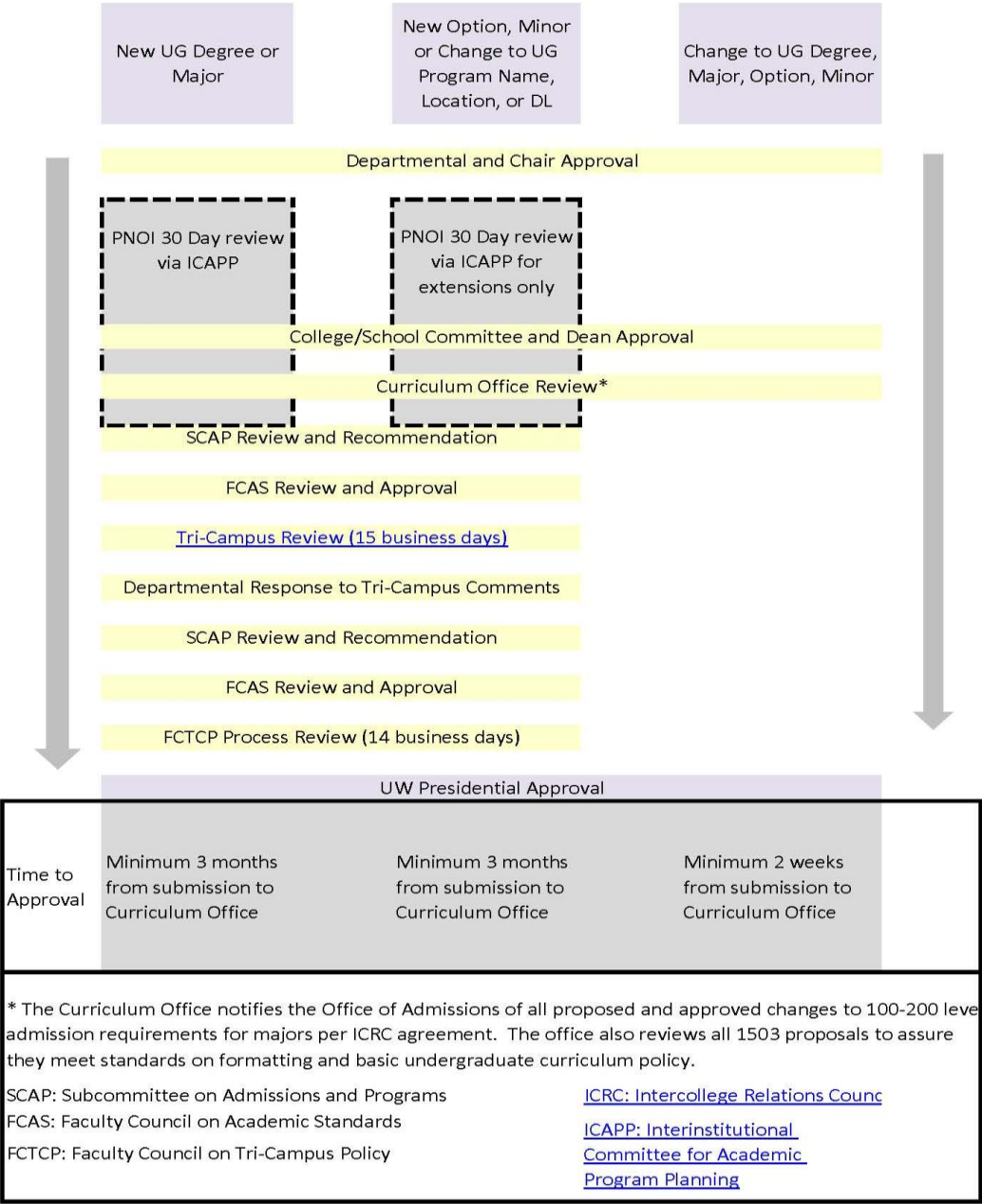
The form is available here: UW 1503 Link

External Notifications

The university has existing agreements with other public institutions in the state to assure the best outcomes for students and good use of state resources.   Below are the two specific agreements about notifying these institutions that should be adhered in creating and changing academic programs

- **Community College notification:** Under an agreement through the Washington ICRC|, the university is required to notify community colleges of changes in lower division requirements two years prior to their applying to transfer students from Washington state community colleges.   For further information, email uwcr@uw.edu.

- **Public Institution Notification:** Proposals for **new degrees, new majors or extensions via distance or new location** require notifications of other public institutions prior to their final approval by the University.   For further information on the process, email Robert Corbett at rcorbett@uw.edu.

1503 Curriculum Approval Bodies and Timing Estimates

New UG Degree or Major	New Option, Minor or Change to UG Program Name, Location, or DL	Change to UG Degree, Major, Option, Minor

Departmental and Chair Approval

PNOI 30 Day review via ICAPP	PNOI 30 Day review via ICAPP for extensions only

College/School Committee and Dean Approval

Curriculum Office Review*

SCAP Review and Recommendation

FCAS Review and Approval

Tri-Campus Review (15 business days)

Departmental Response to Tri-Campus Comments

SCAP Review and Recommendation

FCAS Review and Approval

FCTCP Process Review (14 business days)

UW Presidential Approval

Time to Approval	Minimum 3 months from submission to Curriculum Office	Minimum 3 months from submission to Curriculum Office	Minimum 2 weeks from submission to Curriculum Office

* The Curriculum Office notifies the Office of Admissions of all proposed and approved changes to 100-200 level admission requirements for majors per ICRC agreement. The office also reviews all 1503 proposals to assure they meet standards on formatting and basic undergraduate curriculum policy.

SCAP: Subcommittee on Admissions and Programs
FCAS: Faculty Council on Academic Standards
FCTCP: Faculty Council on Tri-Campus Policy

ICRC: Intercollege Relations Counc
ICAPP: Interinstitutional Committee for Academic Program Planning

Creating a New Degree or New Major

University Degrees are awarded for satisfaction of general education requirements of the university, completion of program requirements and electives specified for a **major**, and completion of 180 credits of courses with a minimum 2.0 cumulative grade point average. A **degree** is distinct from a **major** in that a **degree** includes all coursework completed at the university; a **major** refers to the coursework completed for the focus of the degree.

Degrees awarded by the university include the Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Design, Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering, etc. and are often referred by informal abbreviations such as "BA", "BDes." and "BSEE."   Majors awarded by the university include Biology, English, Environmental Studies, Sociology, etc.   The decision whether to propose an academic program as a new degree or a new major depends the conventions of the profession and whether existing degrees sufficiently capture the type of program of study.   A proposal for a new degree should include a proposal for general education requirements.   The minimum requirements for any new degree are specified in the scholastic regulations.

Approvals for a new degree may differ from those for a new major, so the decision to move forward with a proposed new degree should be done in consultation with the Dean and, if appropriate, the Provost.   Otherwise, the process for approval for a new degree is the same as that for a new major.

Majors provide the focus of an undergraduate program, indicate what students have specialized in during their academic career, and provide opportunities for students to engage deeply in an academic area as a complement to the short term experiences of general education and self-chosen electives.   The content and specificity of courses for a major may differ: a program may admit students once a year to pursue a shared curriculum as a cohort or may admit year round with a core of as few as 20 credits. Courses for a major may be required from departments outside the home department. Below are basic policies for a new major.   Exceptions to these policies require justification.

1. A major should consist of between 50 and 90 credits.

2. The credits to complete a major, along with general education requirements and admission requirements, should not require students to complete more than 180 credits for their degree.

3. Majors may be proposed with three types of admission:
    a. Open Admission: Matriculated students in good academic standing are admitted at any time.

    b. Selective /Minimum Requirements Admission: Requires students to complete satisfactorily a set of prerequisite courses with a minimum GPA. All students who meet the minimum requirements are admitted.

    c. Competitive Admission: Students must complete all minimum requirements to apply and must then compete with the entire applicant pool for a limited number of spaces.

4. Majors should include at least 20 credits of core courses, which all students must fulfill. These courses may come from groups, and courses in any given group should be comparable in learning goals. The intention is to provide a substantive foundation that all students in a major share. This expectation may be met in two ways:
    a. in departmentalized or programmatic majors by a set of courses within that offering unit.
    b. in interdisciplinary majors by a set of courses that serve to integrate the participating disciplines.

5. Majors should require that at least 50% of the credits for that major derive from upper-division (300- and 400-level) courses.

6. Proposed catalog copy for a major may explicitly list electives for inclusion in the catalog. Alternatively, proposed catalog copy may indicate that electives may be taken from a list that is managed by the department. Such lists should be included with the initial proposal documentation, with an indication that they will be departmentally managed.

7. Majors and degrees that are competitive or admit students directly as freshmen must include a continuation policy that is no more restrictive than the requirements to graduate from the major.

8. Programs requesting that greater than 50% of the credits for that major must be taken through the University of Washington must provide justification for that request. On the condition that adequate academic justification is provided, FCAS will approve such requests.

9. Programs shall not present barriers to admission or graduation to students with disabilities.

Documentation Required in addition to form 1503: A new degree or major requires adding or extending infrastructure such as faculty oversight, advising, student services, and other administrative tasks, and thus will require new or redirected resources. Therefore, FCAS has approved guidelines for a brief (2-4 page) rationale for the proposed degree or major. The guidelines reflect those questions that should be addressed in planning a new degree or major at the university. The rationale will also provide a helpful context for university faculty and others to understand the program. Additionally, if the new program is to be offered through distance technology or at another location, it should also include in the justification responses that address the section of the guidelines concerning criteria for approval of a provisional distance program.

Process – External Notification for New Degrees or Majors

The flowchart on page 3 of this document lays out the steps in the approval process at the Seattle campus of the university for a **new degree or major.** In addition to the usual steps required for an option, minor or changes to an existing major, a further step notifying outside institutions is required. The university has agreed to share notices of proposed offerings with other Washington public institutions, including the community colleges.   The justification that is to the accompany the proposals as described above, including steps one through five, constitute a Planning Notice of Intent (PNOI) and are shared by submission to the Council of Presidents.   Contact rcorbett@uw.edu for further information.

Creating a New Option

Options are undergraduate academic programs that overlap with at least 50% of the credits of an existing major within a department or program and typically allow students to specialize within a major. Like majors, they are transcripted. All coursework required for the option, including upper and lower division courses, may be counted within the 50%. Departments may recognize their own areas of emphasis within degree programs as an aid to advising, but only formally approved options are transcripted.

Below are the formal policies FCAS has adopted for options:

1. A program may offer a standard major with options that a student may choose. (For example, a student can earn a BA in Anthropology or a BA in Anthropology with an option in Archaeological Sciences.) Alternatively, a program may require every student to choose one of several options. (For example, students in the Applied and Computational Mathematical Sciences program must choose an option when they declare the major.)

2. Each option within a major, including the standard major, must share at least a 50% common core. "Common core" courses represent the essential curricular content that all students in a major are expected to master, and should provide a substantial foundation for further work in the major.

3. The number of total credits for an option should differ by no more than 10 credits from any other option in the major, including the standard major.

4. Open and minimum admission requirement majors may have competitive options as long as a non-competitive alternative is available.

5. Programs offering options may limit the number of options for which a student may enroll within that program.

6. Each option offered within a degree program must be distinct.

Creating a New Minor

Minors are coherent courses of study at the undergraduate level consisting of 25-35 credits. Students are not allowed to receive a minor and a major within the same field of study. Coursework in minors is not limited to a single department or program. Minors may be interdisciplinary and they may include courses on all three campuses. Such interdisciplinary and tri-campus minors require an administrative home with advising support on each campus that they are offered. Typically, interdisciplinary minors have an advisory group of faculty who determine appropriate courses for inclusion.

Below are the formal policies that FCAS has adopted for regular minors, interdisciplinary minors and competitive minors:

A. Unit/Departmental Minors

1. 25-35 credits
2. A minimum of 50% or 15 credits, whichever is greater, of 300/400 level courses.
3. A student cannot receive a minor in their major. * (see Interdisciplinary Minors)
4. A minimum of 50% or 15 credits, whichever is greater, must be completed in residence at the UW campus granting the minor.
5. Minors may request a minimum cumulative 2.0 GPA for courses applied to the minor; higher grade and GPA requirements are subject to additional review.
6. Courses taken Satisfactory/Not Satisfactory will not be counted toward a minor.
7. Students must declare a major and have completed a minimum of 45 credits before declaring a minor.
8. Students must have the advisor in their major sign minor declaration paperwork in order to ensure that students meet university satisfactory progress requirements.
9. Generally, minors are open to students in good standing at the university.

B. Interdisciplinary Minors

Interdisciplinary minors are minors that are composed of courses and content which come from more than one area of study.

Interdisciplinary minors were created because students are not allowed to minor in their major, but at times the content overlap between the major and an Interdisciplinary minor is unavoidable. To ensure that students are satisfying the intention of the rule disallowing a student to minor in their major, FCAS created the following policy.

1. Interdisciplinary minors must require that 60% of the coursework applied to the minor is taken outside of the student's major(s) requirements. This means these classes may not apply both to the satisfying major(s) requirements and interdisciplinary minor requirements. Note: These credits can count towards the 180 credits required for graduation.
2. The minor should require some type of Capstone/Colloquium/Seminar/Cumulating experience.

C. Competitive Minors

It is strongly encouraged that Minors be open, as they are intended to be flexible introductions to a field. Should a department request a competitive minor, the department takes on the following responsibilities for students admitted to the minor:

1. The department must provide the student with access to the department advisors.
2. The department must have a continuation policy in place for students in the minor.
3. The department must provide preferential access to the courses required for the minor to ensure the student can timely complete the minor.

Changing or Adding Program Requirements

Program Requirements include course and grade requirements for fulfilling minors, options and majors and are also called graduation requirements. Proposed changes to core courses, elective requirements and other academic requirements must be submitted in a form 1503 providing a rationale for the change and current and proposed catalog copy. Except for minor changes such as a renumbered course, it is advisable to provide all of the catalog copy to provide context for the change. In the case of updating lists of electives, departments may communicate directly with the Curriculum Office. Timing and approvals required for changes to program requirements are illustrated in the chart above. Additionally, changes to grade requirements and continuation policies must be submitted on a form a 1503. For changes to or additions of admission requirements, see the page on admission requirements for further policies about their approval

Supporting Documentation: In addition form 1503, programs can provide supporting documentation such as relevant data about a course or sample curriculum plans. In the case of adding courses from another program, memos can be provided.

Community College notification: Under an agreement through the Washington Intercollege Relations Committee([1http://www.washingtoncouncil.org/icrc/](http://www.washingtoncouncil.org/icrc/))the university is required to notify community colleges of changes in lower division requirements two years prior to their applying to transfer students from Washington state community colleges.

Changing or Adding General Education Requirements

General Education Requirements are the courses required by the university or the college/school for completion of the degree (e.g. BA, BSEE, BFA) in distinction from those required for the major (e. g. English, Oceanography, Painting, etc.). Such requirements may also fulfill admission requirements or program requirements for the major. The university's minimum requirements for general education are specified in the UW Policy Directory in the section on "Scholastic Regulations" (http://www.washington.edu/admin/rules/policies/SGP/ScholRegCH114.html), which require at least 40 credits in three areas of study, 12 credits of writing including 5 of English Composition, 5 credits of quantitative and symbolic reasoning skills, and 3 credits of diversity. See the policy directory for exact requirements.

Addition or changes to **general education requirements** follow the same process as those for program requirements, with one difference. Each UW college/school sets its own general education requirements that must include, but are not limited to, the University's. Thus, a change to a general education requirement can potentially affect multiple programs. Depending on the complexity of the change, making such changes may take the submission of multiple 1503s. University general education requirements themselves may only be changed through legislation in the Faculty Senate

Changing or Adding Required Electives

Required Electives are typically sets of courses from which students can choose to complete a major. These courses may be offered by the unit or by other units. Changes or additions to sets of **electives** should be submitted on 1503 in the same way that changes are made to program requirements, with two differences. First, since electives often come from other units, there should be some assurance that students will have access to the courses. Second, since units often provide a large number of courses as electives, including them in the catalog creates difficulties due to the length. Units can decide to keep an approved electives *list*, upon approval by 1503 from FCAS, and then update the Registrar's Office as additions or changes occur. Note that this policy only applies to electives and not groups of courses meant to fulfill core requirements.

Adding or Revising Admission requirements

Admission requirements include courses, credits, GPA, and related stipulations which must be satisfied before students can be considered for admission to an academic program. Programs may require courses from outside their discipline as well as from within it. Programs may also require an essay or a test for admission, as well as relevant extracurricular activities. Programs should include a process for considering appeals for admission when applicants have been denied.

Guidelines for Departmental Admission Course Prerequisites

Academic departments with selective or competitive undergraduate admission programs often require applicants to complete certain courses before applying for admission. The Faculty Council on Academic Standards reviews departmental admission policies before University approval, and it offers the following guidance to departments establishing admission requirements.

1. Courses required for admission should be offered frequently and with sufficient space to provide adequate access to students interested in the major. Access to prerequisite courses should not be used as a way to limit eligible applicants.
2. Courses should be at the 100 or 200 level, with content appropriate for freshmen or sophomores.
3. Courses should ideally apply to general education requirements if the student is not subsequently admitted to the major.
4. Courses should be available at most community colleges so transfer students can complete departmental admission prerequisites prior to applying to the University.

Admission policies usually fall into one of three categories:

- *Open Admission*: Matriculated students in good academic standing are admitted at any time.
- *Selective/Minimum requirements Admission:* Requires students to complete satisfactorily a set of prerequisite courses with a minimum GPA. All students who meet the minimum requirements are admitted.
- *Competitive Admission:* Students must complete all minimum requirements to apply and must then compete with the applicant pool for a limited number of spaces.

Applications for **Selective/Minimum requirements and competitive programs** should provide a description of the application process include proposed date(s) for admissions and describe any tests, essays or other materials used for consideration for admission.   These details except the date are not included in catalog copy, but it is a good practice to have a written description of the process to hand out or allow students to download.

Minimum grade requirements for admission are typically no higher than 2.0 for a specific course. However, a specific minimum grade in a course may be required for admission if the course and grade have been approved as a major requirement. Also, a minimum GPA above 2.00 may be specified for a set of courses as an admission requirement.

Admission requirements can be added or changed for

- an existing major
- an existing option within a major

Programs wishing to change the admissions process for a program should complete a 1503 indicating the change and what process and procedures will be followed.   Proposed changes should adhere to the standards detailed in this document.

Programs requesting to change from **Open** or **Selective/Minimum admission** to **Competitive admission** must provide justification for that request. Such justification should include, but is not limited to, detailed consideration of:

- Intellectual resources—capacity of existing faculty and administrative personnel for accommodating the number of current majors.

- Physical resources—sufficiency of instructional space (classrooms, labs, etc.) for accommodating the number of current majors, and if so, why?

- Fiscal resources—financial challenges distinct from those associated with the above two concerns.

- Accreditation concerns—accreditation requirements associated with the program (faculty to student ratio, etc.) require competitive admission due to existing resources.

- Other holistic and pedagogically-motivated concerns

In addition, programs requesting to change from Open or Selective admission to Competitive admission must provide:

- Brief overview to put the change into a context that can be understood outside of the discipline

- Documentation of the current major, and trends in the major, over the past five years— numbers of current students, accessibility to required courses, graduation rates, significantly impacted courses, documentation of accreditation requirements, memoranda or notes of discussions on change, etc.

- An outline of the planned admission process—supporting materials required, dates applications are considered, and review process, as well as a plan for phasing in competitive admission, and the effects of such on existing majors.

- A description of a petition process for students not admitted to the major

Assessment: Within 3 years of implementing the change, the program should develop a report on how the change in admission requirements has affected its student body, including trends in numbers of students in the majors. The report should be shared with the appropriate school or college, with a copy sent to FCAS.

Community College Notification: Under an agreement through the Washington Council's Intercollege Relations Committee (http://www.washingtoncouncil.org/icrc/), the university is required to notify community colleges of changes in lower division requirements two years prior to their applying to transfer students from Washington state community colleges.

Continuation Policies

Continuation policies are satisfactory progress requirements to which students are held once they are admitted to a major, if those standards exceed the University's policy on scholarship: http://www.washington.edu/students/gencat/front/Low_Scholarship.html.   These continuation standards should be no more restrictive than graduation requirements for a major in terms in grades required in a course or cumulative grades for all courses applicable to the major. They should in general adhere to the policies on grade requirements for graduation requirements as explained here: http://depts.washington.edu/registra/curriculum/FCASpolicies.php#programBasedGradeReqs. Policies on continuation may require students to take a certain amount of credits in the major per quarter, require them to see an advisor, or other actions.   A proposal for a new continuation policy should include statements about how a student is put on probation, how the student can rectify that, and what a petition process is available.   These statements and other supporting information should be submitted via a 1503.

Changing Administrative Policies

The following are actions that require the review of FCAS to be carried out.

- Changing the name of an academic program
- Extending a program through distance learning or at an off-campus site
- Suspension of a program
- Elimination of an academic program

These actions are grouped together because, while they require completion of a form 1503, there are no specific rules about the curriculum. The 1503 is necessary to identify the program and certify that the proposed changes have been reviewed by the appropriate bodies, but no curriculum needs to be proposed or changed, unless it is part of the a proposed name change or the extension of a program, in which case the guidelines above apply. In each case, the justification is the most important part of the application, and should address what is being changed. Guidance for these justifications does vary and is briefly listed below.

- **Changing the name of an academic program** – Name changes are made to degrees and majors for reasons usually that are internal to the discipline. These reasons should be explained as clearly as possible, and the addition of supporting documents such as letters of support or evidence from peers helps illuminate them. FCAS's main concern with name changes is assuring that the change will not substantially impact another academic program and that the name reflects the program's curriculum. As with other changes, coordination before a proposal is submitted will smooth the process.

- **Extending a program through distance learning or at off-campus site** – Programs that intend to offer their existing curriculum via distance technology or at off-campus site should include as part of their proposal a justification addressing these guidelines for approval of a provisional distance program.

- **Suspension of an academic program –** If an academic program is to be suspended by closing admission or other method, FCAS should be notified via submission of a 1503 at least two quarters before the decision will take effect. The justification should provide a reason for the proposed suspension and, if appropriate, a plan for reinstatement of admissions. FCAS may approve a suspension for an academic year, but further requests will be referred to Senate Committee on Planning and Budget with a recommendation that the program undergo an RCEP. For further information on the RCEP process, see this Faculty Senate page: http://www.washington.edu/faculty/secfac/rcep/

- **Elimination of an academic program** – After the RCEP is completed and a program is to be eliminated, a 1503 is required to specify what steps will be taken in the closure to assure the best outcomes for students. The 1503 and any supporting documentation should include agreements reached in the RCEP relating to curriculum and formal elimination of the major. These agreements must contain a "teach-out" plan that accommodates existing students in the major.