# University of Detroit Mercy

# Policy on Changes to Existing Programs

Changes to academic programs are a normal and expected part of maintaining quality, relevance, and responsiveness in higher education. This document provides guidance on the types of program changes that may occur, outlines the processes for proposing changes, and identifies important considerations to ensure changes are implemented effectively and consistently across the university.

**This policy applies to all credentials offered, including certificates and degrees.** Please note that program changes impact various business practices and university publications and must be **submitted by October 1** for the upcoming catalog. **Changes are implemented in the fall term only.**

Changes as outlined below may be proposed by the Dean of the college/school for which the program resides, the program director/department chair, or program faculty. Approval within the college/school must take place before submission, along with support from the Dean; supporting documentation may be required.

Before submitting any proposed change, it is essential to fully identify and assess the details of the change. While some adjustments may appear straightforward, their impact on various aspects of the university's operations and academic structure can often be more significant than initially anticipated. Typical changes affect more program details than anticipated.

Once the changes are identified, it is critical to review each area impacted by the change, as outlined in the policy below, and ensure that all relevant factors are addressed in the proposal, if applicable.

Common examples of changes include, but are not limited to:

A. Program Name
B. Major Name
C. Degree Name
D. Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code *(contact Executive Director of IR&E with questions)*
E. Concentration Name
F. Department/Division Name *(separate process, see below)*
G. Minor Name
H. Modality Change *(separate process, see below)*
I. Subject Name
J. Degree Requirements
K. Change in Total Credits

When submitting your proposal, please ensure that you identify and explain all associated changes, as outlined further in this document.

Changes to McNichols campus programs may also be subject to program review, as outlined in the *Triggering Program Review* document available on the Shared Governance website.

# Timeline:

**Substantial Changes:** Please allow **3–4 months** for substantial changes to complete the full review and approval process.  Changes of this nature must be reviewed by multiple levels of stakeholders and additional revisions or updates may be required throughout the process. Early submission is strongly encouraged to accommodate the necessary timeframes and prevent delays.

**Individual Changes:** Depending on the change requested, individual changes typically require **1-3 months** for full review and approval.

**To avoid delays and unnecessary extensions** of the timeline, please ensure that proposals are detailed, concise (avoiding redundancy), and include all required materials at the time of submission. Timely responses to follow-up requests are essential to maintaining momentum through the review process.

Finally, please be mindful of busy periods in the academic calendar—such as the start of the term, census dates, and holiday breaks—which may affect review and approval timelines.

# Table of Contents:

# Substantial Change:

## Includes changes to one or more of the following:

**A. Program Name**
**B. Major Name**
**C. Degree Name**

Changes to the following items may also take place; include these in your proposal, if applicable.

a. Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code
b. Concentrations
c. Department Name *(separate process, see below)*
d. Minor Name
e. Course Subject Name
f. Degree Requirements
g. Modality Change *(separate process, see below)*

# Proposal

Proposals for substantial changes as indicated must include the following:

a. Evidence of department or division discussion, and consultations with other stakeholders if appropriate. Stakeholders may include internal or external colleagues, external partners, alumni and students. This documentation should summarize activities leading to the proposal (e.g., catalyst prompting request) and present department/division recommendations, or other information the department/division feels is helpful to subsequent decision-makers.
b. Consultation with the University's Registrar Office to ensure that the proposed program name/prefix has not been used previously.
c. Consultation with the Executive Director of Institutional Research & Effectiveness (IR&E) & Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) regarding potential accreditation implications and necessary approvals.
d. A clear justification or rationale for the change. This justification should be student-focused. Justifications may reference disciplinary standards, market demands, or employment/industry expectations.
e. The anticipated date for the program name changes. Substantial   can only be implemented the fall term to align with the new catalog year.
f.  An explanation of how the change will affect current students. For example, specify whether students will remain in the existing program or be given the option to transition to the new program. Per HLC guidelines, current students must be grandfathered out and allowed to complete their original program and cannot be required to transition without consent. A written request for

review and support by the College/School curriculum committee or appropriate governing or shared governance body.

g.  Documentation of department, division, and curriculum committee support with a formal request seeking the endorsement of the Dean/Leadership Team of the college or school.

# Approval

1.  Following college/school leadership review and support, the Dean will submit request with supporting documentation via email to Executive Director of IR&E & HLC ALO for review. The Executive Director of HLC ALO will consult with the Associate Vice President (AVP) & University Registrar to resolve any concerns.
2.  The Executive Director of IR&E & HLC ALO will then forward to the Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) and determine if MFA approval is needed. If MFA approval is needed, proposal will be forwarded accordingly.
3.  Following MFA approval, if applicable, Provost/VPAA will facilitate a discussion with the Academic Leadership Team (ALT).
4.  Following the ALT discussion, the Provost/VPAA will render a decision to approve or not approve.
5.  If approved, the Provost/VPAA will notify the AVP & University Registrar and Executive Director of IR&E & HLC ALO of the approval and effective date to initiate notification of the following
    -   President's Council
    -   Office of the Registrar
    -   Marketing & Communications
    -   Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness
    -   Information Technology Services
    -   Applicable Shared Governance Groups (e.g., Faculty Assembly, Leadership, Clearinghouse, Committees)
    -   Office of Enrollment and Student Affairs

# CIP Code Change Only

A **Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code** is assigned to each academic program, based on the major, to categorize fields of study for federal reporting and compliance purposes. Changes to CIP codes may be necessary to better align a with its curriculum, reflect industry standards, or to qualify for STEM designation, which can impact funding, federal reporting, and student opportunities, including work authorization for international students.

CIP code changes should be proposed when a program evolves to reflect current academic and professional trends.

## Request Process

A.  Requests for CIP Code changes should be sent to the Executive Director of IR&E & HLC ALO and AVP & University Registrar. Include the following:
    a.  Rationale for proposed change
    b.  Current CIP Code
    c.  Proposed CIP code
    d.  Description of any curriculum changes related to the request including details and the percentage of curriculum change, if applicable.

## Approval Process

1.  The Executive Director of IR&E & HLC ALO and AVP & University Registrar will review all CIP code change requests to ensure accuracy, compliance with accreditation and regulatory requirements, and appropriate classification
2.  Upon review the Executive Director of IR&E & HLC ALO and AVP & University Registrar will provide the final approval status or request additional information if necessary.

# New **Concentration** or **Name Change**

## Request for a New Concentration:

A.  Requests for new concentrations should be sent to the Executive Director of IR&E & HLC ALO and AVP & University Registrar. Include the following:
    a.  Rationale for creating the new concentration (*note:* multiple concentrations can be included in one proposal)
    b.  Program(s) tied to the concentration
    c.  Information on concentration requirements (e.g. whether all students will be required to declare a concentration, is the concentration optional etc.)
    d.  Proposed Concentration name
    e.  Courses included in the concentration
    f.  Changes to program curriculum due to the addition of the concentration (including details and the percentage of curricular change, if applicable)
    g.  Documentation indicating the department, division, and curriculum committee support with a request seeking the endorsement of the Dean/Leadership Team of the college or school.
        a)  If the concentration includes courses from another college/school a letter of support from the other college/school leadership must be included.

*Please note:* Changes to programs related to adding concentrations may be subject to triggering program review based on the change.

## Approval Process

1.  The Executive Director of IR&E & HLC ALO and AVP & University Registrar will review all requests to ensure accuracy, compliance with accreditation and regulatory requirements, and appropriate classification.
2.  Upon review the Executive Director of IR&E & HLC ALO and AVP & University Registrar will provide the final approval status or request additional information if necessary.

## Request for Name Change to a Concentration

A.  Requests for name changes for minors should be sent to the Executive Director of IR&E & HLC ALO and AVP & University Registrar.

    The request must include the following:

    a.  Rationale for proposed change
    b.  Current concentration name
    c.  Proposed concentration name

d.  Description of any changes to curriculum related to the name change (including details and the percentage of curricular change, if applicable)

*Please note:* Changes to concentrations may trigger program review, depending on the scope of the change, as outlined in university policy.

## Approval Process

1.  The Executive Director of IR&E & HLC ALO and AVP & University Registrar will review all requests to ensure accuracy, compliance with accreditation and regulatory requirements, and appropriate classification.
2.  Upon review the Executive Director of IR&E & HLC ALO and AVP & University Registrar will provide the final approval status or request additional information if necessary.

# Department/Division Name Change

Just as academic program names must sometimes evolve to reflect trends in research and scholarship, so too may the names of academic departments or divisions. A department name change may be proposed by the Dean of the College/School for which the program resides, program director/department chair, or program/department faculty.

## Request Process

Once approval has been obtained within the college/school, complete the [Changes to Existing or New Academic Department/Division Request Form](#).

## Approval

1. The Changes to Existing or New Academic Department/Division Request Form will be submitted and reviewed by the Executive Director of IR&E & HLC ALO and AVP & University Registrar.
2. Following a discussion, the Provost/VPAA will render a decision to approve or not approve the department/unit name change.
3. If approved, notification will be provided to the Finance Office and other impacted university offices.

*Please note:* Department/unit name changes impact various business practices and university publications and must be coordinated carefully to ensure consistency across all platforms.

# Minor Name Change

## Request Process

A. Requests for name changes for minors should be submitted to the Executive Director of IR&E & HLC ALO and AVP & University Registrar.

The requests must Include the following:

    a. Rationale for proposed change
    b. Current minor name
    c. Proposed minor name
    d. Description of any curriculum changes related to the name change, including details and the percentage of curricular change, if applicable.

*Please note:* Changes to programs related to adding concentrations may be subject to triggering program review based on the change.

## Approval Process

1. The Executive Director of IR&E & HLC ALO and AVP & University Registrar will review all requests to ensure accuracy, compliance with accreditation and regulatory requirements, and appropriate classification.
2. Upon review the Executive Director of IR&E & HLC ALO and AVP & University Registrar will provide the final approval status or request additional information if necessary.

# **Modality** Change

University of Detroit Mercy (UDM) is approved by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) to offer both individual courses and full programs via distance education (definitions provided below).

HLC approval is required when 50% or more of a program's coursework is delivered through distance education within a given academic year.

If a program intends to be offered fully via distance education (i.e., online), it must undergo a separate internal review and receive additional HLC approval. This requirement is based on the percentage of didactic (instructional) courses delivered online. Programs that include required in-person components, such as clinicals or practicums, may still be considered fully online.

**Course Schedule Types for Online Delivery**

- **O1S**: Online 100% Synchronous
- **O1A**: Online 100% Asynchronous
- **O2S**: Online 75–99% Synchronous
- **O2A**: Online 75–99% Asynchronous

Note:  If a program consists primarily of **hybrid courses**, additional review and approval may still be required depending on the proportion of distance-delivered instruction.

## Request Process

**For programs 50% or more via distance education:** Once internal approval has been obtained within the college/school, contact the Executive Director of IR&E & HLC ALO to submit a request for review.

**For programs 100% via distance education:** Once internal approval has been obtained within the college/school complete and submit an  Application for Transitioning a Program to Fully Online.

## Approval Process

**For programs 50% or more via distance education:**

1. The Executive Director of IR&E and HLC ALO will review the request and ensure all proper documentation is included.
2. The request will be submitted for HLC approval.
3. Once approved, notification will be sent to the Dean and the Provost/VPAA.

**For programs 100% via distance education**

1. The Executive Director of IR&E and HLC ALO will review the request and ensure all proper documentation is included.

2. The Executive Director of IR&E & HLC ALO will forward to the Provost/VPAA. If applicable, Provost/VPAA will facilitate a discussion with the Academic Leadership Team (ALT).
3. Following the ALT discussion, if applicable, the Provost/VPAA will render a decision to approve or not approve to full online delivery.

# HLC/Department of Education Definitions

***Distance Education (Based on federal definition):***

Education that uses one or more of the technologies listed below to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor or instructors and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor or instructors, either synchronously or asynchronously.

The technologies that may be used to offer distance education include:

1. The internet;
2. One-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite or wireless communications devices;
3. Audio conference; or
4. Other media used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in items 1–3 above.

For purposes of this definition, an instructor is an individual responsible for delivering course content and who meets the qualifications for instruction established by HLC.

***Distance Education Course:***

A course in which at least 75% of the instruction and interaction occurs using one or more of the technologies listed in the definition of distance education, with the faculty and students physically separated from each other.

***Distance Education Program:***

A certificate or degree program in which 50% or more of the courses may be taken as distance education courses.

# Course **Subject Name(s)** Only

Course subject names typically align with the corresponding major. If a significant program change includes a subject name update, it should be incorporated into the proposal without additional documentation. However, if a course subject name change is requested independently, the following steps must be followed.

## Request Process

A. Requests for Course Subject Code changes should be sent to the Executive Director of IR&E & HLC ALO and AVP & University Registrar. Include the following:
   a. Rationale for Proposed Change
   b. Current Subject Code
   c. Proposed Subject Code

## Approval Process

1. The Executive Director of IR&E & HLC ALO and AVP & University Registrar will review requests to confirm code availability, determine approval status, and establish an appropriate timeline for implementation.

# Significant **Degree Requirements Change** or **Change in Total Credit Hours**

Prior HLC approval may be required for substantive changes to existing educational programs. This includes changes related to clock hours, credit hours, program content, customized pathways, method of delivery, length of term affecting allocation of credit, or the cancellation or suspension of a program.

We are required to submit changes related to:

- **Program content:** According to the U.S. Department of Education, program content changes include changes to a program's curriculum (measured by clock or credit hours), learning objectives, competencies, or required clinical experiences. This would include changes in the general education courses required for program completion and not merely the courses within the discipline, program or major.
- **Total credit hours required for program completion:** Adjustments in the total number of hours needed to complete a program must also be approved, as they impact the overall structure and compliance of the program.

## Request Process

When a program is reaching the **25% threshold of content change** since the last reported, the program must contact the Executive Director of IR&E and HLC ALO. This includes:

- The addition of new courses
- Significant revisions to existing courses that require a new course number
- Changes in credit hours for individual courses or the overall program
- Other substantial modifications to program content

*Note:* Reaching the 25% exactly is not required as calculating changes precisely can be complex. Therefore, if changes are approaching the 25% threshold, it is strongly recommended to err on the side of caution and submit a request. It's better to overreport than to risk missing required approvals.

If **changing total credit hours required for a program**, contact the Executive Director of IR&E and HLC ALO immediately.

## Approval Process

1. The Executive Director of IR&E & HLC ALO will review requests and work with the submitter to determine the necessary approvals.
2. If required, submission for HLC for formal approval will be completed.
3. Once HLC approval is received the program, Dean, Provost and AVP & University Registrar will be informed.