

# Procedures for University Policy 4021, Outside Activities and Conflict of Commitment

## I. Scope and Statement of policy

These Procedures apply to all faculty governed by the Faculty Handbook. As stated in the Faculty Handbook and University Policy 4021, a faculty member's primary professional commitment is to their teaching, research, service, and administrative responsibilities at the University.

The University encourages faculty members to engage in Outside Professional Activities that contribute to the growth of knowledge or advance the mission of the University. Outside Professional Activities afford faculty opportunities to collaborate and share their expertise with communities beyond the University, to develop professional growth opportunities for faculty and students, and to enhance their expertise and teaching in their chosen discipline.

Faculty members must disclose any activity that is likely to create a conflict of commitment as set forth in University Policy 4021 and these Procedures. This requirement applies regardless of whether any compensation is received for the outside activity or commitment.

Generally speaking, 9-month faculty do not need to disclose Outside Activities during the summer. However, if the faculty member is an Investigator on sponsored projects or if the Outside Activity is a foreign affiliation or appointment, then disclosure is required.

## II. College Implementation of Procedures

In accordance with Policy 4021, Deans, in consultation with Local Academic Units (LAUs), may specify College-level Procedures that implement the Prompt Disclosure, Prior Approval, and Annual Certification requirements to fit the norms and expectations of their units.

**If College-level procedures are not specified, the below definitions and procedures drafted by the Conflict of Commitment Committee apply.** Deans may specify their College-level procedures only by 1) notifying the Office of Institutional Compliance and the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance in writing and 2) submitting a Word document of their College's procedures for inclusion on Mason's University Policy website. Deans must notify their faculty of procedural changes.

## III. Definitions

*One day per week:* for purposes of this policy, a day is defined using common sense and customary practice. Typically, a day means the equivalent of one eight- to twelve-hour day out of seven. For faculty members at less than 1.0 FTE, "one day per week" would be prorated accordingly.

*Outside Activities:* means an activity that an individual performs or commits to perform at or for an entity other than Mason.

*Outside Professional Activities*: means Outside Activities that are related to one's professional expertise.

Additional definitions are found in University Policy 4021.

#### **IV. Procedures**

Disclosure of Outside Professional Activities shall be made via the University's online disclosure system. See <https://disclose.gmu.edu> for detailed instructions and training. Outside Professional Activity disclosures will be reviewed by the faculty member's Chair (or LAU head), Dean or Dean's representative, and may be referred to other reviewers such as Institutional Compliance or Human Resources if required. If Prior Approval is required for a disclosure, it will be reviewed by the Chair (or LAU head) and approved or disapproved by the Dean. During the review process, a disclosure may be sent back to the faculty member to request clarification or further information.

##### **A. Prompt Disclosure**

Outside Professional Activities with significant potential to create a conflict of commitment, such as those that require a significant professional commitment, require additional disclosure beyond what is expected in the annual faculty review process. Engagement in such Outside Professional Activities is **limited to one day per week** without Prior Approval, and disclosure must be provided to the faculty member's Chair (or Local Unit Administrator) **within 30 days**. Examples of such Outside Professional Activities include:

1. Consulting or testifying as an expert or professional witness;
2. Serving on a board of directors outside of the University
3. Providing or presenting a workshop for industry (for-profit organizations); and
4. Providing outside consulting services or referrals or engaging in professional practice as an individual or through a single-member professional corporation or sole proprietorship. However, if such activity constitutes a founding or co-founding role or an executive or managerial position with a company, it requires Prior Approval, see below.

##### **B. Prior Approval**

Outside Professional Activities that are especially likely to create conflicts, or that come under specific Federal or Commonwealth requirements, require **prior approval from the responsible Dean**.

In order to receive Prior Approval, a faculty member must submit a Prior Approval Request (or PAR) in RAMP as soon as practicable after the faculty member becomes aware of the upcoming activity.

Examples of such Outside Professional Activities include:

1. Performing sponsored research, or administration of a grant or award, for an educational institution, trust, organization, government agency, foundation, or other entity outside of the University (Such arrangements, when undertaken as a Mason employee on a subcontract or subaward through OSP, are a matter of faculty workload and are not Outside Professional Activities);
2. Activities, affiliations, or appointments involving foreign entities or countries, including sponsored research, and including activities that would not otherwise need to be disclosed;
3. Consulting or employment outside of the University that exceeds the one-day-per-week limit;
4. Assuming a founding or a co-founding role or an executive or managerial position of a company or otherwise outside of the University;
5. Assuming an executive or managerial position outside of the University; or
6. Outside activities, including activities for professional organizations, in which a faculty member uses, or commits to using, university facilities, equipment, supplies, or computer time.

Reasons a Dean may deny a request for approval include:

- interferes with the performance of regular employment;
- competes with coursework offered by the University;
- competes with services offered by the employee's unit, such as providing workshops to industry (for-profit organizations); and
- competes with research conducted at the University.

A Dean's decision to deny a request for approval may be **appealed in writing** to the Provost. Please email your appeal request, with any supporting documentation attached, to the Provost's Office at [gmuprov@gmu.edu](mailto:gmuprov@gmu.edu). The Provost's decision regarding any such appeal is final.

When engaging in any Outside Professional Activity as described in the above sections, faculty members should take care to preserve the distinction between projects undertaken through individual initiatives and projects sponsored or officially sanctioned by the University.

### C. Annual Certification

At least once every 12 months, faculty members must complete an Annual Certification of their Outside Professional Activities.