

# Office of University Building Official Charter

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## Purpose

1.	Policy .....	1
1.1	Scope of the University Building Official and Department.....	1
1.2	Independence.....	2
1.3	Authority .....	2-3
1.4	Responsibilities of the University Building Official .....	3-4
1.5	Annual Reports.....	4
1.6	Responsibility for Corrective Action.....	4
1.7	Coordination with External Regulatory Agencies.....	4
1.8	Special Projects .....	5
2.	Procedures .....	5
3.	Definitions .....	5
4.	References .....	5
5.	Approval and Revisions.....	5

## **Purpose**

This document outlines the policies and procedures covering the University Building Official office at George Mason University and serves as a charter for the department.

## **1. Policy**

It is the policy of the Board of Visitors and the administration of George Mason University that University projects are designed and constructed in compliance with the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC), standards and the applicable accessibility codes, as well as related laws and regulations promulgated by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

### **1.1 Scope of the Building Official and Department**

The construction and/or renovation of any facility on university owned property shall be reviewed by the Office of University Building Official for compliance with the USBC. The University reserves the right to request the services of the Department of General Services as appropriate. Specific functions of the Office of University Building Official may include, but not necessarily be limited to:

- Coordinate with other University departments and staff to ensure an understanding and compliance with the building code requirements.
- Review of construction drawings and details for conformance to the requirements of the building code.
- Issue and manage building permits for construction activities where applicable.
- Conduct construction phase inspections as required by the building code.
- Issue certificates of occupancy for new structures following successful inspections.

- Provide support to University staff to determine building safety and condition in the event of fire, flood or other structural failure to University owned facilities or structures.
- Temporary assignments and/or special projects as allowed under the Management Agreement between the Commonwealth of Virginia and the University pursuant to the Restructured Higher Education Financial and Administrative Operations Act (“Management Agreement”).

### **1.1.1 Organizational Structure**

The Finance and Land Use Committee has the responsibility to oversee and evaluate the construction, renovation, and maintenance of the buildings, structures, and facilities of the university. Accordingly, the University Building Official has a reporting and policy relationship to the Committee and also serves in a staff role to the Committee. For administrative oversight of the University Building Officials’ office function, the University Building Official reports to the University’s Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Chief of Staff.

### **1.1.2 University Building Official Qualifications**

The University Building Official shall be a full-time employee of the University, a registered professional architect or engineer, and certified by the Department of Housing and Community Development to perform the Building Official function.

## **1.2 Independence**

Independence is essential to enable the University Building Official function to accomplish its purpose. Accordingly, the University Building Official has direct and unrestricted access to the Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Chief of Staff and the BOV Finance and Land Use Committee. The University Building Official shall be functionally independent of all University operations.

The University Building Official, as well as review/inspection staff, shall not be assigned to routine university operating duties unrelated to the building code function. In accordance with the Management Agreement, no individual licensed professional architect or engineer hired under the University's personnel system as a member of the review unit or contracted with to perform these functions shall also perform other building code-related design, construction, facilities-related project management or facilities management functions for the University. In addition, members of the University Building Official Office will not develop and install procedures, prepare records, make management decisions, or engage in any other activity which could be reasonably construed to compromise their independence. The University Building Official or members of the department shall not be assigned any additional supervisory or oversight responsibilities which could be reasonably construed to compromise their independence. Therefore, the University Building Official and appraisal procedures do not in any way substitute for the responsibilities assigned to other persons in the organization.

## **1.3 Authority**

The University Building Official has unrestricted access to all University building records,

reports, activities and property. Access and information shall be related to issues related to building code enforcement and construction necessary to discharge their enforcement responsibilities. The University Building Official will exercise discretion in the review of records to assure the necessary confidentiality of matters that come to its attention.

## **1.4 Responsibilities of the University Building Official**

The University Building Official has primary responsibility for the proper management for, and enforcement of, the USBC to ensure that construction projects conducted on property owned by the university are completed in compliance with the code, related laws and regulations, and this Policy Statement. The University Building Official is specifically charged with, but not limited to, the following responsibilities:

- Coordinating and hiring department management and personnel for the Building Official department, and ensuring the Office is staffed with licensed professional architects or engineers who are certified by the Department of Housing and Community Development in accordance with the Code of Virginia.
- Developing, submitting for approval, and executing comprehensive annual and long-range plans to carry out departmental responsibilities.
- Establishing a program for selecting and developing the human resources of the department.
- Establishing and maintaining a review program to evaluate the operations of the University Building Official's department.
- Establishing and maintaining a program to maintain staff education, certification, and competency in their fields of expertise.
- Establishing written policies and procedures for the University Building Official Office and directing its technical and administrative functions.
- Issuing building and trade permits for each capital project as required by the USBC to have a building or trade permit.
- Issuing building and trade permits to non-capital projects when required by the USBC to have a building or trade permit.
- Establishing a program of permit inspection and compliance verification in accordance with the USBC.
- Documenting appropriately the results of all reviews, permits, inspections, reports, and evaluations performed.
- Determining the suitability for occupancy issuance of certifications and building occupancy for all projects required.
- Coordinating and maintaining contact with the State Fire Marshall, The Department of Housing and Community Development, other municipal building officials, other university/college building officials, the state building official and other state agencies as required to insure inspections and approvals as required by the building code and related laws.
- Such other duties as required to fulfill the office of the Building Official as required by the

USBC.

- Reporting to and coordinating with the Board of Visitors and University's Vice President of Strategic Initiatives and Chief of Staff with respect to the duties, responsibilities, and progress of the Office of University Building Official on a regular basis.
- Issuing an annual summary report of activities to the Finance and Land Use Committee of the Board of Visitors.
- Communicating directly with the Finance and Land Use Committee any matters considered to warrant its attention.

## **1.5 Annual Reports**

The University Building Official will issue an annual report at the Fall Board of Visitors Meeting that identifies the code enforcement and building permit activities performed during the prior year. The format and style of the report will be developed by the University Building Official, depending upon the nature and conditions surrounding the activities.

The Annual Report, as well as most reports on special projects, will be issued to the members of the Finance and Land Use Committee, the President, the appropriate Vice Presidents of the university or their designee, and other appropriate management personnel, as deemed necessary by the University Building Official. In addition, reports approved at open meetings of the Board of Visitors shall be made available to the public in accordance with State statutes. In certain circumstances, the University Building Official may decide, with the approval of the Chair of the Finance and Land Use Committee, to restrict the issuance of an audit report to certain members of management and/or the Committee.

## **1.6 Responsibility for Corrective Action**

In the event a project, building or trade permit results in nonconforming work that is in violation of the Building Code, the University Building Official may issue a Notice of Violation as detailed in the appropriate section of the USBC. The Notice of Violation will be issued to the Project Manager or responsible party who requested and was granted a building or trade permit for construction. A copy of the Notice of Violation will be sent to the Vice President for Facilities or designee.

The department to whom the Notice of Violation was issued is responsible for taking remedial steps to achieve compliance and to provide, or have provided, a written response to the conditions reported. The responses should be submitted to the University Building Official within 30 calendar days of the issuance of the Notice of Violation.

## **1.7 Coordination with External Agencies**

The University Building Official will coordinate the department's efforts with those of other state and local building code and related regulatory agencies by participating with, and coordinating with, the agencies to provide comprehensive, cost-effective building code enforcement of the university. Duplication of work will be avoided as much as possible. The University reserves the right to request the services of the Department of General Services as appropriate.

## 1.8 Special Projects

The University Building Official is empowered to conduct special projects, reviews, or investigations at the request of the University President or his designee, or the Finance and Land Use Committee. All special projects shall be reported to the Chair of the Finance and Land Use Committee.

## 2. Procedures

The University Building Official shall be empowered to establish department policies and procedures in keeping with university policy, the building code and the laws related to the building code. The department policies and procedures shall provide for a consistent process of project review, client communication, permit issue management, and inspection issue management. The policies and procedures are subject to revision as changes are made in the building code or improvements in the process are recognized.

## 3. Definitions

**Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC):** The Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC) is a state regulation promulgated by the Virginia Board of Housing and Community Development, a Governor-appointed board, for the purpose of establishing minimum regulations to govern the construction and maintenance of buildings and structures. The provisions of the USBC are based on nationally recognized model building and fire codes published by the International Code Council, Inc. (ICC). The ICC model codes are made part of the USBC through a regulatory process known as incorporation by reference. The USBC also contains administrative provisions governing the use of the model codes and establishing requirements for the enforcement of the code by the local building departments and other code enforcement agencies.

## 4. References

- The Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code VAC 36-97 through 36-119.1
- The Management Agreement Between George Mason and the Commonwealth of Virginia
- BOV Resolution Approved September 30, 2021

## 5. Approval and Revisions

Revision: 01

Approved August 25, 2022 by:



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University Building Official