



Tennessee Higher Education Commission

Section Title: Academic Policies

Policy Title: Focused Baccalaureate Degrees: Approval Process

Policy Number: A1.6

- 1.6.1 Purpose.** Pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-7-202(q)(2)(A), the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) has the statutory responsibility to review and approve new academic programs for public institutions of higher education in the State of Tennessee.
- 1.6.2 Definition of Focused Baccalaureate Degrees.** Focused Baccalaureate Degrees vary in length between 90-119 semester credit hours (SCH) and are typically between 90-100 SCH; must fulfill an in-demand workforce need; and will prepare students for direct entry into the workforce and/or a workforce-aligned graduate degree program. It is recommended that Focused Baccalaureate Degrees contain embedded, stackable credentials, where appropriate. Focused Baccalaureate Degrees must have the degree designation “Focused Baccalaureate Degree (FBD)”.
- 1.6.3 Request for Consideration.** In order for a program to be considered a Focused Baccalaureate Degree, the Locally Governed Institution or University of Tennessee System must submit a request to THEC for review and approval prior to the submission of a Letter of Notification or Academic Program Modification. The request should address the following:
- (a) Demonstrate alignment with an in-demand workforce need in Tennessee.
 - (b) Provide evidence of clear industry involvement in the development and sustainability of the proposed program.
 - (c) Describe integration of work-based learning, experiential learning, or professional development opportunities, such as apprenticeships, co-ops, fellowships, field work, internships, service learning, attainment of professional milestones, and credential acquisition.
 - (d) Address transfer and residency considerations.
 - (e) Provide an overview of possible alignment to graduate programs.
 - (f) Identify embedded, stackable credentials, if applicable.
 - (g) If the program leads to licensure, address how the proposed program will fulfill licensure requirements.
 - (h) If the program is programmatically accredited, provide evidence that the accreditor will support a baccalaureate degree less than 120 semester credit hours.
- 1.6.4 Approval Process for Focused Baccalaureate Degrees.** Focused Baccalaureate Degrees will follow THEC Academic Policy A1.0 – New Academic Programs: Approval Process or THEC Academic Policy A1.1 – Academic Program Modifications.

Source: THEC Meeting: July 23, 2026