

Section Title: Academic Policies

Policy Title: New Academic Programs–New and Modified Academic Programs: Evaluation Criteria

Policy Number: A1.1

1.1.10 **Programs Subject to Approval.** New academic programs requiring Commission approval are those that differ from currently approved programs in level of degree or major offered, as reflected in the institution's catalog and the Commission's academic inventory, subject to specified provisions. In the interest of minimizing duplication of effort and institutional document development, THEC will accept for review the program proposal in the program proposal formats required by University of Tennessee and Tennessee Board of Regents system policies, provided these formats address criteria named in 1.1.20A through 1.1.20P below. All program proposals must include THEC Financial Projections form (~~Attachment A~~).

Modifications to existing approved programs must follow the same proposal format and criteria similar to new academic programs. The THEC Executive Director will have approval authority for program modifications. At the will of the Commission, the Executive Director has the right to elevate a program modification to a new program which may be considered for approval by the Commission (See 1.020 (Schedule) and 1.0.30 (Action) New Academic Programs: Approval Process).

Program modifications are limited to the following changes:

- change in the degree designation of a program when this change involves a significant curriculum shift in redefining the program's purpose (e.g., B.A. to B.F.A; M.A. to M.F.A.)
- change of degree designation for an existing academic program or concentration per recommendation of a disciplinary accreditation body. Letter of documentation from the accreditation body to support this program modification must be submitted with the proposal.
- separation of a concentration from an existing program to establishment of the existing concentration as a free standing program. Any concentration with a steady enrollment and graduation rate for at least three years may submit a program modification proposal to become a free-standing degree if the establishment of the concentration does not compromise the remaining academic program and does not require new faculty resources.

- 1.1.10A **Non-degree and non-certificate programs.** Commission approval is not required for non-degree and non-certificate programs, such as those offered at Tennessee ~~Technology Centers~~ Colleges of Applied Technology.
- 1.1.10B **Certificates.** The Commission approval for a TBR community college certificate program is not required. Commission approval is required for an undergraduate or graduate certificate at universities only when the program consists of at least 24 semester hours.
- 1.1.10C **(Reserved)**
- 1.1.10D **Name Changes.** Renaming an existing program without an essential change in the originally approved curriculum does not require Commission approval; ~~planned large scale curriculum change in a program without a name change does require Commission approval.~~
- 1.1.10E **Reconfigurations.** A reconfiguration of existing programs without an essential change in the originally approved curriculum and without a net gain in the number of programs (e.g., a consolidation of two programs into one) does not require Commission approval.
- 1.1.10F **Sub-majors.** Additions, deletions, and revisions of sub-majors (options, concentrations emphases, tracks, etc.) without an essential change in the originally approved major curriculum do not require Commission approval.
- 1.1.10G **Notice.** Before governing board consideration of the changes described in Provisions 1.1.10A - 1.1.10F above, a two-week notice should be given to the Commission staff. In the event the staff interprets the proposed change as one requiring Commission approval, prompt arrangements will be made to discuss the proposed change with the institution and its governing board staff for a determination of applicable policy.
- 1.1.10H **Special Areas.** For programs at baccalaureate or higher level in program areas where annual THEC statewide and institutional degree production analyses indicate there is great potential for unnecessary program duplication, no additional programs may be submitted for approval without exceptional determination of need. Such need must be demonstrated to and approved by governing board and Commission staff before the proposal or development of any new programs in these ~~three~~ special areas.
- 1.1.20 **Criteria for Review.** The criteria set out in Provisions 1.1.20A - 1.1.20QP will generally be used in reviewing new and modified program proposals. However, the stringency of individual criteria will depend on the specific program, and, in particular

circumstances, other criteria may be added at the time of notification (See 1.0.050 New Academic Programs: Approval Process).

References to provisions of certain institutional policies, such as overall admissions standards, do not mean that such policies need to be approved by the Commission.

- 1.1.20A **Mission.** Proposed ~~new~~ programs must adhere to the role and scope as set forth in the approved mission of the institution.
- 1.1.20B **Curriculum.** The curriculum for both undergraduate and graduate programs should be adequately structured to meet the stated objectives of the program, and reflect breadth, depth, theory, and practice appropriate to the discipline and the level of the degree. The undergraduate curriculum should ensure General Education core requirement commonality and transfer (where appropriate) of 19-hour pre-major paths. The curriculum should be compatible with accreditation, where applicable, and meet the criteria for articulation and transfer (See A1.0.60 (~~New~~ Academic Programs: Approval Process)).
- 1.1.20C **Academic Standards.** The admission, retention, and graduation standards should be clearly stated, be compatible with institutional and governing board policy, and encourage high quality.
- 1.1.20D **Faculty.** Current and/or anticipated faculty resources should ensure a program of high quality. The number and qualifications of faculty should meet existing institutional standards and should be consistent with external standards, where appropriate.
- 1.1.20E **Library Resources.** Current and/or anticipated library and information technology resources should be adequate to support a high quality program and should meet recognized standards for study at a particular level or in a particular field where such standards are available.
- 1.1.20F **Administration/Organization.** The organizational placement and the administrative responsibility for the program should be clearly defined and designed to promote success of the program.
- 1.1.20G **Support Resources.** All other support resources--existing and/or anticipated, should be adequate to support a high quality program. This would include clear statements of clerical personnel or equipment needs, student advising resources, and arrangements for clinical or other affiliations necessary for the program.
- 1.1.20H **Facilities.** Existing and/or anticipated facilities should be adequate to support a high quality program. New and/or

renovated facilities required to implement the program should be clearly outlined by amount and type of space, costs identified and source of costs. (Facility Master Plans F4.1)

- 1.1.20I **Need and Demand.** Evidence should be provided that a proposed ~~new~~ program contributes to meeting the priorities/goals of the institution's academic or master plan, why the institution needs that program, and why the state needs graduates from that particular program.

Student Demand. Evidence of student demand, normally in the form of surveys of potential students and enrollment in related programs at the institution, should be adequate to expect a reasonable level of productivity.

Employer Need/Demand. Evidence of sufficient employer demand/need, normally in the form of anticipated openings in an appropriate service area (that may be national, regional, or local), in relation to existing production of graduates for that service area. Evidence may include the results of a need assessment, employer surveys, current labor market analyses, and future workforce projections. Where appropriate, evidence should also demonstrate societal need and employers' preference for graduates of the proposed program over persons having alternative existing credentials and employers' willingness to pay higher salaries to graduates of the proposed program.

Future Sustainable Need/Demand. Evidence of sufficient employer demand/need for the proposed program that covers a reasonable period in the future beyond the anticipated date of graduation of the first program graduates.

- 1.1.20J **No Unnecessary Duplication.** Where other similar programs may serve the same potential student population, evidence should demonstrate that the proposed program is in accord with the institution's THEC-approved distinct mission, is sufficiently different from the existing programs or that access to the existing programs is sufficiently limited to warrant initiation of a new program. The proposal should explain why it is more cost effective or otherwise in the best interests of the State to initiate a new program rather than meet the demand through other arrangements. (e.g., collaborative means with another institution distance education technologies, Academic Common Market, and consortia).

- 1.1.20K **Cooperating Institutions Entities.** For programs needing the cooperation of other ~~institutions~~ entities (including government, education, health, and business), evidence of the willingness of these ~~institutions~~ entities to participate is required.

- 1.1.20L **Diversity and Access.** The proposed program will not impede the state's commitment to diversity and access in higher education (Post *Geier*). ~~A statement should be provided as to how the proposed program would enhance racial diversity. A plan should be provided as to how the proposed program would insure all prospective students have equitable access to the program. This plan should address marketing and recruitment strategies to ensure enrollment projections are met.~~
- 1.1.20M **Assessment/Evaluation and Accreditation.** Evidence should be provided to demonstrate that careful evaluation of the program being proposed would be undertaken periodically. Information must be provided to indicate the schedule for program assessments or evaluations, (including program evaluations associated with Performance Funding) those responsible for conducting them, and how the results are to be used. Where appropriate, professional organizations that accredit programs should be identified and any substantive change that may require a SACS-COC review should be indicated.
- 1.1.20N **Graduate Programs.** ~~New graduate programs will be evaluated according to criteria set forth in this policy, as these criteria are informed by the principles supported by the Tennessee Council of Graduate Schools and best practices in the disciplines.~~
- 1.1.20O **External Judgment.** The Commission staff may, in consultation with the governing board staffs, determine that review by an external authority is required before framing a recommendation to the Commission. Consultants will ~~normally~~ be required for ~~new baccalaureate and~~ graduate programs. Consultants will not normally be required for ~~new undergraduate and~~ certificate programs, but there may be exceptions in cases of large cost or marked departure from existing programs at the institution.
- 1.1.20P **Cost/Benefit.** The benefit to the state should outweigh the cost of the program. Institutions should, in the program proposal, estimate the effect on funding caused by the implementation of the program. Evidence should be provided that program costs will be met from internal reallocation or from other sources such as grants and gifts. Detailed costs should be provided on the THEC Financial Projection form ~~forms required for consideration of new undergraduate and graduate programs (See 1.0.10, Program Costs/Revenues).~~ These details should include reallocation plans, grants, gifts or other external sources funding/partnerships. The THEC Financial Projection form (~~Attachment A~~) must accompany the proposal.
- 1.1.30 **Post Approval Monitoring.** During the ~~first five~~ succeeding years (three years for pre-baccalaureate programs, five years for baccalaureate and Master's programs, and seven years for doctoral programs) following approval, performance of the

program, based on goals established in the proposal, will be evaluated annually by the Commission staff and governing boards. At the end of this period, Commission staff will perform a summative evaluation and present the summary to the Commission annually. This summative evaluation ~~will~~ may include, but not be limited to, enrollment and graduation numbers, program cost, progress toward accreditation, library acquisitions, student performance, and other goals set by the institution and agreed to by governing board and Commission staff. As a result of this evaluation, if the program is deficient, the Commission may recommend to the governing board that the program be terminated. Copies of such recommendation will be forwarded to the Education Committees of the General Assembly. The Commission may also choose to extend this period if additional time is needed and is requested by the governing board.

- 1.1.30A **Schedule.** At the January Commission meeting the Commission will review post approval reports on programs that have recently received approval.
- 1.1.30B ~~**Unfulfilled Productivity.** Institutions with programs that fall markedly short of projected goals as approved in program proposals, must submit, through their governing boards, an explanation of the shortfall and a discussion of the future expectations to accompany annual program progress reports.~~
- 1.1.30C ~~**Further Action.** The Commission may request the governing board to take action on any program that is performing significantly below projections.~~
- 1.1.40A **Delegated Authority for Final Approval of Community College Programs (Certificates and Associates) to the Tennessee Board of Regents.** Notwithstanding anything in this policy to the contrary, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission delegates authority for final approval of community college associate degrees and certificates of any credit-hour requirement to the TBR subject to the conditions outlined in Policy A1.0.70, New Academic Programs: Approval Process.
- 1.1.40B **THEC Authority for Post-Approval Monitoring of All Community College Programs.** Notwithstanding anything in this policy to the contrary, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission expressly does not delegate to the TBR the authority for the post-approval monitoring and evaluation of community college associate and certificate programs as required in A1.0.70B, A1.1.30, A1.1.30A – C (New Academic Programs: Approval Process).

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