

Policy 2:01:01:00

Subject: Approval of Academic Programs, Units, and Modifications

INTRODUCTION

T.C.A. § 49-8-101 et seq. authorized the establishment of the State University and Community College System of Tennessee. Among the powers given to the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) by this Act is the power "to prescribe curricula and requirements for diplomas and degrees."

Institutions have the authority to create new courses. However, if the development cost of a fully online course exceeds \$9,500 for the course, then justification must be submitted to the Office of Academic Affairs for approval. Institutions have the authority to terminate existing courses, determine course content or design, and carry out curriculum revisions less extensive than those the Board has reserved to itself or otherwise delegated. The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) must approve academic proposals specified in **THEC Policy No. A1:0 and A1:1, *New Program Review Criteria***. This policy should serve as a resource for the development of all academic proposals.

Section I. Process

A. Academic Proposals That Must Be Taken to the Board

Beyond those delegated responsibilities the Board reserves to itself the authority to review and approve all proposed academic actions pertaining to the establishment of new academic degree programs.

B. Academic Proposals Approved by the Board through Delegated Authority

Other than new degree programs, academic proposals may be approved by the Board through delegated authority to the Chancellor. Summaries of these proposals will be reported monthly or as needed, to the Board, with a 30-day period for Board review. Board members may contact the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs with questions or concerns, and if desired, can require that the proposal be brought before the full Board at its next quarterly meeting.

Institutions shall provide, to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, proposals related to the following:

1. Establishment of any Certificate of Credit included in the academic inventory or that will be included in the institution's *Catalog* or other recruitment materials and activities. The term "institutional certificate" should apply only to certificates awarding continuing education credit. If college credit is to be awarded and promoted as a certificate, the program of study is subject to Board approval.

2. Establishment of concentrations within an existing academic program.
3. Establishment of a new academic units such as colleges, schools, departments, institutes, centers within existing academic units, bureaus, etc., (see TBR Guideline A-040, and THEC Policy A1.3, New Units and A1.4, Off-Campus Instruction.)
4. Revision of any admission, retention, or graduation policy (both institutional and program specific)
5. Substantive revision of the curriculum of an existing academic program. (Substantive refers to changes impacting 18 or more semester credit hours at the undergraduate level or 9 or more at the graduate level from the last submission to the Board, and includes course rubrics, titles, descriptions, or content).
6. Consolidation of existing academic programs.
7. Extension of an academic degree program to an off-campus site.
8. Inactivation or termination of academic programs listed in the academic inventory.
9. Curriculum modifications that increase required hours for a degree to more than 60 for the associate degree and 120 for the baccalaureate degree, or more than the previously approved exceptions.
10. Current on-ground programs that will be converted to a fully online delivery format.

C. Academic Proposals Requiring Only Notification to Vice Chancellor

Changes to *existing* academic programs not listed above, that require no new costs or minimal costs that the campus will fund through reallocation of existing resources or through sources such as grants and gifts, may be approved through an established process by the institution. The Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs must be informed of such changes prior to implementation and may refer the proposal for Board approval if deemed appropriate due to costs or other potential concerns.. Such action includes, but is not limited to, establishment of new minors and changes such as the modification of the title of an academic program. Minors are typically developed by packaging existing courses and do not usually require new resources or additional costs.

Section II. Procedures

Institutions wishing to effect academic changes that fall into any of the above categories will, therefore, comply with the following procedures as well as those contained in TBR Guideline A-010 and found on the TBR Academic Affairs website.

A. Approval Route of Proposals

Proposals for academic actions that require approval by the Board of Regents shall be submitted to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs for review and approval by the Board.

Subsequent to Board action, the Chancellor shall transmit to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission those proposals that require its approval along with the Board's recommendation. The TBR Academic Affairs staff will maintain communication with the Commission's staff relative to the proposal until formal action has been taken and will keep the institutions informed of its status.

B. Schedule for the Submission and Approval of Academic Proposals

The Board will consider academic proposals at each of its quarterly meetings. Proposals must, however, be submitted sufficiently in advance to permit adequate review by the staff. The time required for this review will vary according to the nature of the proposal, the number of proposals already under review, or other workload issues of TBR staff.

C. Review by and Selection of Consultants

TBR staff may engage qualified consultants to assist in the review of all proposals for new degree programs as deemed appropriate by the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs for both graduate and undergraduate. Consultants will file a written report on the quality of the proposed program and respond to any other relevant questions or issues addressed to them by TBR. Academic proposals must also comply with THEC policy A1:0 and A1:1. A site visit is typically required for new graduate degree programs.

While it is the responsibility of the institution to provide and support such consultants, the selection will be made by the TBR staff and the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, in consultation with the institution. All costs associated with an external review are borne by the institution submitting the proposal.

Section III. General Criteria for Reviewing Academic Proposals

A summary of the major criteria used by the TBR staff in evaluating academic proposals is presented below.

1. The proposed action is central to the mission, role, and scope of the institution.
2. The need for the proposed program is supported by data documenting student interest, employer demand, societal needs, and administrative effectiveness.
3. The proposed action does not constitute unnecessary duplication of academic programs, research projects, or public services available at other public institutions. Partnerships or collaborations should be considered whenever needs might be met with greater efficiency.
4. The proposal documents the institution's ability to implement the proposed action in terms of: (a) fiscal resources, (b) library and other support resources, (c) physical facilities, and (d) qualified personnel.

5. The proposal includes information about appropriate articulation and/or affiliations.
6. The proposal includes information about the online delivery format (if applicable)
7. Proposals pertaining to academic programs should include a description of procedures for regular post-approval evaluation of the programs and units, including evaluation of the program's enrollment and productivity.
8. Proposals should include information related to accreditation, both SACS and professional, and when applicable, provide a time frame for achieving the appropriate accreditation.

Section IV. Sources of Specific Criteria

Listed below are illustrative sources of specific criteria that serve as bases for staff decisions relative to academic proposals.

- (1) TBR Policy No. 2:01:00:00, Degree Requirements
- (2) TBR Policy No. 2:02:00:00, Associate Degree Programs
- (3) TBR Policy No. 2:01:00:03, Principles for Articulation in Vocational/Technical Education
- (4) TBR Guideline No. A-020, Interinstitutional Relationships and Off-Campus Affairs
- (5) TBR Guideline No. A-040, Evaluation of Bureaus, Centers, and Institutes
- (6) TBR Action (December 1986) endorsing TCGS Criteria as standards for both pre- and post-approved review of Master's programs.
- (7) THEC Policy No. A1:0, New Program Review Criteria (November 2002)
- (8) THEC Policy A1:3, New Units

Source: TBR Meeting, December 2, 1988, TBR Meeting, December 13, 2002, March 29, 2006; TBR Meeting, December 8, 2006; March 28, 2008