

3.4 ACADEMIC PROGRAM APPROVAL

3.4.1 Purpose

Policies regulating the criteria and procedures for program approval detail the State Regents' and the institutions' respective roles in the process. These roles are successive and complementary. In carrying out their constitutional responsibilities, the State Regents recognize the primary role of institutional faculty, administrators, and governing boards in initiating and recommending needed changes in educational programs. The institutional faculty are the discipline experts responsible for developing and teaching the curriculum. The institutional administrators and governing board view the proposed program in light of the institution's priorities. The State Regents provide the system perspective and their review should add value to the evaluation process. The State Regents consider the statewide capacity for each new program request as well as linking academic planning with resource allocation. The State Regents also must ensure that requests and mandates are consistently applied.

To facilitate the discharge of these responsibilities, the following policy will be used in submitting and evaluating requests for new academic programs as defined below. The policy requirements are designed to match the internal institutional processes where possible, so that institutions are not required to duplicate efforts.

Program initiation is one method by which the State Regents and the institutions keep the academic curriculum current and relevant in terms of meeting present and future needs of the state and the region. These needs are both societal and occupational in nature. The State System recognizes and supports the tradition of liberal arts education and the need for higher education programs which offer individual and societal benefits that are independent of market demand considerations. Such programs provide immeasurable returns to the state by instilling in citizens a capacity for advanced learning and an understanding of the fundamentals of civilization. Similarly, the State System recognizes and supports providing the educational services to meet the occupational needs of the state and its citizenry.

The primary purposes of this policy include:

- A. To maintain and enhance the quality of instruction, research, and public service conducted at state colleges and universities.
- B. To respond to existing and emerging technological, social, cultural, scientific, business/industry, and economic needs.
- C. To provide to citizens a variety of high-quality opportunities for intellectual growth.
- D. To make programs reasonably accessible to academically qualified citizens of the state.
- E. To utilize the state's and the institutions' resources effectively and efficiently.

3.4.2 Definitions

The following words and terms, when used in the Chapter, shall have the following meaning, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

“Course of Study” is a sequentially organized series of educational experiences designed to culminate in the awarding of an academic degree or certificate. For the purpose of this policy, instructional programs and courses of study will be considered synonymous.

“Program” is a sequentially organized series of courses and other educational experiences designed to culminate in an academic degree or certificate. For purposes of this policy, instructional program, academic program, and course of study will be considered synonymous.

3.4.3 Addition, Modification, and Deletion of Instructional Programs

The addition, modification, and deletion of instructional programs requires State Regents' approval of any program of instruction that results in a certificate or degree, and any designated pattern of courses within an existing major including a new option, specialization and concentration that will be identified on the transcript, diploma, or degree. Minors defined as a coherent set of courses in a discipline or interdisciplinary grouping other than a student's degree program, will be exempted for purposes of this policy.

The terminology for the aggregation of courses into different levels of academic offerings varies from institution to institution. Within the State System, no consistent or uniform use of the terms "major," "option," "emphasis," or "degree" exists. In the interest of clarity, this policy will use the following terminology in referring to different levels of aggregation levels of courses.

A. Level I

Aggregations of courses referenced in State Regents' policy. These are (inclusive): Certificate, Associate in Arts, Associate in Science, Associate in Applied Science, Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of (Specialty), Master of Arts, Master of Science, Master of (Specialty), Doctor of Philosophy, Doctor of (Specialty), and First Professional Degree.

B. Level II

Aggregations of courses that appear in the institutional catalog or on the student's diploma. These vary greatly from institution to institution and include (not inclusive): Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Fine Arts, Bachelor of Recreation, Master of Education, Associate in Applied Science in General Technology, and Doctor of Engineering.

C. Level III

Aggregations of courses with an institutional-unique instructional program code, as listed in the State Regents' inventory of degree programs. The nomenclature includes the discipline area. Examples include: Bachelor of Arts in English, Associate in Science in Physical Science, Master of Education in Secondary Education, and Doctor of Philosophy in Engineering.

D. Level IV

Aggregations of courses under an umbrella degree program (Level III) that reflect subsets of the larger discipline and will usually share a common core (approximately 50 percent) of course requirements, as well as having objectives consistent with the objectives of the Level III program. For example, a Level III Bachelor of Business Administration degree program might have the following Level IV courses of study: Finance, Management, Accounting, Information Systems, and General; or the Bachelor of Arts in English might allow concentrations in Literature, Creative Writing, and English Education.

All four levels of courses of study require State Regents' approval. Substantive changes in programs, including deletion, require approval of the State Regents. Nonsubstantive changes may be approved by the chief academic officer of the institution, but must be reported to the State Regents in a timely manner.

3.4.4 Addition, Modification, and Deletion of Courses

The State Regents recognize the primary role of the institution in initiating, reviewing, and authorizing course additions, modifications, and deletions. These course changes are subject to all other applicable State Regents' policies including the institutional function and program approval policies. The institutions are to exercise this authority in the spirit of Academic Planning and Resource Allocation (APRA) and are to avoid course proliferation and de facto program expansion.

Upon request, institutions will submit current listings of courses offered.

3.4.5 Uniform Course Numbering

In order to provide for a more effective and efficient system of the transfer of student's credits among institutions of Oklahoma higher education, the State Regents adopted the following uniform system of numbering for identification of courses offered at all institutions in the State System.

A course number will consist of four digits as follows:

- A. The first digit will denote the course level.
- B. The second and third digits will be used to identify the course within a department.
- C. The fourth digit will denote the number of semester hours credit of the course.

All courses offered at institutions should be numbered consistent with the course numbering system.

3.4.6 Criteria for Evaluation

A. Centrality of the Proposed Program to the Institution's Mission

A program should adhere to the role and scope of the institution as set forth in its mission statement and as complemented by the institution's academic plan. The institution should list the objectives of the proposed program and explain how the proposed program relates to the institutional mission and academic plan. An evaluation will be made as to the centrality of the program to the institution's mission.

B. Curriculum

The curriculum should be structured to meet the stated objectives of the program, and the institution must explain how the curriculum achieves the objectives of the program by describing the relationship between the overall curriculum or the major curricular components and the program objectives. The proposed program must meet the State Regents' minimum curricular standards including the total credit hour requirements for program completion, liberal arts and sciences, general education, and area of specialization credit hour requirements. The curriculum should be compatible with accreditation or certification standards, where available. Any clinical, practicum, field work, thesis, or dissertation requirements should be included in the proposal. Where appropriate, the proposal will also include a description of how technology is used to accomplish educational objectives.

Where appropriate, the proposal must describe how the proposed program will articulate with related programs in the state. It should describe the extent to which student transfer has been explored and coordinated with other institutions.

C. Academic Standards

The admission, retention, and graduation standards should be clearly stated, must be equal to or higher than the State Regents' policy requirements, and should be designed to encourage high quality.

D. Faculty

Faculty resources will be demonstrated to be adequate and appropriate for the proposed program, given the institution's mission and the character of the program to be developed. The number of faculty will meet external standards where appropriate. The qualifications of faculty will support the objectives and curriculum of the proposed program. Faculty qualifications such as educational background, non-collegiate and collegiate experience, and research and service interests and contributions which relate to the proposed program will be summarized. The institution must demonstrate that core

programmatic faculty possess the academic and research credentials appropriate to support the program.

E. Support Resources

Access to qualitative and quantitative library resources must be appropriate for the proposed program, given the institution's mission and the character of the program, and should meet recognized standards for study at a particular level or in a particular field where such standards are available.

Books, periodicals, microfilms, microfiche, monographs, and other collections will be sufficient in number, quality, and currency to serve the program. Adequacy of electronic access, library facilities, and human resources to service the proposed program in terms of students and faculty will be considered.

The integration of instructional technology in the program's delivery is often appropriate for further engaging the student as an active learner and enhancing the overall learning experience. Access to global sources of information as well as to other students and faculty through computing networks has become an important learning tool for all students, regardless of program. Where appropriate, the proposal will include a description of how instructional and information technology resources are incorporated into this program.

Physical facilities and instructional equipment must be adequate to support a high quality program. The proposal must address the availability of classroom, laboratory, and office space as well as any equipment needs.

F. Demand for the Program

Proposed programs must respond to the needs of the larger economic and social environment. Thus, the institution should demonstrate demand for the proposed program.

1. Student Demand

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

2. Employer Demand

Evidence of sufficient employer demand, normally in the form of anticipated openings in an appropriate service area in relation to existing production of graduates for that area should be provided. Such evidence may include employer surveys, current labor market analyses, and future manpower projections. Where appropriate, evidence should demonstrate employers' preferences 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.

G. Complement Existing Programs

The proposed program should complement and strengthen existing programs at the institution. Existing programs can be strengthened and enriched when appropriate new courses and degree programs are added to the curriculum. It is preferable that a proposed program be based on the existing strengths of the institution rather than be composed entirely of new courses. An interdependence among degree programs helps to strengthen and broaden the educational base of the institution.

H. Unnecessary Duplication

The prevention and elimination of unnecessary program duplication is a high priority of the State Regents. Where other similar programs may serve the same potential student population, evidence must demonstrate that the proposed program is sufficiently different from the existing programs or that access to the existing programs is sufficiently limited to warrant initiation of a new program. Where appropriate, technology will be used to reduce or eliminate duplication of effort and utilize existing resources more efficiently.

Normally, proposed programs in undergraduate core areas consisting of basic liberal arts and sciences disciplines would not be considered unnecessarily duplicative. Unnecessary duplication is a more specific concern in vocational/technical, occupational, and graduate and professional programs which meet special manpower needs. The institution submitting the proposal has the responsibility to provide evidence that the proposed program is not unnecessarily duplicative of similar offerings in the state.

In considering a program whose title or content implies duplication, the proposed program will be examined to determine the extent to which it duplicates existing programs. If duplication is found to exist, then the proposed program will be evaluated to determine whether the duplication is unnecessary. In making this determination, the following criteria will be evaluated:

1. Demand for the Program

Evidence should be presented demonstrating that there is sufficient unmet demand for the program in one or more of the following areas to justify duplication:

a. Student Demand

Present evidence demonstrating student demand for the program and the extent to which that demand is not being adequately met by existing programs.

b. Employer Demand

Present evidence demonstrating demand from employers for graduates of this program and the degree to which that demand is not being adequately met by existing programs.

c. Demand for Services or Intellectual Property of the Program

Present evidence demonstrating the demand for the services (e.g., contracts, consulting, or community service) or the intellectual property (e.g., inventions and creative works) that would be produced by the students and faculty of the program and the degree to which this demand is not being adequately met by existing programs.

2. Alternative Forms of Delivery and Consortial or Joint Programs

The proposal should address the feasibility of meeting the demand for the program through alternative forms of delivery, including electronic and on-site delivery of the program. When duplication is evident, the proposal should address the feasibility of joint or consortial approaches, including through electronic means, or program delivery in order to improve quality and more effectively utilize resources.

I. Cost and Funding of the Proposed Program

The resource requirements and planned sources of funding of the proposed program must be detailed in order to assess the adequacy of the resources to support a quality program. This assessment is to ensure that the program will be efficient in its resource utilization and to assess the impact of this proposed program on the institution's overall need for funds.

Proposed programs may be financially supported in several ways. Institutions must provide evidence of adequate funding which may include, but not be limited to:

1. Reallocation of Existing Resources

The institution must provide evidence of campus funds to be reallocated to the proposed program. The source and process of reallocation must be specifically detailed. An analysis of the impact of the reduction on existing programs and/or organization units must be presented.

2. Tuition and Fees from Students New to the Institution

The institution must provide evidence of a projected increase in total student enrollments to the campus.

3. Discontinuance or Downsizing of an Existing Program or Organizational Unit

The institution must provide adequate documentation to demonstrate sufficient savings to the state to offset new costs and justify approval for the proposed program.

J. Program Review and Assessment

The institution must set forth program evaluation procedures for the proposed program. These procedures may include evaluation of courses and faculty by students, administrators, and departmental personnel as appropriate. Plans to implement program review and program outcomes level student assessment requirements as established by State Regents' policies should be detailed. Program review procedures will include standards and guidelines for the assessment of student outcomes implied by the program objectives and consistent with the institutional mission.

3.4.7 Program Request Procedures

The following procedures will be followed by the submitting institution and the State Regents for the consideration of a new academic program:

A. Academic Plan

Demonstrate consistency with institution's academic plan.

B. Letter of Intent

Institutional president must submit a "letter of intent" to initiate a new program to the Chancellor. The Chancellor will then inform the other institutional presidents of this request and provide the opportunity for comment, questions and protests, as well as, requests for copies of the proposals when received. The "letter of intent" does not entail a commitment on the part of an institution to establish the program or on the part of the State Regents to approve the program. The "letter of intent" will be active for a period of one year and must be received by the Chancellor at least 30 days prior to the new program request. The institution's program request must be received during the one-year time period following the receipt of the intent letter, or a new "letter of intent" must be initiated.

C. Submission of a New Program Request

Upon the Chancellor's receipt of the New Program Request from an institution, copies of the New Program Request will be provided to institutions that have asked for a copy. Institutions will have 30 days from the date the copy is sent to provide comment, submit questions, or protest the proposed program.

D. Content of the New Program Request Submission

The submission will include a description of the Institution's Program Development Process, and will individually address each of the nine criteria for evaluation detailed the Criteria for Evaluation of this policy with supporting data provided as appropriate.

E. Governing Board Approval

The institutional governing board must approve the program request prior to the institutional president formally submitting the request to the Chancellor for the State Regents' consideration.

F. State System Staff Review of the Program Request

The process of the State System staff review is outlined in the Academic Affairs Procedures Handbook. Following, the Chancellor will submit a recommendation to the State Regents. The State Regents may take one of four actions:

1. disapprove the program with a written explanation to the institution of the reasons for this action;
2. defer the program request until the institution meets specified criteria or provides additional information;
3. provisionally approve the program which will include a specified period of time for the program's operation with certain criteria developed in cooperation with the institution to be met if the program is to continue beyond the specified date; or
4. approve the program without qualification.

Should an institution's request for a program be provisionally approved by the State Regents for a specified time period, there will be a window of one year to initiate the program without the year counting toward the provisional time period.

Should the State Regents defer or disapprove the program, the institution will have the opportunity to appeal directly to the State Regents.

Detailed procedures for program requests and reviews are in the State Regents' Academic Affairs Procedures Handbook and are available upon request.

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