03.02.99.R0.01   Academic Approval Procedure for Programs

Approved September 1, 1996
Revised October 2002
Revised October 18, 2011
Revised September 4, 2012
Revised August 17, 2015
Revised February 28, 2020
Next Scheduled Review: February 28, 2025

Procedure Summary

Texas A&M University-Commerce maintains approval processes for new program development, program delivery and curriculum changes that affect program content. All actions are to be in accordance with various rules and/or procedures of the appropriate university bodies, The Texas A&M University System, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

This procedure describes the University's institution-wide processes for modifications to existing degree programs and the development of new degree program proposals. It establishes the processes that must be followed in order to be within the guidelines and standards set by the University and external accreditation bodies. How the procedure is implemented is dependent upon the degree of modification being made or the type of degree being proposed. This procedure addresses when internal approvals are required and to what degree and when external approvals and/or notifications are required depending on the type of request being made. For course related changes see University Procedure *03.03.99.R0.04 Academic Approval for Courses*.

The University maintains an online electronic approval process that will mirror this process. Electronic signatures will be utilized in the system except where wet signatures are required as described in this procedure.

Procedures and Responsibilities

1   GENERAL

1.1 The faculty, with support of the administration, is responsible for the development, implementation and monitoring of academic programs. In developing academic programs and making changes to the curriculum, the University will follow standards of good practice and the guidelines established by this procedure, the A&M System, THECB and SACSCOC. The University will avoid the unwarranted proliferation of degree programs.

1.2 The required A&M System forms must be completed in order to propose new programs, program changes, or program expansion. Because the A&M System regulations and required forms are changed from time-to-time, the most current forms available on the A&M System website should be used. Also, the required paperwork varies, depending on the level of the degree (i.e., bachelors, masters or doctoral); the field (engineering or non-engineering); and the projected cost (whether or not it exceeds $2 million dollars).

1.3 The role of each approving body in this process is as follows:

1.3.1 The Department Curriculum Committee reviews program proposals for curriculum alignment, available prerequisites, course types, and appropriate delivery method. The committee should also check for grammar, spelling, and clarity of the proposal before approving to the next level.

1.3.2 The Department Head reviews program proposals for any impact on required semester credit hours, alignment of the program with any specialized accreditation, and adherence with THECB and/or SACSCOC requirements for review or notification. In addition, the Department Head should consider whether the program proposal is in line with the department's mission and that the department has the capacity to accommodate the proposal.

1.3.3 The College Curriculum Committee reviews the department's adherence to the procedure, assesses whether the program proposal is in line with the college's mission and goals, and examines the proposal's clarity.

1.3.4 As applicable, the Educator Certification Committee ensures that program changes comply with Texas Education Agency policy and Texas Administrative Code related to educator preparation and certification.

1.3.5 The Dean of the College ensures the program proposal is in line with the college's academic mission and that the college has the capacity to accommodate the program proposal.

1.3.6 Provost/Deans' Council reviews the program proposal considering the institutional impact and the University's capacity to accommodate the program proposal. The Provost determines whether the program proposal adheres to the academic mission and goals of the institution.

1.3.7 Institutional Effectiveness reviews the program proposal for compliance with A&M System, THECB, and SACSCOC rules, as applicable.

1.3.8   As applicable, Graduate Council reviews the proposal to ensure the proposal aligns with current Graduate School procedures. This should also involve a review of the proposal in light of the academic mission and goals of the Graduate School.

1.3.9   As applicable, the Academic Department Heads Council reviews the proposal for its possible effects on existing undergraduate program. This should include a review of the proposal to eliminate duplications and suggest efficiencies.

1.3.10   President's Office submits the required notification to applicable external bodies (A&M System, THECB, and SACSCOC, as applicable).

1.3.11   Faculty Senate ensures the entities involved have complied with all steps of this procedure.

1.4   The University will proceed with changes only after careful review and approval by the appropriate A&M-Commerce faculty and administrative bodies, as well as approval by applicable external bodies (A&M System, THECB, and SACSCOC, as applicable). Faculty Senate approval is required on all new program development and program curricular changes. Graduate Council review and approval is required on all new graduate programs and graduate program curricular changes. For changes that impact an educator certification program, review and approval by the Educator Certification Committee is required.

1.4.1   All colleges must develop an academic approval process that, at a minimum, involves program oversight by its Executive Council.

1.4.2   Schools that report to a College Dean will follow the departmental process. Schools that report to the Provost will follow the departmental and college process combined in accordance with their school curriculum approval process.

2   TYPES OF PROGRAM PROPOSAL REQUESTS

In all regards, the primary responsibility for the quality of the educational program resides with the faculty. The University will proceed with marketing and implementation of new programs or expansion of existing programs only after careful review and approval by the appropriate A&M-Commerce faculty and administrative bodies, as well as approval by applicable external bodies (A&M System, THECB, and SACSCOC).

Requests include, but are not limited to, the following:

2.1   New degree program requests (including bachelors, masters, specialist, doctoral);

2.1.1   See the A&M System Office of Academic Affairs Agenda Item Submission Calendar for submission dates.

2.1.2   Prior to submitting a new program proposal to the A&M System and 60 days before the request is submitted to THECB, Institutional Effectiveness shall notify all public and/or private institutions within 50 miles of the teaching site of its intention to offer the program. Thirty days must be allowed for area institutions to submit their objections to the plan to offer the program.

2.1.3 If no objections are received within the 30 day period, THECB will review the proposal within 45-60 days of receipt of the proposal.

2.1.4 New engineering or doctoral programs, as well as programs that do not meet the under $ 2 million cost criteria, require a more in-depth review process (See § 3.1.5).

2.2 New stand-alone minors which might require SACSCOC approval;

Proposed minors requiring the development of new courses in a content area or at a level not associated with an existing, approved degree program may constitute a substantive change requiring approval from SACSCOC.

2.3 New certificate programs;

Proposed undergraduate certificate programs over 20 semester credit hours and graduate certificate programs over 15 semester credit hours require approval by THECB. If the certificate program requires the development of new courses in a content area or at a level not associated with an existing, approved degree program, the certificate may constitute a substantive change requiring approval from SACSCOC. If the certificate program exceeds the THECB semester credit hour thresholds, area notification is required 60 days prior to the proposal being submitted to THECB. The Provost's Office shall notify all public institutions within 50 miles of the teaching site of its intention to offer the program. Thirty days must be allowed for area institutions to submit their objections to the plan to offer the certificate program.

2.4 New competency-based programs or the conversion of an existing program to a competency-based format;

2.5 Expansion of authority of existing programs (offering 50% or more of a degree program by distance education) includes, but is not limited to:

2.5.1 Face-to-face instruction at an approved existing or a new off-site location;

2.5.2 Technology-based instruction (TTVN); or

2.5.3 Online delivery; or

2.5.4 A combination of any of the above.

2.5.5 If the request is an expansion to an off-site teaching location, THECB requires that 30 days prior to submitting the request to THECB, Institutional Effectiveness shall notify all public institutions within 50 miles of the teaching site of its intention to offer the program. Thirty days must be allowed for area institutions to submit their objections to the plan to offer the program.

2.6 Administrative changes to existing programs, substantive and non-substantive (any one or combination of the following):

2.6.1 Change to program title;

2.6.2 Change to CIP code;

2.6.3 Degree type change (e.g. addition of a BA or deletion of a MS, etc.);

2.6.4 Change to a program's minimum semester credit hours requirement.

3 PROGRAM APPROVAL PROCESS (Appendices A,B, & C)

3.1 Internal Process Overview:

3.1.1 See the Academic Calendars for submission dates.

3.1.2 Program proposals require departmental, college, Institutional Effectiveness, Faculty Senate, and Provost/Deans' Council approvals.

3.1.3 Graduate Council must approve changes to graduate programs and new graduate certificates involving more than 15 hours of graduate credit hours.

3.1.4 Academic Department Heads Council must approve changes to undergraduate programs and new undergraduate certificates involving more than 20 hours of undergraduate credit hours.

3.1.5 Each entity in the approval process may reject the proposal; send the proposal back for revision, clarification, or modification; or approve the proposal.

3.1.6 When proposing a new engineering degree program, a doctoral program, or when a proposed program has costs that exceed $2 million, the following process must be followed:

3.1.6.1 A Preliminary Authority Request Form must be completed and submitted. (See Appendix C)

3.1.6.2 The Department Head submits the Preliminary Authority Request Form to the applicable College Dean for review.

3.1.6.3 If approved by the College Dean, the form is then submitted to the Provost's Office for presentation and review by Deans' Council.

3.1.6.4 If approved, the appropriate faculty member works with Institutional Effectiveness to prepare the required notification to A&M System, THECB, and SACSCOC, as applicable.

3.1.6.5 Institutional Effectiveness will work with the Provost's Office to prepare all material for submission for necessary approvals.

3.1.6.6 President's Office to submit the required notification to A&M System, THECB, and SACSCOC, as applicable.

3.2 Internal program approval will proceed in the following order.

    3.2.1 Department:

        3.2.1.1 The department faculty member, working with the Department Head and College Dean, will request permission from the Provost to proceed with the planned program development, modification or expansion.

        3.2.1.2 Once Provost permission is received, the department faculty member completes the necessary electronic form and the required A&M System forms, if applicable.

        3.2.1.3 Approved by Department Curriculum Committee.

        3.2.1.4 Approved by Department Head.

    3.2.2 Institutional Effectiveness reviews the program proposal to determine any applicable external approvals (A&M System, THECB and SACSCOC) and works with the department to complete the necessary documentation.

    3.2.3 College

        3.2.3.1 Approved by College Curriculum Committee.

        3.2.3.2 Approved by College Executive Committee.

        3.2.3.3 Approved by College Dean.

    3.2.4 The Educator Certification Committee is notified of any changes that may impact an educator certification program. The Educator Certification Committee ensures that program changes comply with Texas Education Agency policy and Texas Administrative Code related to educator preparation and certification.

    3.2.5 Graduate Council (graduate level proposals only) or Academic Department Heads Council (undergraduate level proposals only).

    3.2.6 Faculty Senate.

    3.2.7 Provost/Deans' Council.

    3.2.8 Institutional Effectiveness.

    3.2.9 Provost's Office, Institutional Effectiveness, Registrar's Office, and affected College Dean(s) and Department Head(s) are notified of approval progress.

    3.2.10 Institutional Effectiveness coordinates submission of all internally approved program proposals to the applicable external approving bodies.

3.2.11 Each entity in the approval process may reject the proposal; send the proposal back for revision, clarification, or modification; or approve the proposal.

3.3 External approval overview:

3.3.1 Program proposals requiring external approval should be submitted well in advance of the intended implementation date, as the approval process takes some time (at least 6 months for System and THECB approval and up to 1 ½ years for SACSCOC approval).

3.3.2 Program proposals always require department, college, Provost/Deans' Council, Institutional Effectiveness, and Faculty Senate approval before submission for external approval.

3.3.3 Graduate Council must approve expansion or changes to graduate programs and proposals for new graduate programs and certificates involving more than 15 hours of graduate credit hours.

3.3.4 Academic Department Heads Council must approve expansion or changes to undergraduate programs and proposals for new undergraduate programs and certificates involving more than 20 hours of undergraduate credit hours.

3.4 External submission process:

3.4.1 Once all program proposals have received the internal approvals, Institutional Effectiveness will organize the required proposal documentation needed for external approval and work with the Provost's Office and the President's Office in obtaining required signatures. Upon determination, the documentation is ready for external submission. The President's Office will submit the proposal to the A&M System.

3.4.2 The proposal documents will be submitted for review and approval to the following external authorizing bodies, as applicable:

3.4.2.1 A&M System Office of Academic Affairs;

3.4.2.2 Board of Regents of The Texas A&M University System;

3.4.2.3 THECB;

3.4.2.4 SACSCOC;

3.4.2.5 Other external review/approval accreditation bodies.

3.4.3 Following A&M System, THECB, and SACSCOC approvals (as applicable), program additions or changes will be incorporated into the degree audit information and into the following academic year's undergraduate catalog and/or graduate catalog, if timing allows.

3.4.4 Program changes shall not be marketed or implemented until confirmation that all requisite approvals have been received.

4   REQUESTS NOT REQUIRING EXTERNAL APPROVAL

Types of changes that do not require external approval include, but are not limited to, the following:

4.1 Modification of an academic plan that involves creating a track(s), a specialization, a major, an emphasis, etc.

4.2 Implementation of an upper level undergraduate certificate program requiring 20 semester credit hours or less which does not represent a significant departure.

4.3 Implementation of a graduate certificate program requiring 15 semester credit hours or less which does not represent a significant departure.

5   ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGE PROPOSALS (Appendix D)

5.1 Overview:

5.1.1 Certain requests do not require routing through the electronic approval process, but still require limited internal and external approval.

5.1.2 Administrative requests include, but are not limited to, the following:

5.1.2.1 Cooperative agreements, including but not limited to, dual and joint degrees;

5.1.2.2 Renaming of colleges, schools or departments;

5.1.2.3 Modification to existing academic units;

5.1.2.4 Move of programs or departments to different academic units;

5.1.2.5 Creation of new academic units (e.g. department, college, school); and/or

5.1.2.6 Request for a change in the Table of Programs needed when the instructional discipline area requested is not approved by the THECB as being within the institution's mission (doctoral programs only).

5.2 Submission process:

5.2.1 Administrative changes must be recommended by the Provost's Office before any request for change can proceed.

5.2.2 Upon the Provost's recommendation, the required A&M System forms are completed and submitted for approval as follows:

5.2.2.1 Faculty Senate;

5.2.2.2 Graduate Council (as applicable);

5.2.2.3 Provost/Deans' Council;

5.2.2.4 Institutional Effectiveness.

5.2.3 Each entity in the approval process may reject the proposal; send the proposal back for revision, clarification, or modification; or approve the proposal.

5.2.4 Once approved, the documentation is provided to the President for review and signing.

5.2.5 After the required forms are approved and signed by the President, the appropriate documents will be submitted for review and approval to the following external authorizing bodies, as applicable:

5.2.5.1 A&M System Office of Academic Affairs;

5.2.5.2 Board of Regents of The Texas A&M University System;

5.2.5.3 THECB;

5.2.5.4 SACSCOC;

5.2.5.5 Other external review/approval accreditation bodies.

5.2.6 Following A&M System, THECB, and SACSCOC approval (as applicable), administrative changes will be incorporated into the degree audit information and into the following academic year's undergraduate catalog and/or graduate catalog, if timing allows.

5.2.7 No administrative change or academic agreements or association shall be marketed or implemented until confirmation that all requisite approvals have been received.

Related Statutes, Policies, or Requirements

System Policy *03.02 Policies for the Establishment and Revision of Mission Statements and Tables of Programs*

System Regulation *03.02.02 Approval Procedures for Degree Programs, Administrative Changes, Etc.*

System Academic Affairs Program/Administrative Approval

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Rules

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges Policies and Publications

Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions Policy Statement

University Procedure *03.02.99.R0.03 Programmatic and Administrative Substantive Changes Approval Process*

University Procedure *03.02.99.R0.04 Academic Approval Procedure for Courses*

Appendix

Appendix A *Preliminary Authority Request*

Appendix B *Program Approval Process*

Appendix C *Preliminary Program Request Form*

Appendix D *Administrative Change Proposal*

Contact Office

Office of the Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs
903.886.5410

Preliminary Authority Request

Department submits PAR for new engineering, new doctoral, or any new program > $2 million in cost

↓

College Dean

↓

Deans' Council / Provost

↓

Institutional Effectiveness working with the Provost's Office for submission to applicable external bodies by the President's Office

↓

Notification to Board of Regents, THECB, and SACSCOC → Department submits full proposal upon approval of PAR

Program Approval Process

Program change initiated by Department faculty

If no PAR required 1 →

In consultation with department head, college dean →

Permission to proceed from Provost

PAR Approved ↓

Department approval process
Ed Cert Committee notified if req'd; Institutional Effectiveness notified if external approvals required →

College approval process →

Graduate Council; Academic Department Heads Council (as applicable)

Institutional Effectiveness ← Deans' Council/ Provost ← Faculty Senate

Notifications
- Provost's Office
- Institutional Effectiveness
- Registrar's Office,
- Affected College Dean(s) and Department Head(s)

Institutional Effectiveness working with the Provost's Office for submission to applicable external bodies by the President's Office

PRELIMINARY PROGRAM REQUEST FOR NEW AND EXPANDED PROGRAMS

Proposed (name of degree/B.S., M.Ed., etc.) with a major in (include CIP code)

GENERAL INFORMATION AND PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

College: Department
Degree program name & proposed CIP code:

Program Description Abstract: Describe the new program or program change, date of implementation, targeted student population, projected life of the program, instructional delivery methods, off or on campus, percent offered online.

Projected headcount & SCH enrollment (Years 1-3): Delivery mode/site:
Proposed implementation date:

Total Recurring & Non-Recurring budget required (Years 1-3):

JUSTIFICATION & RATIONALE FOR PROGRAM

Provide a clear statement of the nature and purpose of the program or change in the context of the institutional mission and strategic plan goals. Include evidence of participation of relevant faculty and other groups in the program proposal development.

ELEMENTS OF THE PROPOSAL

Before establishing a new academic program or initiating a substantive change as outlined above, a proposal must be submitted to the Office of the Provost for review and approval of its administrative and financial feasibility. Each proposal must include information regarding each of the following elements with content tailored as necessary depending on the nature of the request:

1.1. **Needs Assessment**

Describe the program or change, description of primary target audience, and employment opportunities in the service area of A&M-Commerce. Letters of support from the community and business leaders should be attached as supporting documentation.

Employment Opportunities (include data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and Texas Workforce Commission) *(state, regional, national, as applicable; include URL references if applicable)*

1.1.1 A demonstrated need for the proposed program or change in terms of present and future needs
      of the component, institution, region and state (depending on the nature of the request);

1.1.2. Description of how the proposed program or change would complement and strengthen existing programs or structures within the component and across the university'

1.1.3 *If* a proposed program for a new degree program represents a duplication of a similar program within the region and state, a rationale for its need;   Are there similar programs in the state? How close are they to A&M-Commerce? What are their enrollments, graduates, and experience with placement of graduates? Describe faculty teaching in these programs in terms of numbers and qualifications.

1.1.4 Demonstrated student demand for the proposed new program or change to an existing program (including offering an existing program to a new location or through a new modality) and the likelihood of a sufficient critical mass of qualified applicants; and,

1.1.5 Projected Enrollment & Graduates for years 1-5 (include only new students, not students transferring from an existing program). Please include assumptions used to support numbers.

	Headcount	SCH	Degrees Awarded	FT	PT
Year 1					
Year 2					
Year 3					
Year 4					
Year 5					

1.1.6 Critical mass of qualified faculty and staff to be available to support a high quality program. If the request is for a new doctoral program, the following must be addressed as well.
   a. A demonstrated regional, state or national unmet need for doctoral graduates in the field;
   b. Evidence that existing doctoral programs in Texas cannot accommodate additional students, access to existing programs is limited, or that expanding existing programs is not feasible; and
   c. Evidence of self-sustaining and excellence in the university's master's level program in the field and/or programs in related and supporting areas.

1.2 **Program Description**

What are the student learning goals of the program and how will they be assessed during the initial program implementation and subsequently? Please describe in detail procedures for systematic evaluation of instructional results, including the process to monitor and evaluate programs and how results are used to improve institutional programs. For online or compressed programs, describe the methods for determining that levels of knowledge and competencies are comparable to those required in traditional formats and on campus have been achieved.

1.2.1 educational objectives (student learning outcomes);
1.2.2 assessment strategies to be used of student learning outcomes;
1.2.3 admission standards;
1.2.4 certificate or degree requirements;
1.2.5 mode of course delivery and primary location of the faculty and students involved;
1.2.6 effect on existing programs in the component; and
1.2.7 program administration.

1.3 **Governance** Information must address how the proposed academic program will fit within the organizational structure of the university, the point of contact and responsibility for oversight and management of the proposed program.

1.4 **Resources**

    1.4.1 Faculty Qualifications & Need Indicate the faculty coordinator for this program. Include a roster of faculty proposed to teach in the program, and their credentials using the A&M-Commerce faculty credentialing template.

    1.4.2 resources needed for the new program start-up or other proposed substantive change (e.g., administrative infrastructure, faculty and staff, facilities, equipment, library and related information technology);

    1.4.3 information technologies and classroom support necessary to implement the proposed program or substantive change;

    1.4.4 future expectations of financial support; and

    1.4.5 plan for self-sufficiency;

    1.4.6 A table summarizing the projected five-year costs and potential sources of funds must be included covering the following items:

Faculty. Indicate the number of new faculty who will be needed and include a detailed description of the percent of time existing faculty will be reallocated to this program. Include the number and names where appropriate of core & support faculty, qualifications which will be required, planned additions, etc.

Other Personnel
(clerical, other support staff)

Graduate Assistants
(reference needs if applicable to program)

Supplies, Materials

Library (send request to the director of James Gee Library) Equipment, Facilities

Clinical/Internship Sites
(include overview or detail as applicable)

Accreditation
(institution's intention)

Educator Certification Program
Rated 'Accredited' by the State Board of Educator Certification

COSTS & FUNDING SOURCES

RECURRING COSTS	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5		REVENUE	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Full Time HC Faculty (Excluding Benefits) HC/$							Projected State Revenue					
Adjunct Faculty $							Other State Funding					
Administrative Support HC							Internal Reallocation* Describe in the narrative					
Administrative Support							Other					
Graduate Assistants												
Supplies & Materials												
Library Resources												
IT Resources												
Facilities (include new space needed, projected rent, etc.)												
Equipment (please describe)												
Total Recurring Costs												
NON-Recurring/ Start Up Costs												
Total Projected Costs							**Total Projected Revenues**					

PRELIMINARY APPROVAL REQUIRED SIGNATURES

(Approvals to be simultaneous)
(Please Sign, Date, and Return to the Office of the Provost)

_____   _____
Department Head   Date

_____   _____
Academic Dean   Date

_____   _____
Faculty Senate Curriculum Chair   Date

_____   _____
Faculty Senate President   Date

_____   _____
Vice President for Business   Date

_____   _____
Provost Approval (with Deans Council affirmation) Date

The president of the institution is required to certify that the institution will have funds sufficient to support the proposed program and is committing more than 50 percent of the funds from existing fund sources towards the projected costs over the first five years.

_____   _____
President   Date

Administrative Change Proposal

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┌─────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────┐
│  Permission to  │─────▶│     Faculty     │─────▶│    Graduate     │
│  proceed from   │      │     Senate      │      │    Council      │
│     Provost     │      │                 │      │ (if applicable) │
└─────────────────┘      └─────────────────┘      └─────────────────┘
                                                           │
                                                           ▼
         ┌─────────────────┐                      ┌─────────────────┐
         │  Institutional  │                      │     Deans'      │
         │  Effectiveness  │◀─────────────────────│    Council /    │
         │                 │                      │     Provost     │
         └─────────────────┘                      └─────────────────┘
                  │
                  ▼
         ┌─────────────────────────┐
         │ Institutional Effectiveness
         │ working with the Provost's
         │ Office for submission to
         │ applicable external bodies by
         │ the President's Office
         └─────────────────────────┘
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