

1. Title

Academic Program Approval Standards

2. Rule and Regulation

Sec. 1 Overarching Principles. The standards used for review and approval of academic program proposals are derived from three overarching principles that guide decisions about program goals, design, and implementation at The University of Texas System institutions. These principles are:

1.1 Mission. New university degree and certificate programs should be consistent with the higher education goals and mission of the State of Texas, The U. T. System, and the offering institution. This principle has implications not only for which programs should be offered by U. T. System institutions, but also for how they are designed and delivered so as to be responsive to the needs of students, parents, and the private and public sectors.

1.2 Quality. U. T. System degree and certificate programs should be of excellent quality. Program design, resources, and implementation plan, judged critically in view of the stated goals for a particular program, should compare favorably with State, national and international standards and competing programs. In general, they should exceed minimum standards of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board or appropriate accrediting bodies.

1.3 Efficient Use of Resources. Academic programs at institutions of the U. T. System should represent good investments and efficient use of public and private resources. Program choice, design, and implementation plans should reflect wise use of institutional and inter-institutional or shared resources.

Sec. 2 Standards. Proposed new academic degree or certificate programs must provide good evidence of meeting the following standards:

2.1 Standards Relating to Goals, Need, Fit

(a) Program goals and educational objectives are clear.

- (b) Connections between proposed program goals and State and U. T. System goals and mission are strong and convincing.
- (c) Program goals advance institutional mission and strategic plan. Program is on the approved Table of Programs.
- (d) Program would meet a well-documented unmet need related to present or future manpower or social needs or regional priorities.
- (e) Program complements and builds upon existing university programs, strengths, and resources.

2.2 Standards for Quality of Implementation

- (a) Design of the degree or certificate program reflects understanding of state-of-the-art in the discipline.
- (b) Resources, including faculty, facilities, special equipment, field placement sites for internships, library and information access, and others as necessary, are adequate to deliver a program of excellent quality, meeting or exceeding Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) standards and those of other professional accrediting bodies where applicable.
- (c) Faculty responsible for program design and delivery have appropriate, relevant content expertise, scholarship records, and other professional experience and credentials.
- (d) New graduate programs are built upon demonstrated competence in related areas at the undergraduate or, where appropriate, master's level.
- (e) Program implementation and delivery plans are responsive to student needs and supportive of student retention and graduation, in light of program goals and resource availability.

- (f) The program proposal includes a plan for periodic program evaluation focusing on the program objectives, productivity, faculty and resources, changes in environment such as competition and delivery modes, student outcomes, retention, and graduation.
- (g) An efficient administration plan for the program is described with clear accountability and appropriate roles for faculty committees and unit administrators.
- (h) Interdisciplinary, cross-departmental, or cross-college programs are supported by administrative reporting structures likely to preserve interdisciplinary cooperation.

2.3 Standards for Costs and Revenues

- (a) Program proposal presents clear, logically consistent estimates of program costs and revenues.
- (b) Prospective student demand adequate for an efficient program is convincingly demonstrated, with specific attention to competing programs, other providers, and other delivery systems.
- (c) Proposal establishes growth potential to generate adequate resources to support program costs from State formula funding sources after the first three years and, where appropriate, from non-State sources.
- (d) Available inter-institutional, shared resources are utilized where appropriate.
- (e) Overall program costs are justifiable in light of potential program benefits and impact.

2.4 Compliance Standard

- (a) Program proposal complies in content and format with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board rules and instructions for program authorization.

2.5 Additional Standards for Doctoral Programs

- (a) There is a sufficient base of sponsored research programs in place to support student and faculty research.
- (b) Proposal presents convincing plans for recruitment of a critical mass of very talented students, carefully screened in accord with the goals of the program.
- (c) Proposed program addresses preparation for graduates' future roles of teaching, research or creative endeavor, and work in nonacademic professional settings as appropriate.
- (d) Appropriate student support is available and/or there is a convincing plan for development of future support.
- (e) Because of the high level of resource requirements for doctoral programs, particularly rigorous attention must be applied to almost all approval standards in this document.

Sec. 3 Approvals.

- 3.1 Executive Vice Chancellor Approval. The Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs or Health Affairs approves (1) nonsubstantive program change requests and (2) substantive certificate, baccalaureate, and master's degree requests from respective general academic or health-related institutions.
- 3.2 Board Approval. Doctoral programs or other substantive proposals not meeting the criteria for approval by the Executive Vice Chancellors for Academic Affairs or Health Affairs must be approved by the Board of Regents' Academic Affairs or Health Affairs Committee and forwarded to the Board of Regents for final approval.
- 3.3 Reporting. The Offices of Academic Affairs and Health Affairs will provide annually to the Board of Regents a list of academic program approvals made by the respective Executive Vice Chancellors.

Sec. 4 Changes in Degree Requirements. Changes in degree requirements shall not become effective until approved by the Board of Regents and published in the appropriate catalog; however, students may be given the benefit of any action reducing or modifying the requirements for their degrees immediately upon Board approval.

3. Definitions

Nonsubstantive Program Change Requests – Generally meet the following criteria: (1) no implications for changes in institutional role and scope, (2) no significant new costs, (3) no issues of unnecessary duplication with programs at other institutions, and (4) potential for high quality programming obvious from institution’s previous experience in the same or closely treated subject field.

Substantive Baccalaureate and Master’s Degree Requests that are Eligible for Staff-level Approval by the Commissioner of Higher Education – Generally meet the following criteria: (1) within the approved Table of Programs, (2) of high quality and meet SACS and other accrediting agency standards, (3) adequate practicum placement sites are available, if applicable, (4) demonstrated student interest and job market need, (5) no program duplication issues, (6) five year cost is less than \$2 million, and (7) no new special item funding would be required.

4. Relevant Federal and State Statutes

None

5. Relevant System Policies, Procedures, and Forms

Regents’ *Rules and Regulations*, [Rule 40311](#) – Graduate Education (Section 7, Milestone Agreement Form)

6. Who Should Know

Administrators
Faculty

7. System Administration Office(s) Responsible for Rule

Office of Academic Affairs
Office of Health Affairs

8. Dates Approved or Amended

July 14, 2006
December 10, 2004

9. Contact Information

Questions or comments regarding this Rule should be directed to:

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