

NUMBER: ACAF 2.00
SECTION: Academic Affairs
SUBJECT: Creation and Revision of Academic Programs
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Policy for: All Campuses
Procedure for: All Campuses
Authorized by: Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost and Vice President for System Planning
Issued by: Office of the Provost

I. Policy

University of South Carolina programs that lead to formal recognition including the awarding of all degrees and certificates must be reviewed and approved at appropriate levels of curriculum responsibility within the university, the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE), and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools/Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

This policy applies to program actions on all campuses including the creation and revision of degrees, majors, minors, undergraduate research tracks, academic certificates and concentrations. Following initial program approval, subsequent curriculum changes and revisions such as changes in program delivery method or delivery location, or changes to the program name or program designator require additional review and approval.

A. Academic Program Development: Responsibility and Oversight

1. System Oversight

The faculty of the university has legislative authority over matters pertaining to the curriculum on the campus where they serve. The Provost's Office oversees the system-wide approval process through the Board of Trustees and CHE, and ensures that ongoing academic program development on the Columbia and regional Palmetto College campuses is in compliance with SACSCOC regulations and in alignment with university strategic goals and priorities.

2. Campus and Unit Oversight

The deans of the colleges and schools on the Columbia campus, the campus deans on the regional Palmetto College campuses, and the chief academic affairs officers on the comprehensive campuses are responsible for implementing this policy and

maintaining unit- and campus-level compliance with CHE and SACSCOC regulations.

Within units, program leadership is responsible for ensuring that programs meet the academic expectations of the university and are assessed annually, including monitoring program offerings using specific delivery methods and/or locations.

3. Academic Program Liaisons (APL)

An Academic Program Liaison (APL) is designated for each college/school on the Columbia campus, for each comprehensive campus, and for the regional Palmetto College campuses. The APLs will serve as the main information resource on academic program actions and as the academic program liaison to the Provost's Office for their respective units. The list of current Academic Program Liaisons can be found at www.sc.edu/provost/acadprog.

Draft documents and notifications may be forwarded to the Provost's Office by the APL, but all formal program actions must be submitted through the [Academic Programs Proposal Systems \(APPS\) website](#), directly by the dean, dean's designee, or chief academic affairs officer.

B. Program Action Approval Process

Required approvals as outlined below may take between six months and two years for full review. Programs cannot advertise or admit students before approval notification has been received from CHE and SACSCOC when appropriate.

1. Initiation of Program Actions

In most cases, program actions will begin in a department or unit of a campus, college or school. After consultation with the APL and receipt of unit-level approval, a pre-authorization request will be submitted to the provost for initial approval (the APL will assist in determining if this is not necessary). All program actions must be approved by the campus, college or school academic affairs officials, and relevant committees as needed, prior to review by the appropriate faculty governance body.

2. Review process for Columbia and regional Palmetto College campuses

a. Faculty Governance Review

- i. Program actions related to baccalaureate majors, undergraduate certificate programs, minors, concentrations and undergraduate research tracks offered on the Columbia campus must be reviewed and approved by the Faculty Senate.

- ii. Program actions related to graduate programs including post-baccalaureate certificates must be reviewed and approved by the Graduate Council.
- iii. Program actions related to first professional degrees must be reviewed and approved by the faculty governance structure in the respective colleges and schools.
- iv. Program actions related to two-year degrees awarded on the regional Palmetto College campuses must be reviewed and approved by the regional Palmetto College campus Faculty Senate.
- v. Cognates and sub-concentrations are approved at the campus, college, or school level only and are not reviewed or approved by any university-level faculty governance structure.
- vi. In order to gain faculty governance approval, all Columbia campus program actions must be submitted through the Academic Programs Proposal System's (APPS) website and be approved by the dean of the responsible campus, college or school. On the regional Palmetto College campuses, program actions related to associate's degrees should be submitted to the regional Palmetto College Faculty Senate. Program actions related to the Columbia-based degree completion programs should be submitted to the Provost's Office through the Palmetto College Office.

b. Administrative Review

The Provost's Office must approve all program actions on the Columbia and regional Palmetto College campuses. In addition, the following reviews are required when applicable.

- i. College of Education: All proposed new programs and program revisions related to P-12 education at the Columbia and regional Palmetto College campuses require approval by the Dean of the College of Education.
- ii. Office of Educational Outreach: All Columbia and regional Palmetto College campus programs offering courses under contract with school districts, other institutions of higher learning, businesses, or other entities require the approval of the Office of Educational Outreach in the College of Education.
- iii. Global Carolina: All Columbia and regional Palmetto College campus programs that are offered on an off-site international location must be reviewed and approved by Global Carolina.

- iv. Palmetto College Office: Program actions that may significantly affect the curriculum offerings at the regional Palmetto College campuses must be brought to the attention of and reviewed by the Palmetto College Office.
- v. President: All new academic programs and program name changes across the entire USC system must be approved by the president.
- vi. Board of Trustees: All new academic programs and program name changes across the entire USC system must be approved by the University Board of Trustees. The Provost's Office is the sole liaison to the University Board of Trustees for all campuses.

c. CHE and SACSCOC Approval

The Provost's Office coordinates the notification and submission of all program actions to CHE and to SACSCOC for the Columbia and regional Palmetto College campuses.

- i. CHE approval is required in the following cases:
 - New degree programs;
 - New academic certificates of any length in a new CIP code;
 - New academic certificates of more than 18 credit hours in a current CIP code;
 - Program revisions of more than 18 credit hours including the addition of one or more program concentrations and CIP code changes;
 - Program revisions of delivery location to off-campus (50% or more of credit hours);
 - Extension of an approved health professions program to additional sites in-state, and
 - Center and institute proposals requesting new or additional state funding.
- ii. CHE notification is required in the following cases:
 - Program revisions of 18 credit hours or less (undergraduate) or 12 credit hours or less (graduate), including the addition of a single program concentration;
 - New academic certificates of 18 credit hours or less in a current CIP code;
 - Consolidation of concentrations within an existing program;
 - Program name changes;
 - Program four-letter designator changes;

- Program terminations;
 - Program revisions of delivery method to distance education delivery (50% or more of credit hours); and
 - Center or institute proposals in which state funding is not required.
- iii. SACSCOC approval is required six months before implementation in the following cases:
- New programs, including new dual or joint degree programs;
 - Program revisions that increase program length by 10%;
 - New academic certificates of any length in any CIP code;
 - Program terminations;
 - Program revisions of delivery location to off-campus (50% or more of credit hours); and
 - Program revisions of delivery method to distance education delivery (50% or more of credit hours).
- iv. SACSCOC notification is required six months before implementation in the following cases:
- Program revisions of delivery location to off-campus (25% to 49% of credit hours);
 - Program name changes.

The program percentages must be based on the total number of credits required to earn the degree, not on the number of required credits in the major, minor or course, or the number of contact hours. SACSCOC may also request more information or additional materials such as a prospectus for any action.

3. Review process for comprehensive campuses

a. Faculty Governance Review

All program actions must be reviewed and approved by the appropriate faculty governance structure on each respective campus.

b. Administrative Review

The comprehensive campus chief academic affairs officer must approve all actions leading to the creation and revision of academic programs. In addition, the following reviews and notifications are required when applicable.

- i. Provost's Office Notification: For USC system record-keeping purposes, the Provost's Office should receive a copy of all formal academic program actions and notifications received by the comprehensive campuses from the Board of Trustees, CHE and SACSCOC.
- ii. President: All new academic programs and program name changes across the entire USC system must be approved by the president.
- iii. Board of Trustees: All new academic programs and program name changes across the entire USC system must be submitted through the Provost's Office for approval by the University Board of Trustees. The Provost's Office is the sole liaison to the University Board of Trustees for all campuses.

c. CHE and SACSCOC Approval

The Provost's Office is the liaison to CHE for the comprehensive campuses in the following cases:

- New degree programs;
- Academic certificates of any length in a new CIP code;
- Academic certificates of more than 18 hours in a current CIP code; and
- Program revisions of more than 18 credit hours, including addition of program concentrations and CIP code changes.

The comprehensive campus chief academic affairs officer serves as the liaison to CHE for all other actions and to SACSCOC in all cases.

Specific CHE and SACSCOC notification and approval regulations are the same throughout the entire system, as outlined in Section I.B.2.c of this policy.

C. Academic Program Definitions

1. Degrees and Other Formal Awards

Formal awards are made by the university at the following levels:

- a. Associate's Degrees: Require a minimum of 60 credit hours beyond high school. May only be awarded by two-year campuses.
- b. Bachelor's Degrees: Require a minimum of 120 credit hours beyond high school. May only be awarded by four-year campuses.
- c. Master's Degrees: Require a minimum of 30 graduate credit hours beyond the bachelor's degree.

- d. Specialist Degrees: Require a minimum of 30 graduate credit hours beyond the master's degree.
- e. Doctoral Degrees: Require a minimum of three years of graduate study and a minimum of 60 graduate credit hours (with a maximum of 12 hours of dissertation preparation) beyond the baccalaureate, or a minimum of 30 graduate credit hours (with a maximum of 12 hours of dissertation preparation) beyond the master's degree.
- f. First Professional Degrees in Law, Medicine, and Pharmacy Typically require three or four years beyond the bachelor's degree or beyond pre-professional coursework.
- g. Academic Certificates
 - i. Undergraduate Certificates
 - Undergraduate academic certificates may not be earned independently on four-year campuses due to state policy governing the types of degrees that may be awarded by these institutions (no degree lower than baccalaureate level).
 - Therefore, new stand-alone undergraduate certificate programs are only permitted on the regional Palmetto College campuses of the USC system, and students are required to be matriculated at the regional Palmetto College campus to complete the coursework and to receive their certificates. Pre-existing undergraduate certificates on the Columbia or comprehensive campuses are allowed to continue only if students are concurrently enrolled in a regular baccalaureate program.
 - Undergraduate Certificates: Require a minimum of 15 credit hours beyond high school.
 - ii. Graduate Certificates: Require a minimum of 12 graduate credit hours either post-baccalaureate or post-master's. Post-baccalaureate certificates require the bachelor's degree for admission, and post-master's certificates require the master's degree.
- h. Dual, Joint and Other Collaborative Degree Programs
 - i. Dual Degrees: Typically require all or most of the requirements for two distinct academic degree programs, and two degrees are awarded.

- ii. Joint Degrees: Typically require all or most of the requirements of two distinct academic degree programs administered by two or more of the university's colleges or schools, or by two or more universities, and a single degree is awarded.
- iii. Other Collaborative Degrees: Programs governed by specific agreements typically involving an articulated transfer of credit from one institution to another for the award of a single or multiple degrees. May also include bridge programs that require non-credit study prior to course work for academic credit.

2. Academic Program

- a. Academic Program: A major-degree combination.
- b. Academic Program Learning Outcomes: Statements that describe, in measurable terms, the knowledge, skills, and/or abilities that students are expected to demonstrate, and that clearly support the mission of the educational program.
- c. Program of Study: A prescribed sequence of learning components comprising an academic program.
 - i. Carolina Core: The common core of knowledge, skill and academic experience for all Carolina undergraduate students.
 - ii. College Requirements: Foundational requirements for all majors within the college.
 - iii. Program Requirements: Requirements specific to an academic program that are not major courses. These may include ---
 - A. Cognate: A series of courses that display a distinct curricular pattern in one or more disciplines different from the major. Undergraduate cognates require a minimum of 12 credit hours in advanced level courses related to, but outside the major. Graduate cognates range between 9 and 18 credit hours. Cognates are variable according to what is appropriate as determined by the student and the major advisor. Thus cognates are not subject to faculty governance review, and do not appear on either the transcripts or the diplomas.
 - B. Minor: A series of courses that display a distinct curricular pattern in one discipline that is different from the major. Undergraduate minors normally require a minimum of 18 credit

hours of prescribed courses. Undergraduate minors are subject to faculty governance review, and appear on the transcripts, but not on the diplomas.

- C. Supporting courses: Courses related to and required in preparation for the major, but are not part of the major requirements.
 - D. Electives: Courses open to student selection or preference that are applicable to the program of study and are counted in the required hours to graduate. Note that these are not major electives..
- iv. Major: A program of study in a discipline that leads to a degree in that distinct specialty area at a particular level of instruction. It includes major courses, major electives, and may also include qualifying exams, one or more concentrations, and a capstone project, thesis, or dissertation.
- A. Major Courses: Specific required courses in the distinct specialty area.
 - B. Major Electives: Specific recommended courses that support the distinct specialty area.
 - C. Concentration: A series of courses that display a distinct curricular pattern within the major. They are often called options, emphases, tracks, areas, fields, or specializations. These are different from minors or cognates which are typically outside of the major. Concentrations are subject to faculty governance review, and appear on the transcripts but not the diplomas.
 - D. Capstone Project, Thesis, or Dissertation: A culminating research experience in the distinct specialty area.

3. Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP)

The university uses the federal taxonomy of disciplines and assigns a six-digit code for each major/program. In the taxonomy, a CIP code is specific to a particular category of instructional program. Most graduate and undergraduate degree programs offered by any one department fall under the same CIP code.

4. Delivery Method

Academic programs may be identified according to the delivery method(s) used in the majority of program courses.

- a. Traditional Instruction: Programs in which the majority of courses are offered in a traditional classroom setting, in which the instructor is face-to-face in the same room at the same time as the students.
- b. Distributed Learning: Programs in which the majority of courses are offered using distributed learning as a primary delivery method. Examples of distributed learning methods include web-based instruction, live video streaming instruction, and/or CD-DVD instruction.
- c. Blended Method of Instruction: Programs may be considered “blended” if more than one method of delivery is used.

5. Delivery Location

Academic programs are also identified and approved based upon the delivery location(s) or site used to offer the total number of required credit hours.

- a. On-campus: Programs offered on the geographic site of the home campus. A program is identified as “on-campus” if 50 percent or more of the program’s credits can be obtained on the home campus.
- b. Off-campus: Programs or parts of programs offered at locations geographically apart from the home campus.
- c. Blended Location of Instruction: Program may be considered “blended” if more than one delivery location is used.

6. Interdisciplinary or InterProfessional Academic Programs

Interdisciplinary or InterProfessional programs are academic programs that bring faculty and students together from various departments, schools and/or colleges for the purpose of scholarly focus on a given subject or subjects. Interdisciplinary or InterProfessional programs may be constituted in conjunction with the creation of degree programs or minors, and may offer undergraduate and/or graduate degrees and certificates.

An Interdisciplinary or Interprofessional program that offers no academic degrees is considered an academic administrative unit, and falls under University Policy ACAF 2.02 Establishment and Modification of Academic Administrative Units.

7. Academic Administrative Units

Academic administrative units at the university include colleges, schools, departments, interdisciplinary or interprofessional programs, centers and institutes. With the exception of centers and institutes, academic administrative units may offer academic programs that lead to formal degrees. For more information, see University Policy ACAF 2.02 Establishment and Modification of Academic Administrative Units.

D. Program Development Guidelines

1. Academic Programs

Proposals for a new undergraduate or graduate program should include, as appropriate, the program objectives, learning outcomes, curriculum requirements, and progression/graduation requirements), consideration of faculty and departmental resources, measurable program demand, impact upon existing programs at the university and across the state, and sources of funding.

2. Undergraduate Minors, Concentrations, or Research Tracks

Proposals for new undergraduate minors, concentrations, or research tracks should include as appropriate the prerequisite requirements, curriculum requirements, consideration of faculty and departmental resources, and measurable program demand. Minors, concentrations, and undergraduate research tracks do not require program objectives, learning outcomes, or graduation requirements, but they may be provided where appropriate.

3. Academic Certificates

a. New academic certificate programs requiring more than 18 hours of credit fall under the same guidelines as new majors. These guidelines also apply to new certificate programs of any length being proposed in a CIP code in which the proposing unit has no degree offerings.

b. New certificate programs requiring 12-18 hours in an existing CIP code require the same initial procedures as new majors, with the exception of sending the proposal to CHE. CHE requires only a New Certificate notification by the Provost's Office, for Columbia and regional Palmetto College campus programs, or by the chief academic affairs officer for comprehensive campus programs.

c. Undergraduate academic certificates may only be offered by the regional Palmetto College campuses of the USC system (see ACAF 2.00 section IC1g).

3. International Academic Programs

International academic and exchange programs are typically established as contractual arrangements between the university and the international site. They are normally governed by a Memorandum of Understanding spelling out the terms of the contract such as the program curricular requirements, eligibility and application procedures, instructors, program duration, logistical arrangements, and transfer of credit.

Detailed procedural instructions are available in University Policies ACAF 2.05 Consortial Academic Contracts and Agreements and ACAF 2.06 International Academic Agreements.

4. Dual, Joint and Other Collaborative Degree Programs

The APLs or chief academic affairs officers in the units seeking to create a joint or dual degree program must collaborate in preparing a joint proposal, following the appropriate guidelines depending on the type of program.

The proposal requires the approval of the faculty and leadership in both or all collaborating programs, and letters of concurrence from all university units in closely related disciplines.

5. Interdisciplinary or InterProfessional Programs

Faculty members of the disciplines seeking to establish an interdisciplinary or interprofessional program must determine the nature of their collaboration, the type(s) of degree program(s) and/or minor they wish to pursue, and division of teaching and administrative responsibilities among program participants. Proposals for new majors, certificates and minors fall under the respective guidelines detailed above. Each instance in which an interdisciplinary or interprofessional program is created, revised, or terminated requires letters of concurrence from all related academic units.

Interdisciplinary or InterProfessional programs without related degree programs are governed by University Policy ACAF 2.02 Establishment and Modification of Academic Administrative Units.

E. University Bulletins

The official University Undergraduate Bulletin and Graduate Bulletin exist in electronic form only.

The online bulletins are frozen on February 15 each year to establish the guidelines and regulations under which each incoming class matriculates. The bulletin becomes the archived bulletin of record for the coming academic year, containing the official language used to describe academic programs at USC. Both the undergraduate and graduate bulletins are maintained by the Office of the Registrar. Changes to the bulletins must be

approved by the appropriate faculty governance bodies. Therefore, the effective date for a program change is the publication date of the next bulletin, after any required Board of Trustees, CHE and SACSCOC approvals and notifications are completed; new programs can be added to the bulletin at any time after the approvals and notifications.

Comprehensive campuses and professional schools on the Columbia campus each have academic bulletins/catalogs subject to the unit-wide faculty governance approval policies of those units.

F. Program Assessment

All academic programs should be developed with program objectives using measurable learning outcomes and expectations. Achievement of these outcomes must be assessed on an annual basis by the individual academic unit as well as by the campus, college or school dean, or chief academic affairs officer. A program assessment project, based on program objectives and learning outcomes housed in the APPS system, is conducted each year by the Office of Institutional Research, Assessment and Analytics for the Columbia campus and regional Palmetto College campuses. Comprehensive campuses conduct their own assessments and maintain separate assessment records.

Academic programs using distributed learning must also regularly assess the extent to which the program has maintained the same level of quality in both the portions of the program delivered traditionally and those employing distributed learning.

G. Program Review

All academic programs are to be reviewed regularly by an external review committee. Regular review should be scheduled at least every ten years. Costs of the review are to be borne by the unit or college/school housing the academic program. The unit housing the academic program is responsible for maintaining documentation on the unit's program review procedures, as well as copies of all external review committee final reports.

Documentation of professional accreditation by a national accrediting agency may be substituted for external review committee reports. If professional accreditation does not extend to all academic degree programs of the accredited unit, the unit or college/school is responsible for scheduling external reviews of the non-accredited programs on the same cycle as the accreditation.

II. Procedure

A. Procedure for Comprehensive campuses

Each comprehensive campus should develop individual campus-based procedures to implement this policy.

B. Procedure for Columbia and Regional Palmetto College campuses

Detailed procedural instructions have been developed regarding all program and curriculum development actions. See www.sc.edu/provost/acadprog.

III. Related Policies

University Policy ACAF 2.01 Establishment and Modification of Centers and Institutes

University Policy ACAF 2.02 Establishment and Modification of Academic Administrative Units

University Policy ACAF 2.03 Creation and Revision of Academic Courses

University Policy ACAF 2.05 Collaborative Academic Agreements

University Policy ACAF 2.06 International Academic Agreements

University Policy ACAF 2.20 Academic Program Review

University Policy ACAF 3.00 Assessment of Student Learning

University Policy ACAF 3.50 Academic Bulletins and Planning Calendar

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IV. Reason for Revision

Policy revised to account for the electronic curricular approval system (APPS), new or changed university procedures, new or changed CHE and SACSCOC regulations, and the development of new related policies.