

2.01.01.00 Approval of Academic Programs, Units, and Modifications



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Policy/Guideline Area

Academic Policies

Applicable Divisions

TCATs, Community Colleges

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish the procedures and processes for the submission and approval of academic action requests for academic programs seeking to be developed and existing programs for institutions governed by the Tennessee Board of Regents.

Policy/Guideline

- I. Introduction
 - A. T.C.A. § 49-8-101 et seq. authorized the establishment of the 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."
 - B. Institutions have the authority to create new courses, 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. Courses approved within the Tennessee Transfer Pathways and approved General Education Requirements may not be amended without the approval of the respective state committees. The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) must review and approve new community college associate degree programs, off-campus extensions of existing academic

programs, new academic units (divisions, colleges, and schools), and new instructional locations as specified in THEC Policy No. A 1:0: New Academic Programs - Approval Process, Attachment A(A1.0), and A1:1: Academic Program Modifications. These THEC policies should serve as a resource for the development of all Letters of Application and New Academic Program Proposal (NAPP).

- C. A Letter of Notification is required from all TBR community colleges for new degree programs or certificates with 24 semester credit hours (SCH) or more and must be submitted to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. Within thirty days of receipt, the institutions will be notified if they are authorized to develop a Letter of Application for the development of a new academic program.
- D. The THEC delegates authority to the TBR to approve Letters of Application and to grant final approval for duplicated community college programs (Associates Degrees and Certificates). Degree programs new to the state for TBR institutions must be approved by THEC. The TBR criteria for review and accountability will follow the THEC standards established by the THEC Policies A1:0: New Academic Programs - Approval Process, and A1:1: New Academic Program Modifications. All TBR community college programs listed on the THEC Inventory of Academic Programs will be subject to Post Approval Monitoring for the first three years after implementation and annual productivity evaluations of programs in operation more than three years. Community colleges will participate in all components of the THEC Performance Funding Quality Assurance Program.

II. Process

- A. Academic Actions That Must Be Taken to the Board
 - 1. 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 high quality academic degree programs.

B. Academic Actions Approved by the Board through Delegated Authority

1. With the exception of new degree programs to the state, duplicated programs and certificates of less than 24 hours and other academic actions may be approved by the Board through delegated authority to the Chancellor.
2. Summaries of these proposed academic actions will be reported monthly or as needed, to the Board, with a 30-day period for Board review.
3. Board members may contact the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs with questions or concerns regarding academic actions and if desired, can require that the action be brought before the full Board at its next quarterly meeting.
4. Institutions shall provide to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs all requests for academic actions related to the following:
 - a. Establishment of any college credit-bearing Certificate which is listed in the academic inventory or that will be included in the institution's Catalog or other recruitment materials and activities. There are two types of certificates listed on the official Academic Program Inventory: 1) Academic, and 2) Technical. A Certificate which is not college credit-bearing, i.e., and "institutional certificate" refers to only certificates awarding continuing education credit that may be accepted for college credit if it meets the requirements established through the institution's prior learning assessment standards. A certificate can be free- standing or embedded within a degree program. An embedded certificate requires the approval of the program of study by the Board. It must fully articulate with a degree and should have no new or no more than minimal costs required to implement an embedded certificate.

- b. Establishment of new concentrations or minors within an existing academic program.
- c. Establishment of 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 Academic Units, and A1:4, Off-Campus Instruction-Community Colleges).
- d. Revision of any admission, retention, or graduation policy (both institutional and program specific).
- e. Substantive revision of the curriculum of an existing academic program. (Substantive refers to changes impacting 9 or more semester credit hours at the community college level and 50% or more of the semester credit hours in a certificate program, from the last submission to the Board, and includes course rubrics, titles, descriptions, or content).
- f. Consolidation of existing academic programs within the same discipline regardless of degree designation for purposes of performance funding calculations only.
- g. Consolidation of existing academic programs for purposes of performance funding calculations only.
- h. Extension of an existing academic degree program in totality to an off-campus site.
- i. An inactivated program is automatically terminated and removed from the THEC inventory if not reactivated within a three-year window after inactivation.
- j. Curriculum modifications, including but not limited to a student success course, that increase required hours for a degree to more

than 60 for the associate degree or more than the previously approved exceptions. Also, curriculum modifications that increase or decrease credit hours from what was previously approved for a certificate must be submitted for Board approval.

- k. Conversion of an existing on-ground program to a fully online delivery format (with or without termination of the existing ground program).
 - l. Separation of a concentration from an existing program to establish a free standing degree. Any concentration with a steady enrollment and graduation rate for at least three years may request to become a freestanding degree if the establishment of the concentration as a degree does not compromise the remaining degree and does not require new faculty resources.
 - m. Separation of a concentration from an existing program to establish a free standing degree where the title of the concentration more accurately represents a degree recognized in the workplace. In this instance, the proposed degree seeks to be counted within the overall original degree rather than as an independent degree for performance funding calculations.
 - n. Change of degree designation. Existing academic programs seeking to change or add additional degree designations per recommendation of the disciplinary accreditation body.
 - o. Establishment of an articulation agreement between institutions.
- C. Academic Actions Requiring Only Notification to Vice Chancellor
- 1. Changes to existing academic programs not listed in the previous section, 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.

2. The Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs must be informed of such changes impacting community college programs prior to implementation and may refer the request for academic action for Board approval if deemed appropriate due to costs or other potential concerns.
3. Such action includes, but is not limited to, changes such as the modification of the title of an academic program or unit.
4. Non-substantive curriculum revisions may be approved through the established institutional process and do not require notification or Board approval.

D. Additional Actions Requiring Review by THEC

1. The THEC review and approval of off-campus extensions of existing academic programs is handled through the request for a code, i.e., site or center, and requires that submission of the appropriate form(s) available on the TBR and THEC websites.

III. Procedures

- A. 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.
 1. Approval Route of Requests for Academic Action
 - a. Requests from TBR community colleges 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.

- b. Subsequent to Board action, the Chancellor or designee shall transmit to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission those academic action requests that require its approval along with the Board's recommendation.

2. Schedule for the Submission and Approval of Academic Actions

- a. The Board will consider academic actions on a monthly basis through the Thirty Day Review process. Certificates and duplicated academic degree programs will be considered at each of its quarterly meetings.
- b. All materials, including the Thirty Day Review, must be submitted sufficiently in advance to permit adequate review by the staff.
- c. Community college degree programs new to the state for TBR institutions must be presented and approved at the Board's quarterly Board meeting. Per revision to THEC Policy No. A 1:0: New Academic Programs - Approval Process, these programs must also be presented and approved by THEC's Board at their quarterly meeting.

3. Community college degree programs new to the state for TBR institutions may also require an in-person or virtual site visit as part of the Letter of Application. See Exhibit B.

IV. General Criteria for Reviewing Academic Letters of Notification and Letter of Application

- A. Requirements for Letters of Application are provided in the TBR Guideline A-010: Program Modifications and New Academic Programs. Forms are provided on the Academic Affairs website to aid in the development of a Letter of Application.
- B. Requirements are amended as need be to meet the demands of the workplace.

V. Sources of Specific Criteria

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

1. TBR Policy No. 2.01.00.00 General Education Requirements and Degree Requirements
2. TBR Guideline No. A-010, Program Modifications and New Academic Programs
3. TBR Policy No. 2.01.01.02 Inter-Institutional Relationships and Off-Campus Affairs
4. TBR Guideline No. A-040, Criteria for the Evaluation of Bureaus, Centers, and Institutes
5. THEC Policy No. A1:0, New Academic Programs: Approval Process
6. THEC Policy No. A1:1, Academic Program Modifications
7. THEC Policy A1:3, New Academic Units

Sources

Authority

T.C.A. § 49-8-203; All State and Federal Statutes, Acts, Codes, Rules and Regulations referenced in this policy.

History

TBR Meeting, December 2, 1988; TBR Meeting, December 13, 2002; TBR Meeting, March 29, 2006; TBR Meeting, December 8, 2006; March 28, 2008; TBR Board Meeting December 2, 2010; TBR Board Meeting December 8, 2011; TBR Meeting March 28, 2014; TBR Meeting March 27, 2015; Academic Affairs SubCouncil, July 19, 2023; Faculty SubCouncil, July 21, 2023, September 22, 2023, Board Meeting.

Related Policies

[A-010 Program Modifications and New Academic Programs](#)

[A-040 Criteria for the Evaluation of Bureaus, Centers, Institutes](#)

[2.01.00.00 General Education Core and Degree Requirements](#)

[2.01.01.02 Inter-Institutional Relationships & Off-Campus Offerings \(formerly A-020\)](#)