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South Carolina
Commission on Higher Education
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Procedures: Academic Programs, Academic Units, Centers, Institutes, and Consortia

This procedure manual is to be used in conjunction with the Policy on Academic Programs, Academic Units, Centers, Institutes, and Consortia and is intended to support and operationalize the implementation of that policy.

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Procedures for New Programs

A. Approval to Plan a New Degree Program

1. Each institution must submit an annual forecast of new academic programs planned for the next three years. The forecast is due each year by June 1.
2. For each program the institution intends to advance during the upcoming fiscal year, the institution must submit an Executive Summary with the forecast by the June 1 deadline.
3. Commission on Higher Education (CHE) staff will compile the institutional three-year forecasts. Only those proposed programs projected for implementation in the following academic year, and for which an Executive Summary has been submitted by the June 1 deadline, will be reviewed and scored by CHE staff and the Advisory Committee on Academic Programs (ACAP). CHE staff will then prepare, for Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing (CAAL) review, a slate of those proposed programs eligible to advance to the full proposal stage. Programs listed on the second and third years of the forecast will remain on the forecast and may be presented in subsequent years, as applicable, when the institution intends to advance them for implementation in the following academic year.
   The process consists of two phases:

   <u>Phase 1-Submission and Review</u>

   - By June 1 each year, institutions submit a three-year forecast of proposed programs and Executive Summaries only for those programs they intend to advance for implementation in the following academic year.
   - CHE staff and ACAP will independently review the executive summaries using a standardized scoring rubric. ACAP members are expected to contribute to the review process as part of their advisory role; however, individual participation will depend on member availability. CHE staff will compile the individual assessments, calculate the average ACAP score and the average CHE staff score, and use those results to prepare a slate of proposals for CAAL consideration. The slate will display the CHE staff average grade, the ACAP average grade, and the final grade for each proposal.

Phase 2-Approvals

- CAAL reviews and approves a slate of proposed programs to move forward.
- Approved executive summaries (pre-proposals) advance to full proposal development and staff review.
- CAAL reviews and votes on full proposals.
- The Commission makes the final decision on proposals advanced by CAAL.

4. CAAL authorization to develop a full proposal expires two years after the approval date. During this period, institutions may notify CHE at any time if they wish to withdraw their formal intent to plan the new degree program.
5. Approval by CAAL to advance an Executive Summary to the full proposal stage does not constitute program approval. Final approval is granted only if the full proposal review process is successfully completed and both CAAL and the Commissioners give their approval.
6. **Off-Cycle Forecast Requests**
    a. June 1 remains the primary deadline for submission of the annual three-year academic forecast and associated Executive Summaries. An institution may request permission from the Director of Academic Affairs and Licensing (DAAL) to submit an off-cycle Executive Summary when documented workforce demand, industry developments, economic-development opportunities, regulatory changes, accreditation or licensure requirements, or other compelling circumstances warrant consideration outside the regular forecast cycle.
    b. The institution must submit the request in writing and include a justification for off-cycle consideration. The DAAL will determine, on a case-by-case basis, whether to authorize submission of the off-cycle Executive Summary.
    c. An authorized off-cycle Executive Summary must follow the same review and approval process in accordance with the policy, section A, and these procedures. Authorization to submit an off-cycle Executive Summary does not waive or bypass any required review or approval step and does not constitute approval of the proposed program.

A.1. Proposal Submission

Proposals for new programs must be submitted in the appropriate format electronically by the institution. Please note the following:

1. Final proposals will be reviewed to ensure completeness and compliance with CHE-approved policies. Failure to address all required components adequately or adhere to policies may delay the program's submission to CAAL.
2. Proposals for educator preparation programs must submit additional information required by the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) when the program proposal is submitted to CHE (see policies Section F).
3. Before submitting a proposal for doctoral programs, the institution must provide CHE with information for at least three prospective evaluators, including their curriculum vitae, a description of their qualifications related to the proposed program, and the rationale for their selection. External reviewers should:

    a. be tenured faculty from peer, near-peer, or aspirational institutions with an academic rank of associate professor or higher;
    b. be considered a subject matter expert in the academic discipline;
    c. have no prior relationship with the institution or close personal or familial relationship with potential faculty involved in the proposed academic program;
    d. not be employed within the state of South Carolina;
    e. not have been a consultant or a board member at the institution within the last ten years;
    f. not have been a candidate for employment at the institution within the last seven years;
    g. not be a graduate of the proposing institution; and
    h. not have any other relationship that could impede rendering an impartial, objective professional judgment regarding the merits of the proposed academic program.

    If no external reviewers proposed by the institution are available or acceptable, CHE reserves the right to approve an exception or propose alternative external reviewers. The proposing institution must provide a written report from the external evaluator along with the new academic program proposal. A program cannot move forward until this evaluation is submitted to the DAAL.
4. For joint programs, institutions must submit a copy of the relevant document (such as an MOU, MOA, or Articulation Agreement) to CHE. This document should outline the following:

    a. The intended curriculum or program(s) addressed

b. Responsibilities of each institution
c. Intended sites and locations
d. Date of implementation and expiration, if applicable
e. The program's alignment with the institutional mission
f. Signatures of the chief academic officer and other appropriate senior-level institutional officers

This documentation must be submitted to CHE at least 90 calendar days before the expected implementation date.

A.2. Consideration of the Proposal

1. To allow sufficient time for state-level review and accreditor review, proposals for new degree programs and new certificates should be submitted at least one academic year before the intended term of implementation. Proposals submitted with less lead time may be deferred to a later implementation term and may not be acted upon in time for the requested start date.
2. Once a full proposal is developed and has undergone initial CHE staff review, ACAP members will have the opportunity to review it electronically. Members may provide feedback, questions, or concerns to CHE staff, who will coordinate responses and communicate with the submitting institution as appropriate.
3. Full proposals reviewed electronically by ACAP will be reported on the ACAP meeting agenda and will advance to CAAL.
4. A full proposal will be placed on an ACAP meeting agenda for discussion if substantive concerns or feedback arising during the electronic review warrant further discussion with the submitting institution.
5. Institutions whose full proposals ACAP has reviewed will present their proposals to CAAL for review and approval.
6. CHE staff will review the proposed programs and discuss any concerns with the institution. The institution will address feedback from CHE staff and ACAP before submitting it to CAAL.
7. CHE staff will present the revised proposal to CAAL for consideration. If CAAL requests revisions, the institution must make the necessary changes and resubmit the updated proposal at the next CAAL meeting. Upon CAAL approval, the proposal is presented to CHE for consideration. CHE will notify the institution's President or Chief Academic Officer (CAO) of CHE's decision. For newly approved educator preparation programs, the institution must forward the CHE approval letter to the SCDE upon receipt.
8. If CHE denies or rejects a new program proposal, certificate proposal or program modification, the institution may seek reconsideration only through CHE's established appeal process. To initiate an appeal, the institution must submit a written notice to CHE within 30 calendar days of receiving notification of the

decision, clearly outlining the basis for the appeal and any supporting rationale or documentation. Appeals will be considered by CAAL. If CAAL supports the appeal, the proposal or request will be returned to CHE for further review and consideration. If the appeal is denied, the institution must wait one year before submitting a new or substantially similar proposal or request.

B. Program Modifications

1. Proposals must be submitted electronically by the institution. CHE staff will review each proposal for completeness and compliance with applicable policies. Incomplete or noncompliant submissions may delay review.
2. Program modification proposals will be distributed to ACAP for electronic review and feedback. ACAP members will have at least ten business days to review the proposal and provide comments. ACAP's role in the review of program modifications is advisory only; ACAP does not vote on program modification proposals. ACAP may transmit any comments, questions, or concerns received through the review process to the institution, and the institution may be asked to respond to or revise the proposal as needed.
3. Educator preparation program proposals may include information from the SCDE.
4. CHE staff will prepare a summary list of reviewed program modifications, including any resulting actions, for reporting to CAAL at its regular meetings, similar to the reporting process used for notifications of change.
5. The President and Executive Director (PED) of CHE holds final authority for all modifications. CHE staff will have up to 90 calendar days to review submissions and provide feedback to the institution. Institutions receiving a denial notice may appeal within 30 calendar days. CAAL will review the appeal; if supported, the proposal returns to CHE. If not supported, the institution must wait one year before resubmitting a similar proposal. The Commissioners retain ultimate approval authority on all appeals.

C. Program Notifications

1. Notifications of change must be submitted to the DAAL 90 calendar days prior to implementation using the Notification of Change form, which must be submitted by the institution's CAO.
2. CHE staff will have up to 90 calendar days to review and notify the institution of any substantive questions. The institution may not implement the change until it receives written approval from CHE.
3. The DAAL will notify CAAL of such notifications at each scheduled CAAL meeting.

D. Program Proposals Submitted by Colleges in the South Carolina Technical College System

New program proposals submitted by colleges in the South Carolina Technical College System (SCTCS) must first be evaluated by SCTCS staff and approved by the State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education before submission to CHE.

1. Programs new to SCTCS, including any proposed four-year degrees, must be submitted as new program proposals and follow CHE's new program approval process as outlined in the policy, Section A.

2. For programs already offered within SCTCS but new to the proposing college, and for approved programs delivered at additional sites within the college's service area (including dual enrollment), SCTCS will certify or submit a Notification of Change to CHE in accordance with policy, Section E.

E. New Centers, Institutes, and Consortia

New centers, institutes, and consortia follow the same process as new program proposals. However, only new centers, institutes, and consortia for which the institution intends to request or receive appropriations from the state specifically for that center, institute, and consortium require approval by CHE. All other new center, institute or consortium proposals will be processed by notification of change.

F. Notifications of Termination of an Academic Program, Concentration, Site, or Center

1. The institution terminating an academic program, concentration, site, or center should inform the DAAL within 90 calendar days of termination using the Notification of Termination form, which the institution's CAO or a designee must submit.
2. The DAAL will notify CAAL of such termination notifications at each scheduled CAAL meeting.

G. Schedule of Submission Cycles

The CHE website displays the submission cycle for new programs and program modifications. The DAAL will consider requests for schedule deviations on a case-by-case basis. Please note that ACAP, CAAL, and CHE meeting dates vary each. Any updates to schedules and meeting dates will be posted on the CHE website.

H. Academic Inventory Corrections and Updates

1. The accuracy and maintenance of an institution's Academic Program Inventory are the responsibility of the institution. Each institution should periodically review its inventory to ensure that all academic program information is current, complete, and accurate.

2. If an institution identifies information requiring correction, it must submit an Academic Program Inventory Correction Form, along with the original academic proposal and the approval letter from CHE to academicprograms@che.sc.gov. Upon receipt, CHE staff will review the submission, request any necessary clarifications or supporting information, and acknowledge once the correction request has been forwarded to CHE data staff for processing.
3. Institutions requiring expedited processing must submit a written request for expedited review at the time the Academic Program Inventory Correction Form is submitted. Expedited requests will be considered based on the circumstances described by the institution and CHE's operational capacity.
4. CHE staff will respond to inventory correction requests within sixty (60) calendar days of receiving a complete submission. If additional information is required, the response timeline may be extended until the requested information has been received.

APPENDIX A: PROCEDURES FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Advisory Committee on Academic Programs

Purpose and role

The purpose of the Advisory Committee on Academic Programs (ACAP) is to advise the Commission, principally through the staff and CAAL, on all matters relating to academic affairs generally, and specifically to advise these bodies on matters relating to academic planning and new and existing academic programs in the state. ACAP's role includes providing expertise and input to support environmental scanning and forecasting of future program needs, emerging disciplines, and workforce demands in South Carolina. ACAP's recommendations and guidance are advisory and not binding.

Membership

The members of ACAP shall consist of the following persons ex officio:

- The Director of Academic Affairs of the Commission, who shall serve as Chair.
- The Chief Academic Officer (CAO) or their designee from each public senior college and university.
- The CAO of the staff of the SC Technical College System.
- The CAO from three technical colleges, to be appointed for two-year terms by the Technical College Chief Academic Officers Peer Group.
- The CAO representing the two-year institutions of the USC System.
- A representative from the SC Independent Colleges and Universities System (SCICU).
  This membership structure parallels the Commission, which includes an ex-officio, non-voting representative from the independent college and university sector, thereby ensuring consistent engagement from SCICU institutions in an advisory capacity.

Meetings and review format

ACAP will meet regularly at least three times annually to discuss matters related to academic planning and program development and to consider, as appropriate, proposals and other items previously circulated to members for review and comment. Meeting dates

will be set at the beginning of each fiscal year. Special meetings may be called by the Chair or at the request of a majority of members.

Meetings may be held in person, by electronic means such as video conference or other synchronous technologies, or through electronic review processes, as the Chair determines, to ensure timely consideration of proposals and planning matters. For any items referred to ACAP for review, members will have at least ten business days to review and provide feedback. For program modifications, this review should be electronic and advisory and should not include a vote.

The Chair will distribute the meeting agenda and supporting materials to ACAP members at least one week before each meeting, unless an expedited electronic review is warranted and agreed upon. A majority of the membership will constitute a quorum at any meeting, whether held in person or by electronic means.

APPENDIX B: FORMS

(Status: To Be Developed)

A. Academic Forecasting
B. Proposal Executive Summary
C. New Program Proposal Form
D. Program Modification Form
E. Program Notification of Change Form
F. Notification of Change Form-New Certificate
G. Notification of Change Form-Private Institutions
H. Notification of Termination Form
I. New Center, Institute, or Consortium Proposal Form
J. Evaluator Form (Doctoral Programs)