

## Alabama

### Is the coordinating board for higher education involved in program approval?

Yes, Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) approves academic programs.

### What is the timeframe for the program approval process?

Alabama follows the below timeline:

- (1) submission of Notification of Intent to Submit a Proposal (NISP) – at least 2 months prior to proposal submission;
- (2) institutional comments – within 3 weeks of receipt of NISP;
- (3) preliminary meeting of ACHE staff to discuss comments and the program objectives in relation to the needs of the state; to consider any program duplication, and explore possible means of collaboration, and to evaluate the centrality of the program to the institution's mission and role – within 4 weeks of receipt of NISP;
- (4) submission of Program Proposals – any time beyond 2 months of NISP submission;
- (5) review of proposal by Council of Graduate Deans – 8 weeks;
- (6) second meeting with ACHE staff to review questions and recommendations derived from the peer review and to reach agreement on any necessary proposal changes – within 2 weeks of peer review; and
- (7) completion of ACHE staff recommendation and ACHE action on the program – within 2 months of peer review.

### What criteria is used for program approval?

- (1) relevance of institutional;
- (2) role;
- (3) need for the program;
- (4) collaboration;
- (5) program objectives and content;
- (6) student availability and demand;

- (7) program completion requirements;
- (8) institutional context;
- (9) program administration;
- (10) accreditation;
- (11) resources to support the program;
- (12) financial support;
- (13) distance education technology; and
- (14) program viability.

## Arkansas

### **Is the coordinating board for higher education involved in program approval?**

Yes, Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) approves academic programs.

### **What is the timeframe for the program approval process?**

A Letter of Intent (LOI) informs the Coordinating Board that an institution seeks to offer a new program or organizational unit that requires a proposal and Coordinating Board approval.

The Coordinating Board meets 4 times. For the April Coordinating Board decision meeting, the “letter of intent” is due January 1, proposals are due February 1, and the institutional comment period ends March 1.

### **What criteria is used for program approval?**

Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-61-208 charges the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board with the responsibility to evaluate proposals for all new units of instruction, research, and public service, consistent with established role and scope designations, and to approve programs and organizational units based on established policies.

ADHE staff may engage a maximum of 3 in-state or out-of-state experts in selected fields of study to assist with the review of proposals for undergraduate and graduate programs. The review team will submit a written report to ADHE that evaluates the proposed programs in terms of the need for graduates, student demand and interest, appropriateness of the curricula, and adequacy of institutional resources. Typically, a campus visit is required.

## California

### **Is the coordinating board for higher education involved in program approval?**

No, there is no State governing body. California State University (CSU) approves academic programs for the system.

### **What is the timeframe for the program approval process?**

Proposals are submitted the academic year preceding implementation.

### **What criteria is used for program approval?**

CSU considers the following in the review of a proposed CSU degree program:

- (1) Faculty (Does the faculty appear qualified to offer this program and at this level? Does the faculty expertise span all appropriate specializations, and are there sufficient faculty members for the projected size of the program? Do they appear to have appropriate research or professional experience? Are the arrangements for administering the program sufficient to ensure that it will operate effectively?)
- (2) Curriculum (Does the curriculum have appropriate breadth, depth, and coherence for an undergraduate or a graduate program in this field? Is it up to date, incorporating the most recent developments in the field? Is it consistent with any pertinent recommendations of professional organizations? Is it responsive to employment opportunities for graduates? If it is a baccalaureate program, would it constitute desirable preparation for graduate or doctoral study in the fields indicated in the proposal?)
- (3) Resources (Does the description of facilities, equipment, and information resources indicate that the campus has the resources (or reliable access to resources) that will be needed for a high-quality program? If not, what information would be minimally necessary to assure that the resources are adequate?)
- (4) Assessment of Program Quality and Student Learning (Does the proposal provide an assessment plan that identifies program and student learning goals? Do the student learning outcomes match with the curriculum? Are goals measurable, and will the assessment process be manageable? Is the process meaningful, with assessment results be used to influence changes in the curriculum or pedagogy?)
- (5) State Need and Student Demand (Do you believe that a program of this kind is needed in California? Is there convincing evidence provided in the proposal to demonstrate student interest in the program and employer demand for graduates? Are the sources of information on need current and credible? If you think that the information on need for the program is not adequate, what other information might we suggest that the campuses include in the proposal?)

## Delaware

**Is the coordinating board for higher education involved in program approval?**

No.

**What is the timeframe for the program approval process?**

n/a.

**What criteria is used for program approval?**

n/a.

## **Louisiana**

### **Is the coordinating board for higher education involved in program approval?**

Yes, the Louisiana Board of Regents approves academic programs.

### **What is the timeframe for the program approval process?**

Each September, the Board of Regents will approve the annual Academic Plans of the institutions.

Once approved, full program proposals may be submitted anytime to the Board of Regents for full program approval.

### **What criteria is used for program approval?**

Academic Plans are circulated to Chief Academic Officers and labor market representatives statewide for review and comment. Feedback from the statewide review may include support, recommendations, or substantive feedback to the proposed program based on need, mission, or duplication. Staff will attempt to resolve challenges through discussion among interested parties; unresolved issues will be presented to the Board for a final decision.

Proposals for all graduate degrees (master's and doctoral) and for highly technical and/or selective baccalaureate degrees require review by an external consultant.

### **Guidelines for Academic Program Evaluation that assessors use are:**

- (1) program design;
- (2) need;
- (3) students;
- (4) faculty;
- (5) resources;
- (6) administration;
- (7) accreditation;
- (8) related fields;
- (9) costs; and
- (10) general assessment, comments, and suggestions.

## Massachusetts

### Is the coordinating board for higher education involved in program approval?

Yes, the Department of Higher Education approves academic programs.

### What is the timeframe for the program approval process?

Massachusetts approves public programs at the Letter of Intent (LOI) stage of development.

#### *Phase I:*

LOI from an institution may be submitted annually from September 15 to May 15.

An LOI proposal will be subject to a 15-business-day period of review.

Once an LOI is validated and deemed complete, it is circulated by the Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success to Academic Affairs Committee and Strategic Planning Committee members, public campus Chief Academic Officers (CAOs) and to the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities representatives for comment. The comment period extends for 20 business days.

At the end of this timeframe, all comments are reviewed by staff and sent to the LOI institution's CAO, who then has 20 business days to submit a written response to the Deputy.

An LOI is brought forward either within 20 business days of receiving the institution's response or at the next board meeting.

#### *Phase II:*

Phase II full academic proposals must be submitted within 2 years of Board of Higher Education approval of the Phase I LOI.

A proposed program template is validated and reviewed for completion within 15 business days of receipt. As noted above, the campus can expect staff to provide information regarding any further data that are needed for the proposal to be deemed complete. This communication resets the timeframe. Once the campus has responded by submitting the additional data, the 15-business-day clock begins anew.

Once validated and deemed complete, Fast Track proposals are forwarded to the commissioner with a recommendation for action within 20 business days.

Implementation of a new academic program should occur no later than the second fall semester following approval. If implementation is delayed beyond that time, the institution must

provide an explanation to the commissioner and either request a new implementation date or provide a rationale not to offer the program.

**What criteria is used for program approval?**

There are three major sections to the LOI proposal:

- (1) alignment with Massachusetts goals for higher education;
- (2) alignment with the current campus strategic plan and mission of the institution; and
- (3) alignment with operational and financial objectives of the institution.



## **Minnesota**

### **Is the coordinating board for higher education involved in program approval?**

No, the governing body, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees, approves academic programs.

### **What is the timeframe for the program approval process?**

A Letter of Inquiry must be sent 6 months to 1 year prior to the expected program implementation date.

Notice of Intent (NOI) will be posted on the Minnesota state website for a 20-day review and comment period. Any comments must be addressed by the campus proposing the new program within 10 days. Campuses who submitted comments or concerns will have 10 days to respond to the additional information provided.

The Academic Programs and Quality Assurance Unit will make a determination about whether the applicant may proceed with the submission of a new program application or that they may not submit a new program application.

Appeals can be made within 30 days of a decision. The unit has 60 days to review the appeal. Within 30 days of receipt of the recommendation from the Academic Affairs Council, the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs shall make a final determination regarding disposition of the appeal.

### **What criteria is used for program approval?**

The NOI must include:

- (1) student interest;
- (2) labor market data documenting need for program;
- (3) catalog description;
- (4) curriculum structure and required courses;
- (5) credit length;
- (6) degree award;
- (7) cip code recommendation;
- (8) delivery mode;

- (9) location;
- (10) program learning outcomes; and
- (11) equity 2030 considerations.

Appeal review shall be based on:

- (1) program duplication;
- (2) student interest;
- (3) labor market need;
- (4) program service area need;
- (5) program justification;
- (6) equity 2030 considerations;
- (7) public comments/concerns; and
- (8) other relevant information.

## Mississippi

### **Is the coordinating board for higher education involved in program approval?**

No, the governing body, Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning, approves academic programs.

### **What is the timeframe for the program approval process?**

A university shall submit a New Academic Degree Program Proposal program to the Office of Academic Student Affairs (OASA) 2 months prior to the board meeting which action is expected.

The request is evaluated by OASA during the 2 months prior to the board meeting and is placed on the agenda 1 month prior to the board meeting at which action is expected.

If the Associate Commissioner of Academic and Student Affairs renders a positive decision, the request will be placed on the Board of Trustees' Regular Agenda.

After approved, the institution shall enroll students within 2 academic years of approval. If the institution has not enrolled students by the end of the second academic year, board approval is rescinded.

#### *Routine Review:*

Institution shall provide information about proposed program to the department.

Department staff will verify and post the proposal on the department's website to allow for 20 days of public review and comment.

The proposing public institution will address comments and feedback received. Once all concerns are resolved, the commissioner will recommend provisional approval of the program for a period of 5 years. Institutions have 2 years to implement the program once approved.

Requests submitted by the first of the month will be reviewed and processed, and in most cases, institutions will be notified by the end of the same month.

At the end of the 5-year provisional approval period, the department will review the program's viability to determine whether the coordinating board's provisional approval should become unconditional, remain provisional pending further review in 2 years, or be terminated.

*Comprehensive Review:*

All proposals must be submitted to the coordinating board by July 1 of each year. Evaluation decisions are announced in September and final decisions to approve programs will be made in February.

Department staff will verify and post the proposal on the department's website to allow for 20 days of public review and comment.

Department staff, in consultation with the external review team will review a complete proposal and provide feedback to the institution.

The institution will address comments and feedback received. Once all concerns are resolved, the commissioner will recommend provisional approval of the program for a period of 5 years.

The institution must establish clearly defined performance goals to be achieved during the provisional implementation period and submit an annual report to the coordinating board on specified factors.

**What criteria is used for program approval?**

It is expected that all new degree programs:

- (1) will be consistent with the role and mission of the institution;
- (2) will be considered only when all university degree programs within the discipline have professional accreditation (if available) and have met the minimum standards of productivity;
- (3) will be considered only when professional accreditation will be sought for this program (if available);
- (4) will require no more than 124 credit hours towards graduation if the request is for an undergraduate program, unless it meets the standard for exception;
- (5) will be consistent with the curricula of similar programs in this discipline and will meet any licensing or certification needs;
- (6) will meet local, state, regional, and national educational, societal, or cultural needs;
- (7) will not be unnecessarily duplicative of other programs within the system;
- (8) will be funded through documented resources; and

- (9) will include procedures for program effectiveness.

For a proposed program to be considered through routine review, it must meet the following criteria:

- (1) the program is clearly within the institution's approved mission;
- (2) the program will not unnecessarily duplicate an existing program in the applicable geographic area;
- (3) the program will be offered at the main campus or at a coordinating board – approved off-site location;
- (4) the program will build on existing programs and faculty expertise; and
- (5) the cost to launch the program will be minimal and within the institution's current operating budget.

*Comprehensive Review Criteria:*

- (1) evidence of good faith effort to explore the feasibility of collaboration with other institutions whose mission or service region encompass the proposed program;
- (2) evidence that the offering institution is contributing substantially to the coordinating board's blueprint for higher education;
- (3) evidence of institutional capacity to launch the program in a high-quality manner including an external review, a comprehensive cost/revenue analysis, evidence indicating there is sufficient student interest and capacity to support the program, sufficient capacity to support external learning requirements, and a description of the accreditation requirements and the institution's plan for seeking accreditation; and
- (4) evidence that the proposed program is needed, including not unnecessarily duplicative of other programs in the applicable geographic area and a rigorous workforce analysis demonstrating program need.

## New Jersey

### **Is the coordinating board for higher education involved in program approval?**

Yes, the New Jersey President's Council (NJPC) approves academic programs.

### **What is the timeframe for the program approval process?**

The institution must submit program announcements to presidents of all New Jersey institutions of higher education and the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education.

Objections or concerns to the program announcement must be communicated to the proposing institutions within 30 days of receipt. The objecting and proposing institutions are expected to resolve differences informally in furtherance of institutional cooperation, if not resolution, materials re objecting submitted to NJPC for review.

If the Academic Issues Committee (AIC) determines that there are outstanding issues and/or questions remaining regarding the new academic degree program proposal, the proposal will be returned to the institution for modification and/or correction before resubmission. AIC must provide specific reasons for the return of the propose.

If AIC determines that there are no outstanding issues and/or questions remaining regarding the proposal, it will make a favorable recommendation to the NJPC. If NJPC concurs, the result of a favorable review will be conveyed to the proposing institution within 15 days and the program may be implemented.

Office of the Secretary of Higher Education is responsible for final administrative decisions.

### **What criteria is used for program approval?**

The 4 standards for final program approval, as defined in the regulations are:

- (1) sufficient academic quality;
- (2) sufficient evidence of labor market demand for the program;
- (3) duplication with comparable programs of study in the state; and
- (4) whether the proposed new program will require significant additional state resources).

(Each standard has specific criteria set forth in statute.)

New academic degree program proposals require engagement of an external independent consultant who provides a report.

## North Carolina

### Is the coordinating board for higher education involved in program approval?

No, the Governing Board, University of North Carolina (UNC) Board of Governors, approves academic programs in the UNC System only.

### What is the timeframe for the program approval process?

- (1) The Letter of Intent (LOI) is submitted to UNC System office (office acknowledges receipt within 48 weeks).
- (2) UNC responds with approval to move forward or with questions (within 4 weeks).
- (3) A. Master Degrees – UNC office approves and invites submission of Request to Establish (RTE).  
  
B. Doctoral Degrees – Completed LOI is forwarded to UNC Graduate Council for review/discussion at next quarterly meeting. Within 2 weeks council votes to authorize permission to plan the new doctoral program. If the council approves, UNC System Office approves and invites submission of RTE.
- (4) Campus submits RTE within 4 months.
- (5) Institution submits RTE to UNC System Office (acknowledges recipient within 48 hours).
- (6) UNC System responds that the proposal is complete or need more information (within 4 weeks).
- (7) A. Masters Degrees – Completed RTE s forwarded to UNC graduate council for a 4-week review period. UNC System reviews comment.  
  
B. Doctoral Degrees – Completed request is forwarded to UNC System Office to selected reviewers. Within 10 weeks, external reviewers sent to campus and Gradate Council will be given access to external reviewers' comments.
- (8) Two Parts:  
  
A. Masters Degree – Within 2 weeks UNC System Office is prepared to make a recommendation or notifies campus of any remaining issues for campus reply within 4 weeks.  
  
B. Doctoral Degree – Proposal is presented to Graduate Council at next quarterly meeting.

- (9) Completed RTE is posted to Academic Planning website for 4 weeks for systemwide review and comment gathering.
- (10) UNC makes a recommendation to Committee on Educational Planning, Policies, and Programs (EPPP) Committee brought to the next committee meeting.
- (11) If EPPP Committee approves, then degree program is brought to Board of Governors next meeting.
- (12) Board of Governors acts on EPPP Committee recommendation.

**What criteria is used for program approval?**

- (1) number, location, and mode of delivery of existing programs;
- (2) the relation of the program to the distinctiveness of the campus and the mission of the campus;
- (3) the demand for the program in the locality, region, or state as a whole;
- (4) whether the program would create unnecessary duplication;
- (5) employment opportunities for program graduates;
- (6) faculty quality and number for offering the program;
- (7) the availability of campus resources to support the program;
- (8) the number and quality of lower-level and cognate programs for supporting the new program;
- (9) impact of program decision on access and affordability;
- (10) the expected quality of the proposed degree program;
- (11) feasibility of a joint or collaborative program by 2 or more campuses; and
- (12) any other consideration relevant to the need for the program.



## Ohio

### **Is the coordinating board for higher education involved in program approval?**

Yes, the Chancellor of the Ohio Department of Higher Education approves academic programs.

The Chancellor has a Chancellor's Council on Graduate Studies (CCGS) for graduate programs only.

### **What is the timeframe for the program approval process?**

For undergraduate degrees a public institution of higher education (IHEs):

- (1) institution completes an Initial Inquiry and is assigned an institutional mentor. Institutional mentor sends Program Review Plan letter to institution and individuals in oversight of Ohio Department of Higher Education Course and Program Sharing Network summarizing relevant information;
- (2) Program Review Plan is posted on the department's website;
- (3) after internal approval, institution submits Proposal to Chancellor at least 4 months before implementation. Program must meet General Standards for Academic Programs. (Must be submitted within 1 year of receiving a Program Review Plan.);
- (4) there is a 30-day period for peer review of proposal. External consultants required for new educator licensure or endorsement programs;
- (5) there is a Resolution of Concerns between institutional mentor and proposing institution;
- (6) on recommendation for approval to the Chancellor, a background summary of the program is posted on department's website for a 10-day public comment period; and
- (7) the request and public comments are forwarded to the Chancellor for approval.

For graduate degree programs at public IHEs, University of Dayton, and Case Western University:

- (1) the steps in graduate program approval require a program development plan (PDP) and a full proposal (FP);
- (2) the PDP must be submitted as early as possible in an institutions process. CCGS will review within 4 calendar weeks of submission; and

- (3) based on CCGS reviews and their own assessment, the proposing institution will decide whether the PDP should be expanded to an FP.

An FP is submitted within 2 years for a PDP. Written comments in the process are due in 4 weeks of submission of a full FP. If an objection is raised, the institution must respond within 10 days in advance of the formal CCGS meeting. A final decision is made “as expeditiously as possible”.

### **What criteria is used for program approval?**

For undergraduate programs:

- (1) evidence of an agreement between a college and regional business or industry to train students in an in-demand field to employ successful program graduates;
- (2) workforce need of the regional business or industry is in an in-demand field with long-term sustainability based on data provided by the governor’s office of workforce transformation;
- (3) supporting data that identifies the specific workforce needs that the program will address;
- (4) the absence of the bachelor’s degree program that meets the workforce need addressed by the proposed program that is offered by a state university or private college or university; and
- (5) willingness of the industry partner to offer work-based learning and employment opportunities to students enrolled in the proposed program.

For graduate programs:

The CCGS member institutions shall review the PDP and provide a comments to institutions on the following issues:

- (1) market need for the proposed program and the distinctions or differences between the proposed program and other similar programs across the state;
- (2) opportunities for collaboration with the CCGS member’s own institution;
- (3) concerns with substantive elements of the proposed degree program; and
- (4) suggestions that might help the submitting institution strengthen the proposal or refine its focus.

The following points are expected to be addressed in the FP:

- (1) academic quality (additional standards for entry level graduate degree programs and professional graduate degree programs);
- (2) need;
- (3) access and retention of underrepresented groups;
- (4) statewide alternatives;
- (5) external support; and
- (6) financial impact.

Evaluation of an FP by CCGS involves the following elements:

- (1) consideration of written comments provided by each CCGS member;
- (2) preparation and assessment of the response to these comments by the institution submitting the proposal;
- (3) a formal presentation of the proposal by the initiating institution to CCGS followed by a full discussion of the proposal in the larger context of graduate education; and
- (4) a formal vote by CCGS, by written ballot, advising the Chancellor as to whether the program should be approved.

## Pennsylvania

### Is the coordinating board for higher education involved in program approval?

No, the Board of governors of the State System approves new academic programs for the State system institutions only.

### What is the timeframe for the program approval process?

For new degree program:

- (1) 30 days before submitting New Program Proposal, institution submits Letter of Intent (LOI) to develop a new program to the Council on Chief Academic Officers;
- (2) Council may approve, return for changes, or reject proposals;
- (3) LOI recommended for approval are submitted to the Office of the Chancellor for addition to the Executive Leadership Group consent agenda and, if there are no objections, reviewed by the Office of Academic and Student Affairs. The office will notify institution to proceed with full proposal within 30 days;
- (4) A. An institution submits a Program Proposal using the form provided by the Office. Office obtains peer reviewed feedback from Academic Program Review Committee; and  
B. For doctoral programs, documentation of institutional readiness is required for the first 2 doctoral programs in addition to documentation of programmatic readiness. Institutions must contract with an external reviewer to assess institutional capacity to offer.

### What criteria is used for program approval?

Undeterminable.

## South Carolina

### **Is the coordinating board for higher education involved in program approval?**

Yes, the Commission on Higher Education approves academic programs

### **What is the timeframe for the program approval process?**

Commission guidelines do not give specifics about timelines.

The cycle for the program development/new program approval/program modification process follows the following steps:

- (1) submission of a new program proposal;
- (2) review by the advisory committee on academic programs;
- (3) submission of a full program proposal;
- (4) review by the advisory committee on academic programs;
- (5) review by the committee on academic affairs and licensing; and
- (6) review and approval by the commission.

### **What criteria is used for program approval?**

Compliance with the commission's productivity standards for existing programs will be considered in determining an institution's request to establish a new program.

For new undergraduate programs:

- (1) objectives of the proposed program;
- (2) need for the program;
- (3) program compatibility with the mission, role, and scope of the institution;
- (4) estimated cost of the program;
- (5) personnel, facilities, library holdings, and other resources necessary to conduct a program of high quality or a timeline to acquire these resources;

- (6) research and workforce development needs of the state; and
- (7) quality and scope of the program.

All proposals to establish a new doctoral program must be accompanied by a review from a qualified out-of-state evaluator approved by the commission, which analyzes:

- (1) The merits of the proposed program;
- (2) Its potential effect on existing programs at the institution;
- (3) Its relationship to similar programs in the state, region, or nation;
- (4) The institution's readiness and ability to support the proposed program; and
- (5) Workforce and market demand in South Carolina since these programs typically have lower enrollment and higher costs than program offered at other degree levels.

New program proposal requests will be approved by the commission only if the proposal contains reasonable assurances that enrollment projections will meet minimum standards for degree productivity.

Institutions shall provide an assessment of the program's implementation (enrollment, costs, recruitment) in the third year of implementation so that the commission may evaluate the accuracy of the program market demand and cost effectiveness.

## Virginia

### Is the coordinating board for higher education involved in program approval?

Yes, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia approves academic programs.

### What is the timeframe for the program approval process?

A public institution's governing board must approve each proposal for a new academic program prior to its submission to the council.

- (1) Council must first be informed about a new degree program via a Program Announcement before the program can be presented for approval at a later Council meeting. Council action on new degree programs will occur at 2 specific meetings during the academic year, 1 in the fall and 1 in the spring.
- (2) A program announcement will be presented at a specific council meeting. Any questions or concerns or requests for information raised at that time must be addressed in the full program approval.
- (3) Following submission of the full program proposal by a specified deadline, the new degree program will be presented for action at a subsequent specific council meeting.
- (4) Upon publication of a Program Announcement in Council's Agenda Book, institutions already offering similar degree programs may provide feedback on the need for new degree programs and the potential effects of an additional program in Virginia. The chief academic officer of the interested institution should write the council and the proposing institution within 30 days.

May council meeting approval timeline, with deadlines:

- September 1 (deadline): program announcement submitted to State Council of Higher Education for Virginia SCHEV;
- September council meeting: program announcement receives discussion;
- December 15 (deadline): program proposal submitted to SCHEV; and
- program approval considered for action at the May Council meeting; if conferred, approval is effective fall of the same year or within one calendar year after Council approval.

### What criteria is used for program approval?

The council will focus their evaluation on:

- (1) does Virginia need this program at this time? (council looks at state needs, employer needs, student needs, and duplication); and
- (2) why does the institution need this program at this time?  
(Council looks at institutional needs and resource needs.)



## Washington State

**Is the coordinating board for higher education involved in program approval?**

No.

**What is the timeframe for the program approval process?**

n/a.

**What criteria is used for program approval?**

n/a.