



PA State System of Higher Education Board of Governors

Effective: March 19, 1985

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Policy 1985-01-A: Requirements for Initiation or Change of Credit-Based Academic Programs

See Also:

Adopted: March 19, 1985

Amended: October 9, 2003, January 19, 2012, April 10, 2014, October 8, 2015, January 25, 2018, July 12, 2018, and February 6, 2025

A. Purpose

To delegate to the Chancellor the Board of Governors' authority as set forth in 24 PS 20-2006A(a)(5) for the approval of new undergraduate and graduate degree programs.

B. Introduction

The high-value and relevant academic programs of Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education universities prepare our students for success in their lives and careers in our global society. This policy will ensure all new academic programs undergo a consistent, fair, and timely process to determine the need and appropriateness for the State System.

C. Definitions

Academic Major: Main field of study in an academic program. For baccalaureate degrees, the academic major (comprised of core and cognate courses) and general education are the two principal components of the degree. For master's degrees, the academic major (common core), concentration or specialization, and capstone experience(s) are the principal components of the degree. Academic major can be a sequence of courses, activities, and/or experiences constituting a major field of study, culminating in a credit-based degree or certificate.

Academic Minor: An organized program of study that comprises the fundamental requirements of an academic major (core and cognate courses) equivalent to a minimum of 18 semester credit hours. As a secondary field of study, the academic minor should reflect a minimum of 6 credits of advanced standing coursework. Exceptions to the advanced standing requirements may be granted on a case-by-case basis per request to the chancellor.

Academic Program: An instructional program leading toward a certificate, associate's, bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree or resulting in credits that can be applied to one of these degrees.

Certificate: A formal credit-based credential designated on the academic record and awarded by an educational institution to indicate completion of an organized program of study at the postsecondary level that does not culminate in a degree. Certificates are not the same as *certifications or licenses, which* are typically awarded by third party, standard-setting bodies (not academic institutions), based on an assessment process that recognizes competencies in a particular occupational specialty as measured against a set of standards. Certificates may be awarded at the undergraduate or graduate level.

CIP Code: The Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) is a taxonomic coding scheme of instructional programs. Its purpose is to facilitate the organization, collection, and reporting of fields of study and program completions. The CIP is the accepted federal government statistical standard on instructional program classifications.

Concentration: A program of study in a focused area within an academic program (i.e., degree program, not a minor), consisting of a minimum of 12 semester credit hours for baccalaureate degrees and a minimum of 9 semester credit hours for master's and doctoral degrees. Requirements for the concentration are included within the program of study for the academic major.

Degree Designation: Specific degree type, including but not limited to bachelor of arts, bachelor of science, bachelor of applied science, master of arts, master of science, master of education, doctor of education, and doctor of philosophy.

Discontinuance: Discontinued programs should have no students currently enrolled and the university has chosen not to reinstate or reorganize the program. Programs in moratorium in which no action is taken within the five-year period will be discontinued.

Moratorium: A program placed into moratorium means that students will no longer be admitted during the period of moratorium. Students currently enrolled or admitted will be allowed to complete the program. The university will assess the program's potential and either reinstate, reorganize or discontinue the program. A program shall not be in moratorium more than five years unless approved by the Office of the Chancellor.

Program Change: A change in the academic program (i.e., degree designation or award type, academic major, concentration); academic minor; **or** certificate.

Reorganization: Reorganized programs reflect curricula and/or credentials that have been significantly revised to meet new market demands or revised program accreditation requirements.

D. Process

The Office of the Chancellor shall, in consultation with State System universities, establish and review criteria for the initiation or change of credit-based academic programs as part of the System Standards and Procedures. The System Standards and Procedures are designed to further define or explain the policy to include procedures that ensure a consistent, fair, and timely review process to determine the need and appropriateness to the university and the State System.

a. Academic program proposals shall be subject to action by, or notice to, the chancellor, as follows:

i Action

New academic program, i.e., associate, bachelor, master, doctoral degree.

Reorganization of an existing approved degree program that significantly changes or affects any of the following: name of the major, CIP code, student learning outcomes of the program, change in degree designation or award type, or a change in credit length that exceeds approved policies.

Reactivation of a degree program in moratorium—A university may request a degree program be placed into moratorium for up to five years. At any time during this five-year period, a university may choose to discontinue, reactivate the program as previously approved, or reactivate as a reorganized program. Programs in moratorium being reactivated with no reorganization as outlined above require only notification to the chancellor. However, approval is needed if the program has been reorganized as outlined above.

ii. Notification

New concentration New academic minor
New certificate

Conversion of any current program (associate, bachelor, master, doctoral, minor, or certificate) to online or interactive video learning modality.

Degree program, minor, concentration, or certificate that is placed into moratorium or discontinued.

- b. No new, reorganized, or reinstated academic program (associate's, bachelor's, master's, doctoral degree) requiring approval shall be advertised or offered until the university president receives written notice from the chancellor verifying approval.

No new minor or certificate shall be announced or implemented without confirmation of receipt of notification from the chancellor.

E. Appeals

The University President may appeal the Chancellor's final decision to the Student Success Committee of the Board of Governors.

F. Communications

The Chancellor will provide periodic updates to the Board of Governors of all program actions and notifications.