The UNC Policy Manual
400.1.1[R]
Adopted 05/06/09
Amended 08/26/13
Amended 02/01/16*
Amended 11/14/18
Amended 10/16/19

Regulation for Academic Program Planning and Evaluation

I.   Purpose. This regulation defines the authority, responsibilities, and required processes as related to academic program planning and evaluation in the University of North Carolina System (UNC System).

A.   Compliance

1.   UNC System institutions are individually accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and are responsible for compliance with SACSCOC criteria and procedures with respect to any action related to academic programs that may constitute a substantive change as defined by SACSCOC.

2.   UNC System institutions are required to adhere to the SACSCOC policies and Best Practices and Protocols for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs in planning, delivering and assessing distance education courses and programs.

3.   UNC System institutions are responsible for meeting SACSCOC expectations for the review of the effectiveness of their educational programs, inclusive of student learning outcomes.

4.   The University of North Carolina System Office (UNC System Office) utilizes the most recent Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP), for the classification of all degree programs.

5.   If a program will be delivered out of state, whether face-to-face or electronically mediated, the institution must assure the UNC System Office that all required licensing or other authorization is secured before the program is offered out of state.

6.   The UNC System Office will maintain an Academic Program Inventory (API) as the official record of degree programs offered by the University and of all actions taken regarding degree programs. Constituent institutions will work with the UNC System Office to maintain the integrity of the API.

B.   Constituent Institution Policy and Procedure. Each institution must have a clearly defined process for the review and approval of proposals to plan or establish new degree programs, including online or site-based distance education, off-campus, or alternative delivery of degree programs. All constituent institution processes must be followed and constituent institution approval must be received before a proposal may be submitted to the UNC System Office.

C.   Communication and Forms. Chancellors of the constituent institutions shall communicate to the UNC System Office their intentions or requests with respect to the following:

1.   Request for authorization to plan any new degree program.

2. Request for authorization to establish any new degree program.

3. Request for authorization to establish a new delivery mode of any existing degree program.

4. Request for authorization to change the title, degree type, or CIP of an existing degree program.

5. Request for authorization to discontinue a degree program.

6. Request for authorization to consolidate degree programs.

7. Notification of intent to establish or discontinue a certificate or teacher licensure program.

Constituent institutions must utilize the most recent versions of request forms as required, maintained, and made available by the UNC System Office. Forms for new degree program requests must at minimum address the areas indicated in Section 400.1, Policy on Academic Program Planning, of the UNC Policy Manual, as the basis for decision making on the requests.

II. Academic Program Planning

A. New Baccalaureate, Master's, and Doctoral Degree Program Proposals

1. In addition to demonstrated capacity of the institution to deliver a quality program, major considerations in the planning and evaluation of new degree program proposals are student demand for the program, societal demand (availability of employment for graduates of the program), budget and source of funding for the proposed program, collaboration possibilities with other degree programs within UNC System, and relationship of the new degree program with institutional mission.

2. Constituent institutions must comply with regulations on fostering undergraduate student success that limit the number of baccalaureate degree program credit hours to no more than 128 and that designate baccalaureate programs exceeding 135 semester credit hours as five-year baccalaureate programs.[i]

3. The UNC System Office will be responsible for managing the review process for new degree proposals and for making a recommendation to the Board of Governors of the University of North Carolina (Board) according to the attached flowcharts: Process for Planning and Establishment of New Baccalaureate Degree Program, Process for Planning and Establishment of New Master's Degree Program, and Process for Planning and Establishment of New Doctoral Degree Program. The UNC System Office may approve authorization to plan proposed programs that clearly meet the considerations in II.A.1, above. External reviews will be required for all doctoral programs and may also be sought to evaluate constituent institution readiness to deliver online or site-based distance education, off-campus, or alternative delivery of degree programs at any level.

4. The senior vice president of academic affairs at the UNC System Office, in cooperation with the constituent institutions, will periodically review and determine a standard maximum number of new degree program proposals that each constituent

institution can have under active review at UNC-GA at any given time. Proposals for new joint degree programs shall be exempt from these limitations.

B.   Online and Site-Based Distance Education Programs and Off-campus Programs. Distance education occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Distance education may be mediated through use of the Internet (online) or other means. Off-campus program delivery occurs when students and instructors are together at an instructional site that is geographically separate from the main campus of the institution.

The UNC System Office has authority to approve online and site-based distance education delivery and off-campus delivery of degree programs previously established by the board according to the flowchart Process to Request New Delivery Mode for Existing Degree Program (any level); otherwise, new degree programs to be delivered online, site-based, or off-campus are processed in the same way as all other new degree program proposals and require board approval. Approval by the UNC System Office is required if 50 percent or more of the degree program will be offered in an alternative, online, or distance delivery mode, or a combination of these modes with the following exceptions:

1.   The first online or site-based distance education degree program offering for which a constituent institution must follow any SACSCOC substantive change procedure, regardless of the percent offered in that format, must be approved by the UNC System Office.

2.   Any off-campus offering of a degree program, regardless of the percent offered in that format, must be approved by the UNC System Office.

Constituent institutions proposing such programs will be expected to document how online and site-based distance education programs and off-campus programs exhibit comparable quality to programs offered on site at the constituent institution in terms of both academic standards and standards for student support. The application and maintenance of academic standards are the responsibility of the academic unit and constituent institution offering the instruction online or at a site off-campus.

Constituent institutions proposing such programs will also be expected to document how online and site-based distance education programs and off-campus programs do not result in an unnecessary duplication of effort and resources, including among programs delivered to students on campus.

For off-site delivery, priority should be given to partnering with UNC constituent institutions and with the North Carolina Community College System where appropriate.

Rapidly changing technology may lead to new modes of delivery of courses and degrees. Proposals for other methods for delivery of degree programs must document the comparable quality of the proposed programs to programs offered by the constituent institution in terms of both academic standards and standards for student support.

C.   Degree-Related Distance Education Courses. The development and delivery of individual degree-related distance education courses are institutional responsibilities. Courses may be offered without prior approval of the UNC System Office. However, institutions should list these courses on their distance education web site. Proposals to offer courses or programs through the Southern Regional Electronic Campus (SREC) will be coordinated through the UNC System Office.

D.   Doctor's Degree – Professional Practice.   Professional practice doctoral program proposals (formerly First Professional program proposals, as in medicine, pharmacy, dentistry, veterinary medicine, law, and others) normally involve outside reviewers in the early stages of development and in many cases an on-site review team. Other high-cost programs may also be addressed in the same manner. Constituent institutions should consult with the UNC System Office before beginning to prepare a Professional Practice program proposal.

E.   Joint Degree Programs. Joint Degree programs result in the awarding of a single joint degree by two or more UNC constituent institutions or by a UNC constituent institution and non-UNC educational institution.   Joint degree programs must be approved through the regular institutional processes and have the approval of the chancellor of each participating UNC institution before submission to the UNC System Office for review and presentation to the board for approval.

Proposals for joint degree programs must include documentation that, at minimum, the fundamental elements of the following institutional processes have been agreed to by the partners:

1.   Admission process;

2.   Registration and enrollment process for students;

3.   Committee process for graduate students;

4.   Plan for charging and distributing tuition and fees;

5.   Management of transcripts and permanent records;

6.   Participation in graduation; and

7.   Design of diploma.

Each student who will receive a Joint Degree must be approved by each UNC institution whose name will appear on the diploma using the institutional process for certifying a student to receive a degree.

F.   Dual Degree Programs. A Dual Degree program involves two academic units, either at the same institution or at different institutions, including non-UNC institutions, in a formal agreement to offer two degrees as part of a program of study that will result in a student being awarded both degrees (two diplomas). While such programs offer the advantage that some course work may count for each degree, the requirements for each of the two degrees in a Dual Degree program must be substantially equivalent to the requirements for a student taking only one of the degrees. For example, a juris doctorate and an MBA could be linked in a Dual Degree program. While SACSCOC must approve dual degree arrangements, these arrangements are considered by the UNC System Office as articulation agreements among existing degree programs and do not require additional approval by the UNC System Office or the Board.

G.   Expedited Program Review. While board policy requires that the academic program planning and evaluation process achieve a balance between responsiveness, due diligence, and a state-wide outlook, it also necessitates development of expedited program review processes for circumstances when rapid response is warranted.   A request for an expedited review will be warranted where there is an extraordinary need to have a program start up immediately to meet a clear state need, or to announce immediately that the program will be available at a certain future time. An example might be the need for a degree program as part of a state effort for recruiting or expanding business, industry, or a governmental function. An expedited review will

not require a request for permission to plan, and some or all external review requirements may be eliminated at the discretion of the UNC System Office academic affairs leadership.

H.   Discontinuation of Academic Degree Programs. The Board of Governors has the authority to establish and discontinue degree programs. A constituent institution may recommend the discontinuation of a degree program at any time. The proposal for discontinuation should provide a reasonable time for currently-enrolled students to complete their academic requirements or provide an alternative way for these students to complete their program of study. The constituent institution may submit a letter for approval to reinstate the degree program within five years of its discontinuation.

I.   Program Consolidation. Constituent institutions may request that two or more existing degree programs be discontinued in order to be combined in a single degree program. If the resulting consolidated program differs substantively from the component programs in both curricular requirements and program classification, then the constituent institution must complete an abbreviated request for establishment for expedited review by the UNC System Office and approval by the Board as a new degree program. Alternately, a constituent institution may seek to discontinue one or more degree programs to become concentrations or tracks within another degree program whose core requirements and program classification will otherwise not change. In this case, the request for establishment and board approval as a new program are not required, but for the programs to be discontinued, the request to discontinue must be completed and approved by the board. Constituent institutions should work closely with the UNC System Office to assure the correct steps are taken for consolidation requests.

III.   Academic Program Evaluation. In accordance with state statutes and on behalf of the Board of Governors, the UNC System Office shall manage a biennial program review process in cooperation with constituent institutions.[ii] All academic degree programs are to be reviewed against criteria specifically developed to determine program productivity. The review may result in either decisions to strengthen programs that are or can reasonably be made productive or in program discontinuation. Availability of educational opportunities for North Carolina citizens, including racial and geographic diversity, are also considered.

IV.   Other Matters

A.   Effective Date. The requirements of this regulation shall be effective on the date of adoption of this regulation by the president.

B.   Relation to Federal and State Laws and Policies. The foregoing regulation as adopted by the president is meant to supplement, and does not purport to supplant or modify, those statutory enactments, regulations, and policies which may govern or relate to the subject matter of this regulation.

Process for Planning and Establishment of New Baccalaureate Degree Program:

Letter of Intent Review	Letter of Intent submitted to UNC System Office *UNC System Office acknowledges receipt* **within 48 hrs.**	*Within four weeks*	UNC System Office responds with approval to move forward with request *or* UNC System Office responds with questions; campus replies **within four weeks**	UNC System Office approves and invites submission of Request to Establish	Campus submits Request to Establish **within four months**

Request to Establish Review	Request to Establish submitted to UNC System Office *UNC System Office acknowledges receipt* **within 48 hrs.**	*Within four weeks*	UNC System Office responds that proposal is complete *or* UNC System Office requests information; campus replies **within four weeks**	Completed Request to Establish is posted to Academic Planning Website for **four weeks** for system-wide review and comments	UNC System Office reviews comments received	*Within two weeks*	UNC System Office is prepared to make recommendation to EPPP Committee *or* Campus notified of any remaining issues; campus replies **within four weeks**	UNC System Office makes recommendation to EPPP Committee

Board of Governors Action	Upon UNC System Office recommendation degree program brought to next EPPP Committee meeting	Upon EPPP Committee approval degree program brought to next Board of Governors meeting	Board of Governors acts on EPPP Committee recommendation

Process for Planning and Establishment of New Master's Degree Program:

Letter of Intent Review	Letter of Intent submitted to UNC System Office *UNC System Office acknowledges receipt **within 48 hrs.***	*Within four weeks*	UNC System Office responds with approval to move forward with request *or* UNC System Office responds with questions; campus replies ***within four weeks***	UNC System Office approves and invites submission of Request to Establish	Campus submits Request to Establish ***within four months***

Request to Establish Review	Request to Establish submitted to UNC System Office *UNC System Office acknowledges receipt **within 48 hrs.***	*Within four weeks*	UNC System Office responds that proposal is complete *or* UNC System Office requests information; campus replies ***within four weeks***	Completed Request to Establish forwarded to the UNC Graduate Council for ***four-week*** review period. Graduate deans submit campus comments to UNC System Office for information and consideration	UNC System Office reviews comments received	*Within two weeks*	UNC System Office is prepared to make recommendation to EPPP Committee *or* Campus notified of any remaining issues; campus replies ***within four weeks***	UNC System Office makes recommendation to EPPP Committee

Board of Governors Action	Upon UNC System Office recommendation degree program brought to next EPPP Committee meeting	Upon EPPP Committee approval degree program brought to next Board of Governors meeting	Board of Governors acts on EPPP Committee recommendation

Process for Planning and Establishment of New Doctoral Degree Program:

Letter of Intent Review	Letter of Intent submitted to UNC System Office *UNC System Office acknowledges receipt **within 48 hrs.***	*Within four weeks*	UNC System Office responds that proposal is complete *or* UNC System Office requests information; campus replies **within four weeks**	Completed Letter of Intent is forwarded to the UNC Graduate Council for review and discussion/vote at the **next quarterly** Graduate Council meeting	*Within two weeks*	If Council vote is positive and key decision-making criteria are met, UNC System Office will authorize permission to plan new doctoral program *or* If Council vote is negative, campus may revise and resubmit Letter of Intent. Campus resubmits **within four weeks**	UNC System Office/EPPP approves and invites submission of Request to Establish	Campus submits Request to Establish **within four months**

Request to Establish Review	Request to Establish submitted to UNC System Office *UNC System Office acknowledges receipt **within 48 hrs.***	*Within four weeks*	UNC System Office responds that proposal is complete *or* UNC System Office requests information; campus replies **within four weeks**	Completed Request to Establish is forwarded by UNC System Office to selected external reviewers	*Within ten weeks*	External reviews sent to campus / campus notified whether reviews will be sent to Graduate Council Subcommittee Graduate Council will be given access to external reviewers' comments	***Next quarterly meeting*** ***Next quarterly meeting***	Proposal presented to Graduate Council UNC System Office is prepared to make recommendation to EPPP Committee *or* If utilized, Graduate Council Subcommittee will respond to UNC System Office	UNC System Office makes recommendation to EPPP Committee

Board of Governors Action	Upon UNC System Office recommendation degree program brought to next EPPP Committee meeting	Upon EPPP Committee approval degree program brought to next Board of Governors meeting	Board of Governors acts on EPPP Committee recommendation

Process to Request New Delivery Mode for Existing Degree Program (any degree level):

Request to Deliver Review	Request to Deliver submitted to UNC System Office *UNC System Office acknowledges receipt* **within 48 hrs.**	*Within four weeks*	UNC System Office responds with approval to move forward with request *or* UNC System Office responds with questions; campus replies **within four weeks**	UNC System Office approves and posts Request to Deliver for system-wide review and comments for **thirty days**	If no comments are received, UNC System Office responds that proposal is complete and grants approval *or* UNC System Office requests information; campus replies **within four weeks**

*Supersedes Section 400.1.1[R] of the same title, originally adopted May 6, 2009, and amended August 26, 2013.

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[1]See Section 400.1.5[R] of the UNC Policy Manual.
[2]Relevant statutes are S.L. 1993-407 and G.S. 116-11(3).