Approval Process for New Academic Degree Programs, Program Modifications ("Spin-Offs") and Phase Out of Programs

University of Michigan - Ann Arbor Campus

All new academic programs leading to a new field of study (concentration or major) and/or a new degree must go through a series of internal and external review and approval processes before the program can be implemented and marketed to potential students. This document outlines the basic steps an academic unit must take to obtain the appropriate levels of approval.

Levels of Approval

All proposals for new programs will require some or all of the following levels of approval in the sequential order listed:

1. Department and School/College
2. Rackham Graduate School (Rackham) (may be necessary, see detail below)
3. Provost's Office
4. Board of Regents (may be necessary, see detail below)
5. Michigan Association of State Universities (MASU) 
   Formerly Presidents Council, State Universities of Michigan (PCSUM)

1. Department and School/College: An academic unit planning a new academic program will need to begin the process by following the prescribed internal procedures for obtaining approval within its own department/school/college.
   During this stage of the planning and approval process, the Dean of your school/college should discuss your plans with the Provost (and the Provost's Office). If the new program represents a major change in academic programming such as a new degree level for your unit or a new degree designation, the discussion should focus on how the new program fits into the long-range directions of your department and school/college. These academic planning discussions should cover issues related to resource needs and allocations, program size, impact on other U-M programs or units, the appropriateness of the intended degree designation or level for your unit, and the like.
   If the proposal is for a new concentration/major within an existing degree that your school/college is authorized to award, discussions with the Provost will focus on issues such as the fit of the new program with planned directions for your unit and whether it is duplicative of other existing programs in other units on campus.

2. Rackham: If the new program will fall under Rackham's administrative umbrella the next step is to submit your proposal to the Rackham Graduate School. See Guidelines for Developing and Revising Rackham Graduate Programs at rackham.umich.edu/faculty_staff/information_for_programs/directors/developing_graduate_programs/

3. Provost’s Office: The next step in the process is to submit your proposal to Tammy Bimer, Associate Vice Provost for Academic and Budgetary Affairs (763-9983 or tammyc@umich.edu), who coordinates the approval process in the Provost’s Office. The Provost’s Office is then responsible for seeing that your proposal is moved forward through the final two steps in the process.

4. Board of Regents: Board of Regents approval is needed only if you are proposing a new degree level for your unit (e.g., a new bachelor’s degree program in a unit that previously offered only graduate degrees) or a new degree designation (e.g., recent new degrees in this category include the Master of Health Informatics and Master of Entrepreneurship). Proposals for new concentrations/majors within an existing degree do not need Regental approval.

5. Michigan Association of State Universities (MASU): The last stage of approval is at the state level through the Academic Affairs Officers Committee of MASU. The Academic Affairs Officers Committee includes representatives from all of Michigan’s 15 public universities. All required steps for internal approval must be completed before a program can be submitted to MASU for review. Once you have received notice of approval by MASU, you can move forward with implementing the new program and advertising it.

If you have any questions about what levels of approval are needed for your proposal, contact Tammy Bimer (763-9983 or tammyc@umich.edu).
Submission Procedures

Considerations in the Review of Academic Programs

In presenting new program proposals, institutions are expected to address the issues of need, adequacy of resources, academic quality and consistency with institutional mission and future directions.

Institutional Mission and Future Direction. It is expected that new programs and modifications of existing programs will be aligned with the institution's mission and strategic goals. Therefore, how the proposed program is consistent with the institution's stated mission and plans for the future should be articulated.

Need. With respect to the need for the proposed program, questions such as the following are examined: What is the rationale for the proposed program? How does the proposed program fill or address identified needs? Will the program serve a specified purpose in the local community, a particular region, the state as a whole or within a particular discipline, field, or profession? Are there similar programs offered by other institutions in the state or region? If so, how does the proposed program differ? Will the new program provide access to underserved constituencies?

Resources. Faculty, infrastructure costs (space, renovations, etc.), lab & computer equipment/software/databases, administrative staff, and other needs (e.g., library, marketing, etc.) are recognized as being essential for quality academic programs. So in addition to consideration of program need, recognition is given to the availability and source of funds to provide adequate support for the proposed new program. Does the program require one-time or ongoing infrastructure costs? How will the resources allocated to a new initiative impact funding for existing programs? Will new faculty need to be hired? Does the proposed program require extensive new expenditures for computers, laboratory space or equipment, and library holdings? Finally, will the addition of the proposed program represent an effective and efficient use of institutional resources?

Quality. While each institution attends to the issue of quality control in the development of academic programs, the Academic Affairs Officers Committee systematically reviews proposals noting in particular curricular design, faculty qualifications, plans for learning assessment and support services. The objective is to assure that new programs are not only needed and can be adequately supported, but that high standards will prevail in all such academic endeavors.

All of the above criteria and considerations apply to both undergraduate and graduate programs. Additionally, for post-baccalaureate level programs, special attention is given to such matters as faculty quality, as indicated by publications, externally funded projects, and specialized expertise. Questions may include: What are the trends in the profession? Does the proposed program conform to existing accreditation standards? Do (or will) faculty have the requisite skill and experience to provide a high quality opportunity? Does the proposed curriculum reflect the best thinking on the future of the profession?

Program Definitions

New Academic Programs or Major Revisions involve the introduction of (1) new majors; (2) new degrees including degree changes (for example, Ed.D. to Ph.D.); or (3) a major revision to an existing program. A new program in most cases will result in a new major or degree offering. In many cases, a new program will add new faculty and/or staff, may utilize existing campus resources, and reflect a new set of needs in professional practice and the regional workforce. Additionally, a new program or major revision will include either a substantial proportion of new courses or some significant combination of interdisciplinary offerings that do not currently exist within an existing degree program. The key distinction for a major revision is that it requires significant new curricular elements beyond what currently exists and is likely to require additional resources. A conversion of a minor or concentration to a stand-alone major is a new program.

Program Modifications (*spin-offs*) represent new options, new combinations of existing curricula, and title changes. Program modifications may resemble new programs in a number of ways, but will differ in terms of the number of new courses and additional resources required for the offering of the program. In many cases, a program modification will simply reflect minor changes to existing programs, which adapt to evolving needs in the field of study.

Program modification proposals do not require full documentation and review; however, they must be channeled through the review process, even though such programs ordinarily refer to initiatives or developments too minor to require actions by the Academic Affairs Officers Committee.

Choosing between a program modification and a major revision for the purposes of review is a matter of professional judgment. Our suggestion is that if there is any question about whether a program is a major revision or a modification, it is better to submit as the former. In the event that a proposed program modification is challenged at a meeting of the academic officers, a majority vote, as defined under
“Procedures,” shall determine whether the program will be considered a “major revision” program requiring resubmission with full documentation, discussion, and a vote.

Phase Out of Programs represent academic programs that an institution plans to eliminate from its suite of offerings. Institutions are expected to report all major program deletions and phase-outs for informational purposes only. Like approved programs, the phased-out programs will be reported to the legislature but are not included in the actual legislative language. Phase-out programs do not require formal approval from the Academic Affairs Officers committee.

Minors and certificates. Minors, concentrations, and certificates are not reviewed by the Academic Affairs Officers (AAO) Committee, nor will these types of program changes be reported to the legislature.

The same proposal can be submitted for both Rackham approval and MASU approval if the proposal covers all elements required by both Rackham and MASU.

Use common U-M acronyms only after you have fully spelled out what they stand for the first time they are mentioned. For example, “CoE” should be referenced first as the "College of Engineering (CoE)". Please keep in mind that your proposal will be reviewed by individuals at each of the other 14 Michigan public universities who will not be familiar with our local terminology.

Your proposal may require editing by the Provost’s Office before it’s submitted for approval to MASU. Usually such editing is minor. However, if there is a need for more substantive revision, the academic unit submitting the proposal will be contacted for their consent to the changes. Units will be sent a copy of the final version of the proposal that’s submitted to MASU.

Proposal Format

In general, the version of the proposal submitted to the Provost’s Office must be in an electronic format that can be edited using software such as MS Word or MS Excel. It can be sent in separate parts if different electronic formats are used. For example, the main narrative document could be in Word and an appendix could be in Excel. A separate .pdf document is acceptable for anything that would not need editing, such as a cover memo confirming the approval of the proposal by the submitting unit and containing the signature of the dean.

Schedule and Deadlines

To determine the schedule and deadlines for obtaining approval for your program, you must first ascertain what levels of approval are needed. Once you know that, it is often easiest to figure out your timing by working backwards in time from when you would like to implement your program. Since the last step in the process prior to implementation is approval by MASU, you should start by viewing their meeting schedule. The Academic Affairs Officers meet only four times a year in October, January, April, and June. All new program proposals to be reviewed by the MASU Academic Affairs Officers group at a given meeting must be submitted six weeks prior to the meeting. Here is the Academic Year 2016-17 schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting Date</th>
<th>Proposal Submission Deadline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friday, Oct. 14, 2016 / Lansing</td>
<td>Friday, Sept. 2, 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, Apr. 21, 2017 / Lansing</td>
<td>Friday, Mar. 10, 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday &amp; Friday, June 8-9, 2017 / Location TBA</td>
<td>Thursday, May 5, 2017</td>
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MASU Schedule for the current year is also posted separately. provost.umich.edu/programs/new_program_approval/pres_council_sched.html

If **Regental approval is not needed** for your proposal, it should be sent to Tammy Bimer, tammyc@umich.edu, a minimum of two weeks before the MASU submission deadline.

**If Regental approval is needed**, it should be approved no later than the Regents meeting that precedes the MASU submission deadline. Board of Regents Meeting Dates: regents.umich.edu/meetings/meetdates/

**Obtaining approval within your academic unit and by Rackham (if necessary) must occur before submitting your proposal to the Provost’s Office and thereby to the Regents and/or MASU.**

Other Administrative Tasks and Follow-up

Before beginning the approval process for your proposal, consult with Peggy Guevara <pguevara@umich.edu> in the Office of the Registrar to discuss procedures for setting up your new program in the Student Administration System. Occasionally, there can be technical issues that need further discussion and resolution in order to properly reflect the intent of the program in our student data systems. It is better to identify these problems sooner rather than later in the process so as not to slow down the
implementation of your program once it’s been approved. Also, the resolution of any issues or problems may affect the content of your proposal.

New and Spin-Off programs can be submitted for review and AAO Committee approval prior to Institutional Governing Body (IGB) approval as indicated on the APR cover sheet. Programs will only be accepted prior to final IGB approval if the IGB is scheduled to review the program before the date of the AAO committee meeting at which the program will be reviewed. If the program is modified or not approved by the Institutional Governing Body, the university must notify MASU within two business days after the IGB’s action and the institution must go through the APR process again.

For each category – New Program/Major Revision, Program Modification, and Phase Out/Drop – there is an MASU cover sheet that needs to be completed, signed and included as the first two sheets of the PDF program proposal that is submitted on the APR online database. MASU staff will not approve a program for distribution that does not have a fully completed cover sheet.

Cover sheets

- **New Program/Major Revision**
  [provost.umich.edu/programs/new_programApproval/New_Program_Major_Revision_Cover_Sheet.pdf](provost.umich.edu/programs/new_programApproval/New_Program_Major_Revision_Cover_Sheet.pdf)

- **Program Modification**
  [provost.umich.edu/programs/new_programApproval/Program_Modification_Cover_Sheet.pdf](provost.umich.edu/programs/new_programApproval/Program_Modification_Cover_Sheet.pdf)

- **Phase Out/Drop Program**
  [provost.umich.edu/programs/new_programApproval/Phase_Out_Drop_Program_Cover_Sheet.pdf](provost.umich.edu/programs/new_programApproval/Phase_Out_Drop_Program_Cover_Sheet.pdf)

**Checklist of Elements to Address.** MASU does not require a common format for each proposal, as each campus has its own guidelines.

At minimum, each **New Program/Major Revision** proposal should address the following checklist of elements:

1. What related programs exist?
2. Rationale
3. Curriculum Design
4. New Course Descriptions
5. Projected Enrollments
6. Scheduling Plans
7. Program Costs
8. Description of Available/Needed Equipment
10. Internal Status of Proposal
11. Planned Implementation Date
12. Library and Other Learning Resources
13. Specialized Facilities, Including External Sites as Required
14. Accreditation Requirements

At a minimum, **Program Modification** proposals should address the following checklist of elements:

1. Related Programs – own and other
2. Rationale
3. Curriculum Design
4. New Course Descriptions
5. Planned Implementation Date
6. Accreditation Requirements

The Provost’s Office will notify you once MASU has approved your proposal.

If you have any questions about approval process in general or the specifics of your proposal, please contact Tammy Bimer, Office of Budget and Planning, 523 South Division Street, Room 2225, campus zip 2912, or tammyc@umich.edu.

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