

Council on Postsecondary Education New Academic Programs: Policy and Procedures

The Council on Postsecondary Education has statutory authority to approve new academic programs at state colleges and universities. KRS 164.020 (15) empowers the Council to define and approve the offering of all postsecondary education technical, associate, baccalaureate, graduate, and professional degree, certificate, or diploma programs in the public postsecondary education institutions.

KRS 164.020 (19) allows the Council to postpone the approval of any new program at a state postsecondary educational institution, unless the institution has met its equal educational opportunity goals as established by the Council. In accordance with administrative regulations promulgated by the Council, those institutions not meeting the goals shall be able to obtain a temporary waiver if the institution has made substantial progress toward meeting its equal educational opportunity goals.

In September 2011, the Council approved a new policy and procedures for academic program approval at public institutions. The policy and procedures reflect best practices, reinforce state-level and institutional policies to create a more coordinated approach to academic programming, and better connect academic program approval with the review of existing academic programs. The policy goes into effect on January 1, 2012.

The approval of new academic programs is one of the main responsibilities of state higher education coordinating boards. Reasons for approving new academic programs at the state level include determination of quality maintenance or improvement, need and demand, consistency with institutional mission, unnecessary duplication, cost efficiency and effectiveness, and consumer protection.

The CPE academic program approval process consists of two stages.

Stage 1 (Pre-proposal): Institutions submit information on the proposed program, such as justification for creating the program, evidence that the program is aligned with an institution's mission, the state's postsecondary education Strategic Agenda, and the statewide strategic implementation plan, student demand for the program, employment opportunities for graduates, evidence of sufficient resources to offer the program, and (if applicable) efforts to explore collaboration with other institutions with similar programs. This information will be posted for 45 days in order to allow comments from the Chief Academic Officers of institutions within the State, and the CPE Staff will work to resolve any issues that may arise.

Stage 2 (Full Proposal): If Council staff approves the pre-proposal, the institution will then submit, within eighteen months, a full program proposal that has been approved by the institutional governing board. After Council review, the program is placed on provisional status and will be subject to a post-implementation review after a period that depends on the level (e.g., baccalaureate, masters, doctoral) of the program.

NOTE: New programs are > 24 credit hours at the undergraduate level, and > 18 at the graduate level. Sub-Associate degrees require KCTCS BOR approval before CPE posting (all lower division credit hours).