



MANUAL OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Title REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF EXISTING ACADEMIC PROGRAMS	Number 101	Page 1 of 3
	Date 10/29/2009	

Purpose

The overall purpose of the policy is to support the mission of the VSC: for the benefit of Vermont, to provide affordable, high quality, student-centered and accessible education, fully integrating professional, liberal, and career study. To fully implement this mission, VSC academic programs must be of high quality and remain current, competitive, and cost-effective. Through this policy, the Board of Trustees charges the colleges with and establishes guidelines for an Academic Program Review: a VSC-wide review of degree programs by discipline to assess how well programs fulfill the VSC mission, demonstrate high quality through student outcomes and contribute to the academic and financial viability of the college and system. Generally 4-6 disciplines will be reviewed annually, establishing a five-year review cycle for most programs.

This policy affects graduate, baccalaureate and associate degree programs. The criteria and processes for the Academic Program Review follow. This policy is designed to complement Policy 109: Annual Enrollment Review.

Academic Program Review: Policy and Procedures

VSC academic programs must be of high quality and remain current, competitive, and cost-effective. The Academic Program Review will assess programs system-wide by discipline to determine how well they meet the criteria listed below, how the programs might be strengthened by specific program improvement measures, and if and how collaboration across colleges might benefit the programs. New programs may be exempt from a particular academic program review cycle, generally if they have been in existence fewer than three years and with the approval of the Chancellor.

The primary criteria for Academic Program Review include the extent to which degree programs:

1. align with and support the mission of the VSC and the college.
2. complement, extend and/or diversify the educational offerings of the entire VSC.
3. integrate liberal, professional and career study.
4. demonstrate high quality instruction through student learning outcomes .
5. achieve defined graduate outcomes as demonstrated through valid and reliable assessment processes.
6. maintain currency and competitiveness vis-a-vis similar programs in other institutions, and strengthen the overall reputation of the college.

7. assist in meeting specific regional, state, and/or student needs.
8. provide a clear and viable career path for program completers.
9. remain cost-effective, and strengthen the fiscal stability of the college.

Criteria may be established for particular program reviews to reflect unique challenges or other considerations, as stipulated in advance by the Chancellor in consultation with the Council of Presidents.

The process for Academic Program Review by discipline follows:

1. The Council of Presidents will recommend to the Board of Trustees Education/ Personnel/ Student Life Committee (EPSL) the discipline or disciplines to be reviewed, and the timeline for their review.
2. By June of each year, the Presidents will submit to the Chancellor a report on each program identified for review that includes:
 - a. a description of the program and how it supports the mission of the VSC and college.
 - b. an analysis of curricular coherence and currency.
 - c. an analysis of student outcomes based on a comprehensive program assessment plan and clearly defined student learning outcomes by major.
 - d. a review of job placement and/or continuing education trends among recent graduates.
 - e. an analysis of how the program meets student, regional and/ or State needs, including any formal partnerships or articulations associated with the program.
 - f. longitudinal enrollment, retention and graduation data, and a description of strategies to improve retention and graduation rates and any plans to increase enrollment.
 - g. a review of faculty workload and productivity, including evidence of ongoing professional development and pedagogical and curricular currency among faculty.
 - h. an analysis of feedback from students nearing completion of the program at the time of review.
 - i. an analysis of the costs associated with the program in relation to its contribution to the college's financial stability.
 - j. rationale for any deviation from general VSC maximum credit guidelines, including:
 - a) graduation requirements generally do not exceed 62 credits for an associate degree in arts/ sciences, 68 credits for an associate degree in technical/ applied sciences, 122 credits for a baccalaureate degree, 128 credits for a baccalaureate degree in engineering/ technology, and 36 credits for a masters degree; b) a general education program accounts for approximately 1/3 of an undergraduate degree; c) baccalaureate degree major requirements generally range up to 50 credits.
 - k. an analysis of program strengths, weaknesses, and a plan for program improvement.
3. By June of each year, the Council of Presidents will establish committees to review the program reports. Generally, each committee will comprise 5-8 people, including VSC faculty and administrators and two members external to the VSC.

4. Each committee will submit an analysis of the reports to the Chancellor, including any preliminary recommendations for strengthening particular programs and any recommendations for collaboration of programs across colleges.
5. The Council of Presidents will review all committee reports prior to their submission to EPSL, and will make recommendations to EPSL regarding the status of all programs under review (see four categories below) and program improvement strategies, with particular note made of any recommendations that include collaboration and/ or consolidation as well as any concerns about program quality.
6. Before December 1, EPSL will review all committee reports and the recommendations of the Council of Presidents, and submit a resolution to the full Board of Trustees regarding the status of all programs under review (see four categories below).
7. Before December 1, the Board of Trustees will place all degree programs under review in one of four categories:

Approve: The program is approved for continuation. Programs recommended for continuation may be subject to review in subsequent years based on the criteria established above. Presidents may be charged with implementing specific program improvement strategies.

Approve with Follow-Up Report Required: The program is approved for continuation. Presidents are charged to work with faculty/ academic staff to report back to the Chancellor in specified time period on progress made in relation to specific program improvement strategies. Programs recommended for continuation may be subject to review in subsequent years based on the criteria established above.

Approve with Conditions and Follow-Up Report Required: The program will continue with major modifications or under specific conditions as determined by the Board of Trustees. Presidents are charged to work with faculty/ academic staff to implement specified actions or face termination of program. Progress reports must be submitted to the Chancellor by a specified date. In addition, programs placed in this category may be subject to subsequent review, based on the criteria established above.

Terminate: The program will be terminated. The determination from the Board of Trustees will include consultation with the faculty and contain a phase-out plan including reassignment or termination/ non-reappointment of faculty/ academic staff associated with the terminated program. The phase-out plan will ensure that any students enrolled in the program can complete it within a reasonable time period, as determined by the college.

The colleges also may be charged with consolidating particular programs and/ or strengthening collaboration between particular programs to meet the criteria above and to address any unnecessary duplication.