

Draft Program Approval Policy

Background

On March 17, 2016, Speaker of the House Todd Richardson and House Higher Education Committee chair Steve Cookson directed the Missouri Department of Higher Education (MDHE) to convene stakeholders to begin a process of reviewing the current structure of higher education in Missouri. The letter indicated that the review should include, but not be limited to, recommendations on the overall structure of public two- and four-year institutions, varying institutional missions, and the degree review and approval process. The MDHE has convened a task force to address the issues identified in the letter. The task force formed a subcommittee of chief academic officers (CAOs) to address the degree review and approval process. Because this process to some extent also involves independent institutions, the subcommittee includes representation from that sector and will make recommendations relating to the process for all institutions of higher education.

The following draft is based, in part, on the structure and format of the review processes in Indiana, Texas, and Maryland, as well as current CBHE policies and practices. The draft has been refined substantially after discussion with the subcommittee and other CAOs. It provides a general framework for determining which level of review is appropriate and an overview of the requirements and process associated with each level. After the subcommittee, task force, and CBHE approve the policy framework, MDHE staff will work with the Council of Chief Academic Officers to define additional details, which will eventually be promulgated as regulations.

Objectives

This draft is aimed at outlining a process that achieves three objectives:

1. Ensure Missouri's higher education institutions offer rigorous, high-quality, student-centered programs that effectively serve the citizens of the state while supporting statewide goals, regional workforce demands, and institutional needs.
2. Ensure Missouri's higher education institutions make efficient use of state resources, maintain high standards, collaborate to the maximum extent possible, and design programs that avoid unnecessary duplication at the regional and state levels.
3. Streamline the academic program review and approval process.

General Approach

The MDHE proposes a review process that involves three levels of review: Staff review, which applies to minor changes; routine review, which will likely apply to most new program proposals; and comprehensive review. The following table provides a general framework for determining which level of review is appropriate and an overview of the requirements and process associated with each level. As indicated above, after the subcommittee, task force, and CBHE approve the policy framework, MDHE staff will work with the Council of Chief Academic Officers to define additional details, which will eventually be promulgated as regulations. Many terms and concepts will require further definition. Those that have been identified in early discussions are italicized in the following text and listed at the end of the document.

	Staff Review	Routine Review	Comprehensive Review
Applies To	<p>Minor program changes can be addressed through a simple staff review. Examples of these changes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Change of program title</i> • <i>Combination programs</i> • <i>Single-semester certificate programs</i> • <i>One-year certificate programs</i> • Adding an <i>option</i> to an existing program • Moving an existing program to <i>inactive status</i> • <i>Program deletion</i> 	<p>Proposals that do not constitute a significant change in an institution’s current role, scope, or mission will be reviewed under the routine review process. In order to qualify for the routine review process, the proposed program must meet <u>all</u> of the following criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The program is clearly within the institution’s <i>CBHE-approved mission</i>. For purposes of this process, “mission” means the population the institution serves; the level and array of degrees, programs, and services it offers; and any special or unique features; 2. The program will be offered within the proposing institution’s <i>CBHE-approved service region</i>; 3. The program will not <i>unnecessarily duplicate</i> an existing program in the <i>applicable geographic area</i>; 4. The program will be offered at an approved site; 5. The program will build on existing programs and faculty expertise; and 6. The cost to launch the program will be minimal and within the institution’s current operating budget. <p>In addition, the following proposals will generally be considered under the routine review process:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Substantive curricular changes to an existing program.</i> 2. The addition of an approved program at a <i>CBHE-approved off-site location</i>. 3. New degree programs that are offered in collaboration with an institution already approved to offer such a program. 	<p>Proposals that constitute more significant changes will be subject to a comprehensive review. Proposed programs that meet <u>any one</u> of the following will be subject to a comprehensive review:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The program is outside an institution’s <i>CBHE-approved mission</i>. For purposes of this process, “mission” means the population the institution serves; the level and array of degrees, programs, and services it offers; and any special or unique features; 2. The program will be offered outside the institution’s <i>CBHE-approved service region</i>; 3. The program will require approval from the Higher Learning Commission; 4. The institution will incur substantial costs to launch and sustain the program; 5. The program will include the offering of an engineering degree that falls within the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) code of 14; 6. The program will include the offering of a doctoral degree; 7. The program will include the offering of a professional degree; or 8. The program will include the offering of an education specialist degree.
Institution Must Provide	A basic description of the change on forms provided by the MDHE.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>General information about the proposed program</i>; 2. <i>Certification</i> that the proposal meets the criteria for routine review outlined above; and 3. <i>Certification</i> that the program meets the <i>criteria for all new academic programs</i>. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>General information about the proposed program</i>; 2. <i>Evidence</i> that the offering institution is contributing substantially to the CBHE’s <i>Blueprint for Higher Education</i> and committed to advancing the goals of that plan; 3. <i>Evidence of institutional capacity</i> to launch the program in a high-quality manner, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1. <i>An external review</i> conducted by a team including faculty experts in the discipline to be offered and administrators from institutions already offering programs in the discipline and at the degree level proposed. The review must include an assessment of the offering institution’s capacity to offer the new program in terms of general, academic, and student service

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			<p>support;</p> <p>3.2. A comprehensive cost/revenue analysis summarizing the actual costs for the program and information about how the institution intends to fund and sustain the program;</p> <p>3.3. Evidence indicating there is sufficient student interest and capacity to support the program, and, where applicable, sufficient capacity for students to participate in clinical or other external learning requirements; and</p> <p>3.4. Where applicable, a description of accreditation requirements for the new program and the institution's plans for seeking accreditation; and</p> <p>4. Evidence that the proposed program is needed, including:</p> <p>4.1. Documentation demonstrating that the program does not <i>unnecessarily duplicate</i> other programs in the <i>applicable geographic area</i>;</p> <p>4.2. Evidence indicating that the offering institution has made a good faith effort to explore the feasibility of a <i>collaborative program</i>, and if the institution has chosen not to offer the program in <i>collaboration</i> with another institution, an explanation of the rationale for that choice; and</p> <p>4.3. A rigorous analysis demonstrating a strong and compelling workforce need for the program, which might include data from a credible source, an analysis of changing program requirements, the current and future workforce and other needs of the state, and/or letters of support from local or regional businesses indicating need for the program;</p> <p>5. A clear plan to meet the articulated workforce need, including:</p> <p>5.1. Aligning curriculum with specific knowledge and competencies needed to work in the field(s) or occupation(s) described in the workforce need section;</p> <p>5.2. Providing students with external learning experiences to increase the probability that they will remain in the <i>applicable</i></p>

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			<p><i>geographic area</i> after graduation;</p> <p>5.3. A plan for assessing the extent to which the new program meets that need when implemented.</p>
Process	Proposals subject to the Staff Review process will be reviewed by MDHE staff and reported at the next CBHE meeting. Institutions must report all program changes to ensure that the state program inventory is accurate and complete.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MDHE staff review the proposal to determine if the proposed program is eligible for routine review. 2. MDHE staff post the proposal for public review and comment, along with staff's recommendation to approve the program provisionally. 3. [The final draft policy framework will describe the CBHE approval process in more detail. MDHE staff intend to discuss process changes with the CBHE that would reduce the total time required for approval of a new degree proposal under the routine review process.] 4. The five-year provisional review process currently in use applies. 5. The MDHE may charge fees commensurate with the scope of the review. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MDHE staff and other institutions review the proposal and provide feedback to the offering institution. 2. The offering institution responds to feedback. 3. [New program proposals subject to the comprehensive review process will be reviewed on the timeline currently in place. This will be detailed more thoroughly in the final draft.] 4. If approved, new programs approved under the comprehensive review process must report annually to the CBHE on the number of students completing the program, financial performance of the program, job placement rates of program graduates, success on any applicable licensure exams, and the extent to which the program is meeting the needs it was designed to address. If, by the third year of new program, it appears the program is not performing as planned in any material area, institution staff will work with MDHE staff to revise the plan, develop a plan to perform according to the original plan, or a plan to wind the program down. 5. The MDHE may charge fees commensurate with the scope of the review.

Terms to be defined:

Applicable geographic area
CBHE-approved mission
CBHE-approved off-site location
CBHE-approved service region
Certification
Change of program title
Collaborative program and collaboration
Combination programs

Comprehensive cost/revenue analysis
Criteria for all new academic programs
Evidence of contribution to CBHE Blueprint
Evidence of institutional capacity
External review
General information about the proposed program
Inactive status
One-year certificate programs

Option
Program deletion
Single-semester certificate programs
Substantive curricular changes to an existing program
Unnecessary duplication/unnecessarily duplicate
Professional Degree