



TENNESSEE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

REGULAR CALENDAR ITEM: IV. B.

MEETING DATE: July 28, 2022

SUBJECT: Academic Policy A1.1 – Academic Program Modifications

ITEM TYPE: Action

ACTION RECOMMENDATION: Approval

BACKGROUND

THEC Policy A1.1 – Academic Program Modifications establishes a process for modifying previously approved academic programs through the THEC Executive Director. Additionally, the proposed changes expand the types of programs subject to this policy beyond the elevation of a concentration to a free-standing academic program and a change in degree designation for an academic program.

These proposed changes were developed in consultation with the Chief Academic Officers at each university as well as representatives from the University of Tennessee System and the Tennessee Board of Regents. Additionally, the Tennessee Accreditation Network provided feedback on the policy in an attempt to align with SACSCOC language and policies where possible.

Below is a summary of the proposed revisions to THEC Policy A1.1 – Academic Program Modifications.

Section 1.1.1A – Program Modifications Subject to Approval

- Specific language was added to clarify the approval authority of the THEC Executive Director, including the determination whether a proposed Academic Program Modification proposal should be evaluated for consideration as a new program under the THEC Policy A1.1 - New Academic Programs: Approval Process.

Section 1.1.2A – Modifications to Currently Approved Programs

- The types of programs that can be considered under this policy was expanded to include:
 - Adding a degree designation to an existing academic program.
 - Changing the 6-digit Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) code of an approved academic program.
 - Consolidating two (2) or more existing academic programs into a single academic program.
 - Creating a joint degree program consisting of academic programs that are already approved at each participating institution.

Section 1.1.5A – Quality Assurance Funding

- Language was changed to identify that approved Academic Program Modifications will be evaluated under Quality Assurance Funding instead of Post-Approval Monitoring.

Section 1.1.7A

- The five (5) year policy review schedule was removed as the policy may be reviewed at any time.

Provided below are Attachment A (Redlined Version of Proposed Changes) and Attachment B (Clean Version of Proposed Changes) for the A1.1 – Academic Program Modifications policy.

Attachment A: Redlined Version of Proposed Changes

Section Title: Academic Policies
Policy Title: Academic Program Modifications
Policy Number: A 1.1

1.1.1A Programs ~~Modifications~~ Subject to Approval. The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) Executive Director will have approval authority for modifications to currently approved academic programs as reflected in THEC's Academic Program Inventory (API). ~~At the will of the Commission. Should the Executive Director determine a proposed Academic Program Modification would be more appropriately evaluated as a new academic program under Academic Policy A1.0 – New Academic Programs: Approval Process, which would be then considered for approval by the Commission., the Executive Director has the right to elevate an academic program modification to a new academic program as referenced in Academic Policy A1.0 which may be considered for approval by the Commission.~~

1.1.2A ~~Program~~ Modifications to Currently Approved Programs. Modifications requiring approval from THEC are limited to the following changes and may require an external review if deemed necessary by THEC staff:

- Adding an academic program degree designation to an existing program (e.g., adding a B.A. to an existing B.S.).
- Change ~~or add~~ an academic program degree designation when this change does involve a significant curriculum shift in redefining the program's purpose (e.g., B.A. to B.F.A; M.A. to M.F.A.; Ed.D. to Ph.D.).
- Changing the six-digit Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) code for an approved academic program.
- Establishing a free-standing academic program from an existing concentration that has demonstrated ~~With a steady enrollment and degrees graduation numbers awarded within both the degree designation and all concentrations under that degree~~ for

a period of the last three (3) years. This program modification may be considered only if the establishment of the concentration as a free-standing academic program does not compromise the remaining academic program and requires ~~and does not require~~ limited new ~~faculty~~ resources.

- Consolidating two (2) or more existing academic programs into a single academic program.
- Creating a joint degree program consisting of academic programs that are already approved at each participating institution.

1.1.3A Criteria for Review of Proposed Program Modifications. The Academic Program Modification (APM) ~~c~~Checklist located on the THEC website ~~represents~~specify the criteria for ~~a~~each type of academic program modification. degree designation change or addition or to establish a free-standing academic program. However, the stringency of individual criteria will depend on the specific academic program, and, in particular circumstances, other criteria may be added based on THEC staff evaluation.

1.1.4A Duplication as a Result of Proposed Modification of Currently Approved Programs. Institutions ~~should~~must examine the potential impact of any academic program modification on current academic programs offered within their institution and existing academic programs offered in public and private institutions across Tennessee to ensure the program modification would not be unnecessarily duplicative. No modification may be submitted for academic programs where annual THEC statewide and institutional degree production analyses indicate there is great potential for unnecessary program duplication. Need for any modifications must be demonstrated to and approved by the institutional governing board and THEC before development of any modifications in these academic program areas.

1.1.5A Quality Assurance Funding. Newly approved academic program modifications will be subject to Quality Assurance Funding, which is a statewide supplemental funding incentive to encourage continuous improvement of academic programs.

~~**Post-Approval Monitoring.** Performance of any newly established free-standing academic program will be evaluated annually by THEC and reported to the Commission. The monitoring period will be three years for pre-baccalaureate programs, five years for baccalaureate and Master's programs, and seven years for doctoral programs following approval.~~

1.1.6A Program Modifications to Currently Approved Programs at Tennessee Community Colleges. -Modifications of academic programs offered at the community colleges are not required to seek approval from THEC for program modifications but must be reported monthly by the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) to THEC staff.

~~**1.1.7A** Policy will be reviewed every five years unless changes in eligible academic program modifications are warranted.~~

Sources: THEC Meetings: April 22, 1988; April 19, 1996; January 29, 1997; November 14, 2002; April 26, 2007; January 27, 2011; January 29, 2015; ~~and~~ January 26, 2017; and July 28, 2022.

Attachment B: Clean Version of Proposed Changes

Section Title: Academic Policies
Policy Title: Academic Program Modifications
Policy Number: A 1.1

1.1.1A Program Modifications Subject to Approval. The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) Executive Director will have approval authority for modifications to currently approved academic programs as reflected in THEC’s Academic Program Inventory (API). Should the Executive Director determine a proposed Academic Program Modification would be more appropriately evaluated as a new academic program under Academic Policy A1.0 – New Academic Programs: Approval Process, which would be then considered for approval by the Commission.

1.1.2A Modifications to Currently Approved Programs. Modifications requiring approval from THEC are limited to the following changes and may require an external review if deemed necessary by THEC staff:

- Adding an academic program degree designation to an existing program (e.g., adding a B.A. to an existing B.S.).
- Changing an academic program degree designation (e.g., B.A. to B.F.A; M.A. to M.F.A.; Ed.D. to Ph.D.).
- Changing the six-digit Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) code for an approved academic program.
- Establishing a free-standing academic program from an existing concentration that has demonstrated steady enrollment and graduation numbers for a period of the last three (3) years. This program modification may be considered only if the establishment of the concentration as a free-standing academic program does not compromise the remaining academic program and requires limited new resources.
- Consolidating two (2) or more existing academic programs into a single academic program.

- Creating a joint degree program consisting of academic programs that are already approved at each participating institution.

1.1.3A **Criteria for Review of Proposed Program Modifications.** The Academic Program Modification (APM) checklists located on the THEC website specify the criteria for each type of academic program modification. However, the stringency of individual criteria will depend on the specific academic program, and, in particular circumstances, other criteria may be added based on THEC staff evaluation

1.1.4A **Duplication as a Result of Proposed Modification of Currently Approved Programs.** Institutions must examine the potential impact of any academic program modification on current academic programs offered within their institution and existing academic programs offered in public and private institutions across Tennessee to ensure the program modification would not be unnecessarily duplicative.

1.1.5A **Quality Assurance Funding.** Newly approved academic program modifications will be subject to Quality Assurance Funding, which is a statewide supplemental funding incentive to encourage continuous improvement of academic programs.

1.1.6A **Program Modifications to Currently Approved Programs at Tennessee Community Colleges.** Modifications of academic programs offered at the community colleges are not required to seek approval from THEC for program modifications but must be reported monthly by the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) to THEC staff.

Sources: THEC Meetings: April 22, 1988; April 19, 1996; January 29, 1997; November 14, 2002; April 26, 2007; January 27, 2011; January 29, 2015; January 26, 2017; and July 28, 2022.