



New Academic Program Approval

Approved by the Council:	June 30, 2025
Effective Date:	July 1, 2025

Approval of New Academic Programs: Policy and Procedures

History

Prior to the Postsecondary Education Improvement Act of 1997, institutions notified the Council's predecessor, the Council on Higher Education (CHE), semi-annually of new programs under development. The institution then submitted a program proposal and a two-page executive summary after the proposal had completed all institutional approvals. Staff performed the preliminary review; a Programs Committee made up of CHE members reviewed the proposals; and the full CHE acted upon the staff and Programs Committee recommendations.

In November 1997, the newly formed Council on Postsecondary Education (the Council) directed staff to review academic program policies. Until the new policies were established, staff considered a new academic program only if it documented an immediate, critical need.

- The Council streamlined its academic policies at its September 1998 meeting by directing staff to develop new procedures that “enable institutions to respond quickly to changing market demands and place primary responsibility for quality assurance with institutional governing boards, within broad system-wide guidelines that address statewide needs and protect consumer interests.”
- As a first step in streamlining, in April 1999 the Council delegated to the Kentucky Community and Technical College (KCTCS) board of regents program approval authority for new certificate, diploma, associate in arts, associate in science, associate in applied science, and associate in applied technology degree programs at the KCTCS institutions. This delegation was reaffirmed in November 2000.
- At the November 1999 meeting, the Council delegated its approval authority for new academic programs within designated program bands to each institution's governing board while retaining approval authority for first professional programs; engineering programs at the comprehensive institutions and engineering programs at the doctoral level at the University of Kentucky and the University of Louisville; teacher and school personnel preparation programs; health-related programs above the baccalaureate level; associate degree programs at public universities; and other programs falling outside each institution's negotiated program band. Proposals for new academic programs within an institution's program band were subject to a six-week public review by the chief academic officers of Kentucky's public institutions, the president of the Association of Independent Kentucky Colleges and Universities, and others. If there were no significant problems with the proposal, the institution was allowed to complete its internal process of program approval and subsequently implement the program without full Council approval.

The policy was significantly revised at the September 2011 Council meeting. Definitions were aligned to those of the U.S. Department of Education, the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). The program bands were eliminated, a notification of intent process was developed, and the program approval criteria were more closely aligned with that of the review of existing academic programs.

Between 2011 and 2016, there were revisions to IPEDS and SACSCOC definitions. In addition, both CPE staff and institutional representatives identified areas of the policy and processes that needed further clarification or alteration. CPE staff worked with institutional representatives to update the policy and procedures accordingly. In 2017, the policy was revised. The highlights of the updated policy included:

- 1) A streamlined process for certificates that are not considered substantive changes by SACSCOC.
- 2) A curricular review in the pre-proposal stages rather than in the full proposal stage.
- 3) A shorter review period to help institutions better respond to student and workforce demands.
- 4) A time limit on the submission of pre-proposals and full proposals to help the process progress smoothly and efficiently.
- 5) A more explicit connection between the academic program approval policy and the review of existing academic programs policy by requiring complete submission of the previous year's program reviews before any new programs can be proposed.

This 2020 policy revision further streamlines the process and aligns the process more closely with the information required by SACSCOC.

In June 2025 the policy was again revised to comply with legislation prohibiting approval of programs for which the primary purpose is to indoctrinate participants with a discriminatory concept.

Related Legislation

Numerous statutes and administrative regulations define the role of the Council as well as institutional authority in the area of academic programming.

- [KRS 164.003](#) goals for achievement by 2020, including a seamless, integrated system of postsecondary education strategically planned and adequately funded to enhance economic development and quality of life.
- [KRS 164.020\(15\)](#) empowers the Council to define and approve the offering of all technical, certificate, diploma, associate, baccalaureate, graduate, and professional degree at public postsecondary institutions. It also mandates that the Council expedite

the approval of requests from KCTCS for new programs of a vocational-technical and occupational nature.

- [KRS 164.020\(16\)](#) authorizes the Council to eliminate, in its discretion, existing programs or make any changes in existing academic programs at the state's postsecondary educational institutions, taking into consideration (a) consistency with the institution's mission and the strategic agenda; (b) alignment with the priorities in the strategic implementation plan for achieving the strategic agenda; (c) elimination of unnecessary duplication of programs within and among institutions; and (d) efforts to create cooperative programs with other institutions through traditional means, or by use of distance learning technology and electronic resources, to achieve effective and efficient program delivery; and (e) eliminate any program that includes a requirement for a course or training of which the primary purpose is to indoctrinate participants with a discriminatory concept.
- [KRS 164.020\(15\)\(a\)](#) restricts the Council from approving a new degree, certificate, or diploma program that includes a requirement for a course or training of which the primary purpose is to indoctrinate participants with a discriminatory concept. "Indoctrinate" means to imbue or attempt to imbue another individual with an opinion, point of view, or principle without consideration of any alternative opinion, point of view, or principle. "Discriminatory concept" means a concept that justifies or promotes differential treatment or benefits conferred to individuals on the basis of religion, race, sex, color, or national origin, unless the differential treatment or benefit is:
 - Excluded from a diversity, equity, and inclusion initiative under an exclusion set forth in subsection (7)(b) of [KRS 164.2894](#); or
 - Established or required by law, including but not limited to differential treatment or benefits on the basis of citizenship status.
- [KRS 164.125](#) allows the University of Kentucky, upon Council approval, to provide associate, baccalaureate, masters, and specialist programs. It also allows joint doctoral programs in cooperation with other public postsecondary institutions in the state; doctoral and postdoctoral programs; and professional instruction including law, medicine, dentistry, education, architecture, engineering, and social professions.
- [KRS 164.295](#) allows comprehensive universities to provide, upon Council approval, associate and baccalaureate programs as well as master's-degree programs in education, business, and the arts and sciences. It also allows for specialist degrees and programs beyond the master's-degree level to meet the requirements for teachers, school leaders, and other certified personnel. It also allows for advanced practice doctorates. Comprehensive universities may also provide programs of a community college nature as provided in KRS 164.580.
- [KRS 164.2951](#) encourages public postsecondary institutions to limit the credit-hour requirements to 60 credit hours for associate of science or associate of arts degree

programs and to 120 credit hours for bachelor of arts or bachelor of science degree programs, except in situations in which the quality and content of the program would be negatively impacted or if required by external accreditor in order to meet specific program standards.

- [KRS 164.296](#) states that no public postsecondary institution shall offer any new program of a vocational-technical occupational nature below the associate degree level without the review of KCTCS board of regents and Council approval. The KCTCS board of regents, with Council approval, may contract with public postsecondary institutions for the operation of specific programs and projects.
- [KRS 164.580](#) allows KCTCS, upon Council approval, to offer associate degree programs. Technical colleges, through their faculty and accrediting procedures, may develop degree programs that shall be considered for approval by the board of regents and the Council.
- [KRS 164.815](#) allows the University of Louisville, upon Council approval, to provide associate and baccalaureate degree programs of instruction, master's-degree programs, specialist degrees above the master's-degree level, doctoral degree programs and joint doctoral programs in cooperation with other public institutions of higher education, and professional degree programs including medicine, dentistry, law, engineering, and social professions.
- [13 KAR 2:110](#) outlines the criteria and conditions upon which an advanced practice doctorate may be approved at comprehensive universities.
- [13 KAR 2:060](#) establishes the process for equal opportunity goal setting, measurement of progress, and attainment of a temporary waiver. It is related to KRS 164.020(19).

Policy Fundamentals

- An institution may not submit a proposal unless it has submitted all academic program reviews for the preceding academic year, per the Review of Existing Academic Programs Policy.
- Institutions should recommend the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) code of the proposed program after careful consideration. CPE will review the recommendation and finalize the CIP code with the requesting institution.
- After a program is approved by the Council, an institution has up to three years to implement the program. If the program has not been implemented within this timeframe, it must undergo the new program approval process.

- If institutions advertise or publish in institutional catalogs a new academic program prior to approval by the Council, the qualifier “pending Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education approval” must be included until approval is received.
- After a program has been approved and entered into the program inventory, it is the institution’s responsibility to ensure that all information is correct and current. Institutional staff will update program information in the Kentucky Postsecondary Education System (KPEDS) Program Inventory module.
- The Council reserves the right to create special program approval processes for programs that require extraordinary consideration, such as responding to legislative requirements and administrative regulations.
- The Council is the approving body for academic programs. An institution should follow its internal processes and gain approval from its local governing board before the proposal is submitted for approval to the Council.
- Items that do not require new program approval:
 - Inclusion of new degree designations within an existing degree level.
 - Implementation of significant changes to the program provided the CIP code remains unchanged.

Merged and Separated Programs

If two academic programs are combined into one program, the combined program will be considered a new academic program and must follow the policy and procedures related to new academic programs only if it requires a new CIP code to describe accurately the discipline of the combined program.

If an existing academic program is separated into two or more academic programs, at least one of the separated programs is considered a new academic program and must follow the policy and procedures related to new academic programs. The other program will not be considered a new academic program if the existing CIP code remains the best disciplinary descriptor of the program.

Collaborative and Joint Programs

If any partner institution does not currently offer the academic program, that institution must undergo the new academic program approval process and must provide a “Memorandum of Understanding” that clearly outlines program responsibilities and fiscal arrangements among participating institutions.

If two or more institutions create a collaborative or joint program with academic programs that are already offered at each institution, then the program does not need to undergo the new academic program process at either institution. The institutions should notify the Council of the

arrangement and provide a copy of the “Memorandum of Understanding” through the KPEDS Program Inventory module.

Suspended and Closed Programs

If a program has been suspended for fewer than five years, an institution may reinstate the program through the program inventory system.

After a program has been suspended for five years, it will be considered closed, and this status will be updated automatically in the program inventory.

If a program has been closed and an institution wants to reopen the program, an institution must complete the new program approval process.

Program Approval Process for KCTCS Institutions

This section outlines the process for approving new diploma, certificate, and associate degree programs for KCTCS institutions.

New Diploma and Certificate Programs

The institution will complete a New Diploma/Certificate Form through KPEDS. Programs will be approved upon receipt of the completed form.

Associate Degree Programs of a Vocational-Technical-Occupational Nature (i.e. AAS)

KCTCS will post a proposal to online program approval system. Institutions and Council staff will have 30 days to respond to the proposal.

- *If no issues are identified with the proposal*, the program will be approved by Council staff and reported as an information item at the next Council meeting.
- *If issues are identified with the proposal*, the institution will address those via the online program approval system, and the review period will be extended. Once the issues are resolved, the program will be approved by Council staff and reported as an information item at the next Council meeting. If concerns cannot be fully resolved, the Council staff will inform KCTCS that it should not proceed with its internal process of program approval.

New Transfer-Oriented Associate Degree Programs (i.e. AA, AS, AFA)

KCTCS will post a proposal to the online program approval system. Institutions and Council staff will have 30 days to respond to the proposal.

- *If no issues are identified with the proposal*, the program will be approved by Council staff and reported as an information item at the next Council meeting.
- *If issues are identified with the proposal*, the institution will address those via the online program approval system, and the review period will be extended. Once the issues are resolved, the program will be approved by Council staff and reported as an information item at the next Council meeting. If the concerns cannot be fully resolved, the Council

staff will inform KCTCS that it should not proceed with its internal process of program approval.

Program Approval Process for Universities

This section outlines the approval process for all diploma, certificate, baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral programs at each public university.

New Diploma and Certificate Programs

The institution will complete a New Diploma/Certificate Form through KPEDS. Programs will be approved upon receipt of the completed form.

- [KRS 164.296](#) states that no public postsecondary institution shall offer any new program of a vocational-technical occupational nature below the associate degree level without the review of KCTCS board of regents and Council approval. After review of KCTCS board of regents, the institution will complete a New Diploma/Certificate Form through KPEDS.

All Degree Programs (Excluding Advanced Practice Doctorates at Comprehensive Universities)

The institution will post to the online Notification of Intent system. The notification will then be shared with the chief academic officers at the other public institutions.

- For associate degree programs, the program will only move forward if KCTCS determines, within 30 days of notification, that a community and technical college(s) in the proposing institution's area of geographic responsibility (1) does not have an interest in creating a similar program and (2) does not have the ability to implement the program in a more cost-efficient and effective manner.

If no issues are identified, the institution will then post a proposal to the online program approval system within one year. Institutions and Council staff will have 30 days to respond to the proposal.

- *If no issues are identified with the proposal*, the program will be sent to the Council for approval.
- *If issues are identified with the proposal*, the institution will address those via the online program approval system, and the review period will be extended. Once the issues are resolved, the program will be sent to the Council for approval. If concerns cannot be fully resolved, the Council staff will inform the institution that it should not proceed with its internal process of program approval.

Advanced Practice Doctorates Programs at Comprehensive Universities

The process for approval of Advanced Practice Doctorate Programs is outlined in [13 KAR 2:110](#).