



Statewide Academic Program Review Policy

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

Statewide Academic Program Review

Policy and Framework

The statewide academic program review process is a key responsibility of state coordinating boards like the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE). The process ensures that academic programs are consistent with state priorities and that public resources are used efficiently for the greater good of the Commonwealth.

History of Kentucky Statewide Academic Program Review

The Postsecondary Education Improvement Act of 1997 created CPE and outlined the criteria for program review in statute.

More specifically, KRS 164.020 (16) outlines four criteria for statewide academic program review to determine:

- Consistency with the institution's mission;
- Alignment with the state's strategic postsecondary agenda and implementation plan.
- Elimination of unnecessary duplication of programs within and among institutions.
- 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.

Statewide program review has taken several forms since the inception of CPE but each process has focused on continuous improvement as well as the operationalization of statutory criteria.

In November 1999, CPE passed a series of guidelines related to academic programs that streamlined the process of reviewing programs and recognized the need for institutional flexibility within the new postsecondary structures of the Kentucky Postsecondary Education Improvement Act of 1997. The Council's Guidelines for Review of Academic Program Productivity established degree production thresholds to identify programs for review. The Council conducted four rounds of program productivity review under these streamlined policies. At its January 30, 2006, meeting, the Council amended its Guidelines for Review of Academic Program Productivity to specify a four-year review cycle, and several more rounds of statewide review were conducted.

The statewide program review policy was revised again in 2011, with an implementation date of the 2013-14 academic year. The policy revisions were made in light of best practices, better coordination among state and institutional practices, and an improved connection between academic program approval and review of existing academic programs. CPE conducted five rounds of program reviews under this iteration of the policy.

After several iterations of policy development and numerous rounds of program review, CPE decided to do a one-time comprehensive analysis of academic programs in the state. In 2019,

CPE contracted with Gray Associates to work with universities to review all baccalaureate programs. Gray Associates assisted Council staff to create a methodology that provides campuses with consistent, detailed information to help guide decisions about program needs and improvement. The marginal financial contribution and more than 50 metrics related to student demand, employment, and competition were calculated for each program. Campus representatives participated in facilitated workshops to review these data and analyze each baccalaureate program. CPE also used this data analysis to operationalize unnecessary duplication and identify programs that met the criteria.

In June 2025, the policy was updated to reflect the Council's responsibility to eliminate programs with a primary purpose of indoctrinating participants with a discriminatory concept.

Academic Program Review Process

The program review policy incorporates elements of the comprehensive data analysis with a greater focus on program alignment with the statewide strategic agenda.

The process consists of three major components:

- Annual reports summarizing institutional review efforts;
- Statewide data analysis focused on efficiency criteria; and
- Efforts to scale up implementation of the statewide postsecondary education strategic agenda.

As part of the program review process, KRS 164.020(16) authorizes the Council to eliminate, in its discretion, existing programs or make any changes in existing academic programs at the public 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.

Institutional Annual Reports

Institutions will be required to submit an annual report by July 15th that:

- Summarizes the institutional program review process for the previous academic year, with a special emphasis on the data analyses conducted as well as summaries of meetings of university faculty, committee, or administration where data and processes were discussed;
- Highlights the programmatic decisions made during the previous academic year, with an accompanying rationale for the decision that summarizes all data sources and any supplementary information used to arrive at the stated conclusion; and
- Discusses the plans for institutional program review for the upcoming year.

CPE staff will evaluate these reports and work with institutions if any information is missing or any questions arise. Staff will provide a summary report to the Academic and Strategic Initiatives Committee as well as the full Council.

Statewide Data Analysis

CPE staff will analyze data across institutions each spring semester to determine which programs continue to meet the following criteria for unnecessary duplication:

- Multiple programs in the same CIP code;
- Low and declining enrollment;
- Low new student demand;
- Low market demand; and
- Low or negative contribution margins.

Using this operationalized definition of unnecessary duplication, CPE staff will identify potential collaborative opportunities and work with institutions to identify other potential efficiencies. Staff will provide a summary report to the Academic and Strategic Initiatives Committee and the full Council.

Statewide Strategic Agenda

The strategic agenda highlights priority areas to focus statewide discussions and strategies to accomplish our postsecondary goals. To facilitate implementation of the strategic agenda, each year CPE staff will focus on one or more of the priorities to:

- Understand existing policies and practices at institutions related to the priority;
- Identify obstacles to full implementation of initiatives related to the priority;
- Provide professional development opportunities related to the priority; and
- Evaluate campus plans to create, implement, or expand initiatives related to the priority.

Staff will provide regular updates on this process to the Academic and Strategic Initiatives Committee. In addition, staff will provide an annual report highlighting all these efforts to the full Council.

Summary

Statewide academic program review efforts will continue to monitor the efficiency of the statewide academic program portfolio while expanding the focus on the implementation of high-priority initiatives identified by the statewide postsecondary education agenda.

CPE staff will continue to update the Academic and Strategic Initiatives Committee and submit an annual report to the committee with information about the three major elements of the statewide program review process – institutional annual reports, statewide data analysis and implementation of initiatives related to the statewide agenda.