



PA State System of Higher Education Board of Governors

Effective: March 19, 1985

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POLICY 1985-01-A: REQUIREMENTS FOR INITIATION OR CHANGE OF CREDIT-BASED ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

See Also:

Adopted: March 19, 1985

Amended: October 9, 2003, January 19, 2012

A. Purpose

To provide the chancellor and the Board of Governors, and the president and council of trustees of each University, the general criteria and policies governing Board of Governors' requirements prior to initiation or change of a credit-based academic program within a University or consortium of Universities.

B. Definitions

Certificate: A formal credit-based credential designated on the academic record and awarded by an educational institution to indicate completion of a program of study that does not culminate in a degree. Certificates are not the same as *certifications* or *licenses*, which are typically awarded by third party, standard-setting bodies (not academic institutions), based on an assessment process that recognizes competencies in a particular occupational specialty as measured against a set of standards.

Certificate (sub-baccalaureate): Requires completion of an organized program of study at the postsecondary level (below the baccalaureate degree) in at least one but less than two full-time equivalent academic years, or designed for completion in at least 30 but less than 60 credit hours, or in at least 900 but less than 1,800 contact hours.

Post-baccalaureate (graduate) certificate: An award that requires completion of an organized program of study equivalent to a minimum of 18 semester credit hours beyond the bachelor's degree, but does not meet the requirements of a master's degree.

Post-master's (graduate) certificate: An award that requires completion of an organized program of study equivalent to a minimum of 24 semester credit hours beyond the master's degree, but does not meet the requirements of academic degrees at the doctoral level.

Letter of Completion: A statement of recognition designated on the academic record to indicate completion of an organized set of courses or short program of study, not culminating in a certificate.

Sub-Baccalaureate Letter of Completion: An award that requires completion of a minimum of 12 credits but less than 30 credits at the postsecondary level (below the sub baccalaureate certificate) in less than one academic year (2 semesters or 3 quarters) or in at least 360 contact hours but less than 900 contact hours.

Post-Baccalaureate Letter of Completion: An award that requires completion of a minimum of nine graduate credits beyond the bachelor's.

Post-Master's Letter of Completion: An award that requires completion of a minimum of nine graduate credits beyond the master's.

Academic Program: An instructional program leading toward an associate's, bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree or resulting in credits that can be applied to one of these degrees.

Degree Designation: Specific degree type, including but not limited to bachelor of arts, bachelor of science, master of arts, master of science, master of education, and doctor of education.

Academic Major: Main field of study in an academic program. For baccalaureate degrees, the academic major (comprised of core and cognate courses) and general education are the two principal components of the degree. For master's degrees, the academic major (common core), concentration or specialization, and capstone experience(s) are the principal components of the degree. Academic major can be a sequence of courses, activities, and/or experiences constituting a major field of study, culminating in a credit-based degree or certificate.

Academic Minor when a Major Exists: An organized program of study that comprises the fundamental requirements of the academic major (core and cognate courses) equivalent to a minimum of 18 semester credit hours. As a secondary field of study, the academic minor when a major exists comprises no more than six credits from the major field of study.

Academic Minor when no Major Exists: An organized program of study that comprises the fundamental knowledge and skills of a field of study (core and cognate courses) in which the university does not offer an academic major, equivalent to a minimum of 18 semester credit hours.

Concentration, Track, Specialization, or Emphasis: A program of study in a focused area within an academic program (i.e., degree program, not a minor), consisting of a minimum of 12 semester credit hours for baccalaureate degrees and a minimum of nine semester credit hours for master's degrees. Requirements for the concentration, track, specialization, or emphasis are included within the program of study for the academic major.

Program Change: A change in the academic program (i.e., degree designation, academic major, academic minor, concentration, track, specialization, emphasis); academic minor (i.e., when no major exists); or certificate (i.e., name of program of study).

C. Procedure

The Office of the Chancellor shall, in consultation with State System Universities, establish and review criteria for the initiation or change of credit-based academic programs.

1. Academic program proposals shall be subject to action by, or notice to, the Board of Governors or chancellor, as follows:

a. Board of Governors' Action

New academic program (i.e., bachelor's, master's, doctoral degree) – Full proposal covering criteria in Section B of the administrative procedure required.

b. Office of the Chancellor Action

New academic minor when no academic major (bachelor's degree) exists – Full proposal covering criteria in Section B of the administrative procedure required.

New letter of completion and sub-baccalaureate certificate when no academic major exists – Full proposal covering criteria in Section C of the administrative procedure required.

New graduate (post-baccalaureate) certificate when no master's degree program exists – Full proposal covering criteria in Section C of the administrative procedure required.

New post-master's certificate when no doctoral program exists – Full proposal covering criteria outlined in Section C of the administrative procedure required.

New degree designation – Letter containing rationale and supporting materials required.

c. Office of the Chancellor Notification

New concentration, track, specialization, or emphasis; new academic minor when academic major (bachelor's degree) exists; new sub-baccalaureate certificate when academic (bachelor's) major exists; new graduate (post-baccalaureate) certificate when master's degree exists; new post-master's certificate when doctoral program exists – Letter required.

Other program changes in the academic program inventory, including changes in the academic program (i.e., degree designation; academic major; academic minor; concentration, track, specialization, emphasis, CIP code); or program status (i.e., moratorium, reorganization, discontinued) –Letter required.

2. No academic program (bachelor's, master's, doctoral degree) minor, or certificate requiring approval shall be advertised or offered until the University president receives written notice from the chancellor verifying approval by the Board of Governors or chancellor.

No program change shall be announced or implemented without the appropriate action.

3. All new academic programs (bachelor's, master's, doctoral degrees) submitted for approval after January 18, 2012, must comply with the above definitions, and all previously approved programs must be in compliance by conclusion of the next program review cycle after July 1, 2012, defined as program review reports to be conducted during the 2012-2013 academic year. All programs must be in compliance as of August 1, 2015.