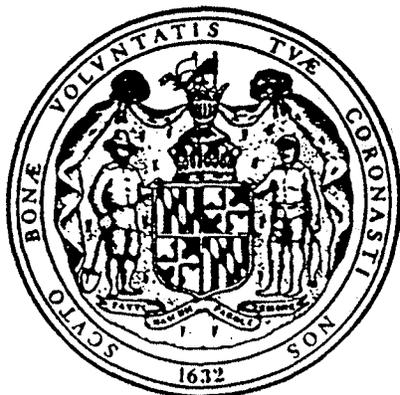


**POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
FOR
ACADEMIC PROGRAM
PROPOSALS**

**FOR DEGREE-GRANTING
COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

JANUARY, 1993



Maryland Higher Education Commission

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FOREWORD

This manual is intended to serve as a guide to Maryland higher education degree granting institutions in academic program development. It is intended for use by all Maryland higher education institutions, public and independent, two-year and four-year.

These policies and procedures were initially adopted in August, 1989. In October 1991, in response to reductions in the higher education budget, these policies were amended to prohibit the development of programs which did not meet an immediate and compelling statewide need as identified in the Maryland Plan and to support those which demonstrate access to resources adequate to implement the program.

In June, 1992, the Commission again amended these policies and procedures in response to the downturn in the economy. As amended, these policies place greater emphasis on programs central to campus mission; programs which meet a critical and compelling regional or statewide need as identified in "Investing in People;" the impact proposals have on similar low-productive programs; and the funding sources for new program initiatives.

This manual is organized into six major sections. Section I describes the statutory authority of the Commission with respect to the review of academic programs. Section II describes the delegation of responsibilities. Section III explains criteria and policies for the review process. Section IV identifies the review schedule for submitting proposals. Section V describes the steps in and academic program review process. Section VI contains guidelines used to determine the types of program actions that require submission of program proposals. Outlines of the specific information required for various types of submissions are contained in Appendices A-C and Tables I-II. A glossary of terms is also provided.

These policies and procedures will be reviewed regularly by the Commission to ensure that it remains appropriate for changing conditions.

I. STATUTORY AUTHORITY OF THE COMMISSION REGARDING
ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW AND APPROVAL/ENDORSEMENT

The Maryland Higher Education Commission has the responsibility to review academic program proposals in both the public and independent sectors of higher education. In the public sector, the Commission reviews and approves or disapproves all new programs, and substantial modifications of existing programs, including off-campus degree programs. In the independent sector, the Commission reviews and recommends or does not recommend that programs be implemented.

Programs proposed for discontinuance by institutions do not require Commission action. However, institutions are required to provide written notice to the Commission in advance of any program discontinuance. The statutes contain the following provisions with respect to the program review process:

- o A 150-day time frame for the review of completed proposals. If the Commission fails to act on a proposal within the prescribed time frame, the program is officially approved without any further action of the Commission.
- o If the Commission disapproves or acts not to endorse a proposal, the Commission is required to provide to the applicant governing board a written explanation of the reasons for the disapproval.
- o After revising a proposal to address the Commission's reasons for disapproval or lack of endorsement, the governing body may submit the revised proposal to the Commission for approval, thereby triggering a new 150-day time frame for Commission action.
- o Public institutions may not implement a program without the prior approval of the Commission.
- o If an independent institution of higher education has implemented a new or substantially modified program contrary to the recommendation of the Maryland Higher Education Commission that was based on a finding of unreasonable duplication, then the Commission may recommend that the General Assembly reduce the appropriation by the amount of aid associated with the full-time equivalent enrollment in that program. This provision does not preclude the independent institution from going forward with implementation of the new or

substantially modified program. If the Legislature reduces program funding, the affected independent institution may apply annually to the Commission for reconsideration of the program recommendation.

II. DELEGATION OF PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITY

The Maryland Higher Education Commission has delegated to the Secretary of Higher Education the responsibility and authority to act in its behalf on proposals submitted by Maryland public and independent colleges and universities for new programs and major modifications of existing programs.

This delegation is subject to the following conditions and limitations:

- (a) The Secretary shall prepare and present a report to the Commission at each meeting summarizing all actions taken since the prior report. Where appropriate, the report will include:
 - o name of academic program proposal or articulation agreement;
 - o degree to be offered;
 - o proposing institution;
 - o relationship to institutional/segment role and mission;
 - o relationship to goals, objectives, and initiatives of Statewide Plan; and
 - o disposition of the proposal.
- (b) If the Secretary disapproves or recommends against a proposal, then the affected institution shall be entitled, upon request, to have the matter reviewed by the Commission in accordance with the Commission's Rules and Procedure (COMAR 13B.04.01). An appeal procedure is described in Section V-D.
- (c) The Secretary shall, to the maximum extent feasible, use existing procedures, forms, and regulatory standards in exercising the authority delegated herein.

Additionally, the Secretary of Higher Education will report annually to the Maryland Higher Education Commission on programs experiencing low productivity.

III. CRITERIA & POLICIES FOR THE REVIEW PROCESS

Three long term goals guide the Commission's statewide planning responsibility:

- Quality in the context of statewide planning focuses on the effectiveness of institutional results. That is, the extent to which an institution fulfills its stated mission. Thus, an important question is the centrality of a proposed program to the institution's approved mission.
- Access and Choice for Maryland Citizens to Higher Education is concerned with the needs of citizens for postsecondary education programs, services, and research. Included are issues of financial assistance, transferability of credit, economic development issues and equal opportunity concerns.
- Accountability is defined as a comprehensive set of reliable and valid indicators appropriate to the mission of the campus which can assess an institution's performance against its self-definition and aspirations.

Criteria for Program Review

- o A program proposal will receive particular scrutiny in determining the extent to which it addresses the following areas:
 - Centrality to Mission and Planning Priorities, relationship to the Instructional Program Emphasis as outlined in the mission statements, and a campus priority for academic program development.
 - Critical and compelling regional or statewide need as identified in the Maryland Plan.
 - Reasonableness of Program Duplication, if any.
 - Adequacy of Curriculum Design and Related Learning Outcomes.
 - Adequacy of Faculty Resources.
 - Adequacy of Library Resources.
 - Adequacy of Physical Facilities and Instructional Equipment.

- Adequacy of Finances.
- Adequacy of Provisions for Evaluation of Program.
- Consistency with Commission's Minority Student Achievement Goals.
- Relationship to low productivity programs identified by Commission.

A. Mission and Planning Priorities

Centrality to the institutional mission as well as the established planning priorities of the institution is essential. Programs submitted by a public institution that are central to an institution's mission statement shall be eligible for approval and implementation.

In sum, the proposed program must be:

- o central to the campus mission;
- o related to the Instructional Program Emphasis as outlined in the mission statements; and
- o a campus priority for academic program development.

B. Need for the Proposed Program

The proposed program must meet a critical and compelling regional or statewide need as identified in Investing in People: The Maryland Plan for Postsecondary Education.

Demand and need for the program in terms of meeting present and future needs of the region and the State in general must be clearly stated. Two kinds of needs may be identified: 1) societal needs; and 2) occupational needs relative to upgrading vocational/technical skills or meeting job market requirements. The Commission recognizes and supports the tradition of liberal arts education and the need for higher education programs which offer individual and societal benefits that are independent of manpower or market demand considerations. Such programs provide immeasurable returns to the State in part by instilling in citizens a capacity for advanced learning and an understanding of the fundamentals of civilization.

When appropriate, institutions proposing new programs must present data projecting market demand and the availability of openings in the job market to be served by the new program. The types of information submitted will vary depending on the program but may include the following: manpower and employment projections prepared by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and

Maryland Department of Economic and Employment Development as well as professional and trade associations; and surveys of potential employers, including numbers of anticipated vacancies and training requirements. Finally, as an additional indicator of need, the institution shall clearly detail how program success will be defined and measured, particularly if such a definition includes measures in addition to the conferral of a degree or certificate.

C. Duplication of the Proposed Program

The elimination of unreasonable program duplication is a high priority. Ordinarily, proposed programs in undergraduate core programs consisting of basic liberal arts and sciences disciplines would normally not be considered unnecessarily duplicative. Unreasonable duplication is a more specific concern in vocational/technical, occupational and graduate and professional programs which meet special manpower needs. The issue of how a proposed program meets an institution's local and state area needs shall be addressed.

Evidence demonstrating that the proposed program is not duplicative of similar offerings in the State is essential. At a minimum, this must be substantiated on the basis that the proposed program or programs to be offered are not unreasonably duplicative of existing programs in a specific geographical location in the State. In determining whether a program or course of study is unreasonably duplicative, the Secretary shall consider the degree to be awarded, the area of specialization, the purpose or objectives of the program or course of study to be offered, the specific academic content of the program or course of study, evidence of the quality of the proposed program in comparison to existing programs, and an analysis of the market demand for the program. Staff analysis will also include an examination of such factors as role and mission, accessibility, alternative means of educational delivery, analysis of enrollment characteristics, and residency requirements.

D. Adequacy of Curriculum, Design and Related Learning Outcomes

The presence of a structured and coherent program of study with clearly delineated program objectives and intended student learning outcome must be evident. Required courses in the major shall not be excessive and should be consistent with customary expectations for the type of degree proposed. Likewise, the Arts and Sciences core courses should be distributed in a manner consistent with the Commission's Minimum Standards. If appropriate, the curriculum of the proposed program shall reflect the requirements of any accrediting or certifying body.

E. Faculty Resources

Faculty resources shall be adequate and appropriate for the proposed program, given the institution's mission and the character of the program to be developed. The minimum educational attainment of the faculty shall be the appropriate degree commensurate with the degree level of the proposed program. While the doctorate, in most instances, is the appropriate terminal degree for baccalaureate and graduate programs, the MFA or a similar professional degree is often considered a terminal degree. If specialized accreditation or state licensure is an expectation, the number of terminal degree holders shall meet the minimum requirements of the appropriate accrediting association or licensing agency.

Adjunct faculty are an important and necessary component of some programs. However, except in unusual circumstances at least 50 percent of the total courses within the proposed degree program shall be taught by full-time faculty. Generally, programs shall involve credentialed full-time faculty in teaching, program development, and student services. Adjunct faculty, when utilized, shall possess the same or equivalent qualifications as the regular faculty of the institution and shall be approved by the academic unit through which the credit is offered. The responsibilities of adjunct faculty shall be specified in such a manner that their involvement in the program development and academic advising is assured, or that these activities are provided by other appropriate means.

F. Library Resources

Qualitative and quantitative factors of library resources shall be appropriate for the proposed program, given the institution's mission and the character of the program to be developed. Books, periodicals, microfilms, microfiche, monographs, and other collections shall be sufficient in number, quality, and currency to serve the program. Adequacy of the library personnel and of facilities to service the proposed program in terms of students and faculty will be considered.

Access to interlibrary loans and to libraries at other institutions or in other cities shall be indicated. Interlibrary loans, advanced technologies, and reciprocal loan privileges at local libraries may constitute valuable resources for the program that may not be available on-site. However, within this framework adequate library material shall be available at the institution which proposes the program. If the program is to be taught off-campus, and/or through instructional television, access to adequate library resources either through location at the site, cooperative agreements, or telecommunication, shall be documented.

G. Physical Facilities and Instructional Equipment

Physical facilities and instructional equipment shall be adequate to initiate the program. Spaces shall be provided for classrooms and for staff and faculty offices. Laboratories for studies in the technologies and sciences shall be designed to provide maximum utilization of facilities, materials, and equipment. Some courses require laboratory facilities, specialized equipment such as computer terminals and audio-visual aids, or other special resources. An institution offering such courses off-campus shall assure that appropriate facilities and instructional equipment requirements are met.

H. Finances

The resource requirements of proposed programs shall be analyzed in order to assess the adequacy of the requested resources to support a quality program. This assessment is to ensure that the program will be efficient in its resource utilization and to assess the impact of this proposed program on the institution's overall need for funds. Programs submitted by public four-year institutions, depending on new allocations of resources should have funding requests included in the institution's asking budget. Table 1 - Expenditure Categories and Table 2 - Resource Categories must be completed in sufficient detail to allow the Secretary of Higher Education to make a judgment on the adequacy of resources. (See pages 47-50.)

New programs shall normally satisfy at least one of the following conditions:

- (1) Reallocation of Existing Resources - campuses must provide documented evidence of campus funds to be reallocated to the new program. The source and process of reallocation must be specifically detailed. An analysis of the impact of the reduction on existing programs and/or organization units must be presented.

and/or

- (2) Tuition and Fees From Students New to the Institution - campuses must provide evidence of a projected increase in total student enrollments to the campus.

and/or

- (3) Grants, Contracts or Sources Other Than Normal State Appropriations - campuses must provide documented evidence of funding sources and amount. Alternative financing plans must also be presented for the period when the funds cease to be available.

and/or

- (4) Discontinuance or Downsizing of an Existing Program or Organizational Unit - campuses must provide adequate documentation to demonstrate sufficient savings to the State to offset new costs and justify approval for a new program offering.

I. Adequacy of Provisions for Evaluation of Programs

Each institution shall set forth instructional supervision and evaluation procedures for the program. These procedures may include evaluation of courses and faculty by students, administrators, and departmental personnel. Curriculum review procedures established by each institution for its program offerings shall include standards and guidelines for the assessment of student outcomes as defined for the program and consistent with the institutional mission, and those shall be specified.

J. Minority Student Achievement

Consistent with the Commission's policies regarding minority access, identify specific actions and strategies which will be utilized in the recruitment and retention of other-race students.

K. Low-Productivity Programs

Each year the Commission will identify low-productivity programs. Low-productivity programs directly related to the proposed program should be addressed. Careful review should consider the fiscal resources (faculty, administration, library resources, and general operating expenses) currently devoted to the low-productive programs and how those resources can be redistributed to help fund the proposed program.

Review of Cooperative Ventures, Off-Campus Programs,
Telecommunications Instruction, Closed-Sites,
Directed Technology Certificates and Statewide Programs

A. Cooperative Ventures

The Higher Education Commission encourages institutions to explore the opportunities for cooperation with other institutions, within a segment and between segments, offering similar programs and to document the extent to which cooperative arrangements have been explored. Every institution considering a new academic degree program or a major modification of an existing program is encouraged to explore cooperative development of new program initiatives. The cooperative degree program guidelines are provided as an illustration of a model to assist institutions in establishing such programs.

B. Off-Campus Programs

Off-Campus programs must be submitted for review and approval. Campuses offering programs off-campus as defined in the Glossary, must provide for adequate and appropriate library resources within reasonable distance of the instructional site. Students enrolled in off-campus instruction shall have access to academic support services equivalent to those provided to students enrolled in on-campus resident credit courses, including academic advising, counseling, library and other learning resources, and financial aid. At least one-third of the classes offered in an off-campus program shall be taught by full-time faculty members of the parent institution.

C. Telecommunications Instruction

Programs offered via telecommunications instruction at off-campus sites shall be considered an off-campus program and must be submitted to the Commission for review and approval. A proposal shall be submitted for this purpose. The focus of the review shall be to ensure a level of quality equivalent to that of regular on-campus resident credit instruction. No program offered via telecommunications instruction will be approved which is not already an approved program offered on the primary campus of the applicant institution. Institutions proposing specialized fields of study to maintain professional accreditation shall present written evidence of compliance with the appropriate professional accrediting association's standards for off-campus instruction.

Procedures for the selection and evaluation of faculty responsible for telecommunications instruction shall be in accordance with the standards and procedures used by the

institution for the appointment of faculty responsible for on-campus resident credit courses. Students enrolled in telecommunications instruction shall have access to academic support services equivalent to those provided to students enrolled in on-campus resident credit courses, including academic advising, counseling, library and other learning resources, and financial aid.

D. Consultant Review

The review of program proposals will generally entail Higher Education Commission staff discussions with institutional/segmental personnel involved with the program. In cases where the Secretary determines that additional expertise is needed to evaluate a program outside experts may be retained. The Secretary and the institutional/segmental administrators shall agree on the selection of the consultant(s). All financial obligations incurred during the visit are the responsibility of the institution. For an on-site visit, an institutional or segmental representative will be invited to join the team as a resource person.

E. Closed Sites

Maryland colleges and universities maintaining full and unconditional accreditation and approval from Middle States Association and from the Maryland Higher Education Commission may respond to the request of a sponsoring agent to offer a previously approved academic degree program at a business/industry or governmental site solely for its own employees by submitting a letter of notification to the Secretary of Higher Education describing the program and affirming that there is access to library resources and faculty consistent with the scope and nature of the offerings. Academic programs may be offered through traditional means as well as through various technological needs. Under this policy, the general public will not be recruited nor admitted to these programs. If an institution elects to open the program beyond the designated employees, the Commission's off-campus policies and procedures will prevail.

F. Directed Technology Certificates

A Directed Technology Certificate is designed for community colleges as a sequence of courses that meets specific training objectives. Its purpose is to dramatically shorten the startup time for credit training programs and to provide a useful credentialing function for those desiring a formal college award. The Certificate can be awarded for successfully earning at least 12 credits but no more than 24 credits.