
Developing/Modifying Degree Programs

Proposals to develop new degree programs or extensively modify existing programs must go through a multi-step process, including action at the Program Faculty (PF), School, and University levels as well as working with the State Council on Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) and possibly the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools-Commission on Colleges (SACS), GMU's regional accreditor. The steps within the School are described below; these procedures were approved by the Schar School faculty by unanimous oral vote on March 23, 2018.*

Step 1: Developing/revising the program. A faculty member or faculty members planning to modify extensively an existing program or to develop a new program should consult as widely as possible among colleagues throughout the School whose research and teaching interests would be affected by the substance of the proposal. The written proposal *must* contain the following information: Rationale for the proposed modification or new degree; likely student demand and interest; financial aspects (e.g., is there a possibility of outside funding? If so, what is the source?); staffing implications (e.g., would the proposed initiative require a new hire or new hires?); relationship with existing Schar degree programs (e.g., is there a danger of program cannibalization?); relationship with other Mason units (e.g. does the proposal call for collaboration with other units? If so, have those units been consulted and do they support the initiative?); and follow the steps outlined in the *Template for a New Degree Proposal* (see Annex 1).

Step 2: The Curriculum Committee. The Curriculum Committee, with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs as a non-voting member, then considers the proposal. Their primary purpose is to review the new/revised degree proposal for completeness and conformity with school requirements; if the Curriculum Committee approves of the proposal by a majority vote, it will be sent to both Program Faculties for their consideration. If there are questions about the proposal or if the proposal is incomplete, this will be communicated to the faculty member(s) making the proposal. The Curriculum Committee will reconsider the proposal when it is revised and resubmitted. If the resubmittal still is deemed to be incomplete or otherwise problematic, the Committee will communicate that information to both Program Faculties in writing. Likewise, if the Committee now approves of the proposal, by a majority vote, that will be communicated to both Program Faculties in writing.

Step 3: Program Faculties. The director(s) of the Program Faculties (PFs) may form ad hoc committee(s) to review the proposal. Such an ad hoc committee will solicit the views of the Dean on the feasibility of the proposal. After due deliberation, the PFs will discuss and vote on the proposal, based on presentations by the proposal initiator(s), the report from the Curriculum

* It should be noted that while the 2018 vote approved some revisions to the previous procedures (approved on March 24, 2017), there were no changes to the *Template for a New Degree Program* that was approved with the 2017 vote.

Committee, and a report of the ad hoc committee(s). If one or both PFs vote for the proposed new/revised program, by a majority, it will move forward to the Committee of the Whole for consideration. If both PFs vote against the proposed new/revised program, by a majority, the proposal will not move forward.

Step 4: Committee of the Whole (excluding the Dean). If at least one PF approves the proposed program, the Curriculum Committee will take the proposal to the Committee of the Whole (excluding the Dean), providing a summary of the discussions and votes at the preceding stages. Following appropriate time for consideration and discussion, the Committee of the Whole (excluding the Dean) will vote on the proposal. If a majority of the Committee of the Whole (excluding the Dean) vote against the proposal, the proposal will not proceed to the next stage of the approval process.

Step 5: The Dean. The Dean will consider the proposal if a majority of the Committee of the Whole has voted in favor of it. To help inform the Dean's decision, the chair of the Curriculum Committee will give the Dean a summary of the discussions and votes at the preceding stages. The Dean may accept or reject the proposal. If the Dean rejects the proposal, s/he must explain to the Committee of the Whole the reason(s) for doing so.

Other Approvals. As the process of reviewing and considering a proposal takes place, the proposal initiator(s) should keep in mind that Central Administration and SCHEV, and perhaps SACS, will need to be provided with information regarding the modified/new program. Each of these entities has their own guidelines and forms. It is highly recommended that anyone preparing a proposal assure that the proposal will meet, or can be used to develop, the paperwork required for these entities. The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs can provide guidance in these areas.

Note: As a general rule, the process for approving a new degree program, through all required steps, will take about two years. In order to be put onto the schedule for BOV approval, the approvals at the Central Administration level must be completed by August of the year preceding the launch of the new program. Offering a program to students before receiving full approval puts the School and the University at risk with both SCHEV and SACS.

Annex 1: Template for a New Degree Proposal[†]

All degree programs must be approved by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV). This template is based on documents from the Provost's website; the language is directly from that website. Using this template, and completing each item before submitting the degree program to the appropriate Program Faculty (PF) for approval, will help to ensure that the program meets many of the stated criteria for SCHEV approval. *Note: This template does not include all SCHEV requirements, only those that most affect the School.* All degree program materials should be single-spaced, in 12-point Times or Arial font.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

1. Introductory paragraph

- Type of degree (BA, MS, PhD, etc.) and the title of the degree program
- Sponsoring academic unit (include school, department, and/or program)
- Proposed initiation date (no sooner than one year after submission of the proposal).
Example: *"George Mason University requests approval to initiate a Masters of Arts (MA) degree program in English Literature. The proposed program will be administered by the English Department in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences and is to be implemented by August 1, 2017."*

2. Second paragraph

- Purpose: What is the specific purpose of the degree purpose?
Note: The purpose as stated here should be specific to this degree program, and must be outside the scope of any other degree within the school and university.
- How will graduates of the degree be prepared to serve the community and/or the job market? How are they needed? (Include text to answer questions such as: The degree program will prepare students to do what? The program will expose students to what [specific skills and/or knowledge]? To address what specific need or issue[s]?)

3. Subsequent paragraphs

- State of the Field: Describe the status of the field and/or discipline in terms that warrant a new degree program.
- Note if the degree as emerging, cutting edge, interdisciplinary.

[†] As approved by faculty vote on March 24, 2017; no changes to the Annex were made by the March 2018 faculty vote on the procedures.

- Provide a description of the program area.
- Provide a **brief** history of the evolution of the discipline.

ADMISSIONS CRITERIA

- Application materials (e.g., transcripts, standardized tests, letters of recommendation [if letters are required from specific individuals please specify] writing sample, etc.)
- Qualifications (e.g. minimum GPA, minimum percentile on standardized tests, academic degrees, experiences, special considerations, etc.)
- If no minimum scores are required, state “no minimum _____ score is required.”

TARGET POPULATION

- Specify group or groups who will be targeted for enrollment into the proposed degree program.

CURRICULUM

- First paragraph:** Must include degree program name, number of credits required, indicate if the program is thesis or non-thesis. Indicate focus and intent of the curriculum.
- Second paragraph:** Specifically discuss focus/intent of the curriculum; discuss the uniqueness or particular strength of the core curriculum. Articulate knowledge derived from core coursework. Knowledge acquired from other required courses may be discussed if such courses are required for all students.
- Third paragraph:** Indicate experiential learning opportunities that will be required and what knowledge and skills the opportunities will provide to students.
- Indicate the number of new courses developed the program, if applicable, and indicate new courses with an asterisk.
Example: *The Department of Education developed five new courses for the proposed program. New courses are indicated with an asterisk.*

The curriculum presentation must include the following items. Do *not* use a table or text box to present the curriculum.

- Total credit hours
- Breakdown of curriculum and credit hours. Please include category headings for each grouping of courses (e.g., Core Courses, Major Courses, Restricted Electives) and the number of credits required for the category.

- Requirements (e.g., special project, comprehensive examination, thesis, dissertation, pass/fail etc.)
- Process (e.g. committee requirements, program progression, what happens if student fails to pass a requirement).
- Sample plan of study for full-time and, if applicable, part-time students. Do not include summer or winter break if enrollment is not required.
- Course descriptions for new and existing required common core courses and restricted elective courses. **Please indicate new courses with an asterisk.**

FACULTY

- List of faculty dedicated to the required common core, restricted electives, and other required courses.
- Name of other department(s) and names of faculty from other departments if teaching core, restricted electives, or other required courses.
- Indicate if new faculty will be hired and credentials required for expected new hires (if applicable)
- Adjunct credentials if existing or expected new hires (if applicable)

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

- Will there be a program director? What are the director's responsibilities/duties?
- Is the program director an existing faculty member teaching in the degree program? Will the program director continue to teach?
- Will the director have to be hired? What credentials will be required?
- Are there any other positions needed to launch and sustain the degree program? Program coordinator? Administrative support? If so, what are the duties and responsibilities? Where will these positions come from (e.g. positions existing in the department)?
- Will there be a faculty committee that will oversee the program? If so, what are the committee's responsibilities?

RESOURCES NEEDS

- Full-time Faculty from the unit, defined as 50% or more of individual's teaching load.
- Part-time Faculty from the unit, defined as less than 50% of individual's teaching load.

- Faculty from other units who will teach core courses or required courses, name the department, the number of faculty (if known), the FTE in the initial year and FTE through the target enrollment years.
- Adjunct Faculty, actual number and FTE in initial year and FTE through the target enrollment year
- Graduate Assistants
- Classified Positions – provide the title(s) and number(s)
- Will Financial Aid be offered to students? If not, state: *No targeted financial aid will be available or is needed to launch or sustain the proposed program.*
- Equipment (including computers) – If new hires, please address equipment needs. If not, state: *No new equipment (including computers) is required to launch or maintain the proposed program.*
- Library – will new library resources be needed? If not and no resources will be allocated to support the program, state: *No new library resources are needed to launch or sustain the proposed program. The library has an adequate collection to support the proposed degree program. Resources include journals and publications for nutrition. As a member of the Virtual Library of Virginia (VIVA), on-line access to journals is also available.*
- Telecommunications – If new hires, please address telecommunication needs. If not, state: *The proposed program requires no new telecommunications to launch or sustain the proposed program.*
- Space - If new hires, please address space needs. If not, state: *The proposed program will not require additional space to launch or sustain the proposed program.*
- Other Resources (specify) – If resources will be distributed from multiple sources, please delineate source(s). Example: *Information such as tuition paid for doctoral level students, advertising, campaign, travel specific to students in program, federal grant funding specifically used to support students in the proposed program.*