

### 3.4.1

#### **Educational Programs: All:Academic program approval**

The institution demonstrates that each educational program for which academic credit is awarded is approved by the faculty and the administration.

#### **Judgment**

Compliance    Partial Compliance    Non-Compliance    Not Applicable

#### **Narrative**

Tennessee Technological University (TTU) follows a well-defined process for approving educational programs. The University has mandated detailed efforts to ensure not only that procedures for developing new educational programs are clear, but also that faculty and administration are involved in documented ways throughout the program approval process. The University further mandates that each program for which academic credit is awarded is approved by the faculty and the administration.

#### **Process of Program Approval**

Before initiating a new program, which usually begins with the faculty and results from changes in particular disciplines and student and industry demand, the faculty justify the need for the program based on available resources (such as available teaching faculty, available number of credit hours in addition to general education course requirements, and other resources that might be needed, whether they be technological, library-related, or otherwise). In addition to initiating new educational programs, new concentrations can also be proposed within already-existing majors, based on changing disciplinary, student, and industry needs. These concentrations follow the same process of approval as other educational programs.

Through the TTU site, the Provost's Office maintains its own website, which outlines procedures for academic program approval [1]. Information included on the site provides detailed guidance on the documents required for academic program approval for new degree programs and academic program modifications. The procedures for new degree program approvals [2] and modifications of academic programs [3] are kept up to date and accessible to any academic unit. As described in the procedures, the academic unit requesting the new program and program modifications must submit the required documents and forms to the following offices/committees, as appropriate, for review and approval within TTU:

1. Departmental faculty
2. College curriculum committee, dean, and Provost or his/her designee
3. University Curriculum Committee (if undergraduate level) or Graduate Studies Executive Committee (if graduate level)
4. Academic Council
5. Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

The attached flowchart provides a visual image of the approval process [4].

In addition, TTU Policy 224 enforces the policy and procedure for approval of new academic programs [5]. TTU also ensures that the new program complies with Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) notification/approval requirements and ensures that SACSCOC is notified of any substantive changes following the TTU Substantive Change Policy [6]. Beyond the TTU level, the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) website [7] provides detailed information on the policies and processes behind the creation and approval of new academic programs as well as academic program or unit modifications.

In addition to approval at the TBR level, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) lists guidelines for academic program approval on its Policy Manual, including information on what types of academic programs require approval at that level [8]. Please note that as a result of the Complete College Tennessee Act (CCTA) of 2010, THEC revised its program approval process and approves programs in concert with the THEC Master Plan for Education. The THEC Master Plan for Education frames implementation of the provisions of the CCTA through performance funding measures and highlights institutional missions, emphasizes workforce development, and avoids duplication of academic programs and services [9].

An example of this approval process is the approval of the Digital Media concentration within the Bachelor of Fine Arts degree within the College of Education in October of 2012 [10] (Item 18 on the attached curriculum meeting minutes). This document clearly demonstrates the University Curriculum Committee's approval process at this stage after approval had been granted at the department and college levels. Other examples at this same stage of approval are the approvals of the Mechatronics concentration for the Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering and the Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering [11] (Items 13 and 14 on Pages 9-12); the International Relations and Comparative Government concentrations within the Department of Sociology and Political Science [12] (Item 9 on Pages 17-23); [13] [14] (the College of Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee minutes); the Recreation and Leisure concentration within the Department of Exercise Science, Physical Education, and Wellness [15] (Item 3 on Pages 3-9); and the Business Intelligence and Analytics concentration within the Department of Decision Science and Management [16] (Item 19 on Pages 14-15). The approvals of Academic Council for these new concentrations are presented in the attached Academic Council meeting minutes [17] for the Digital Media concentration (Page 2); [18] for the Mechatronics concentration (Pages 1-2); [19] for the International Relations and Comparative Government concentrations (Page 2); [20] for the Recreation and Leisure concentration (Page 2); and [21] for the Business Intelligence and Analytics concentration (Page 2).

An example of the new academic program approval process at the graduate level is the Master of Science in Human Ecology degree program that was conceptualized and approved by the graduate committee within the college of Human Ecology in 2014. Per TBR procedures, TTU submitted a Letter of Intent (LOI) to the TBR for THEC approval. On December 14, 2014, THEC approved the LOI [22] that allowed TTU to move forward with the development of a program proposal. The comprehensive TBR program proposal packet was completed by the college on February 16, 2015 and placed on the GSEC March meeting agenda [23] (Item 7) for approval. Following the GSEC approval of the proposal, as shown on GSEC March 3, 2015 meeting minutes [24] (Item 7 on Page 2), the proposal was forwarded to the Academic Council for approval at the April 15, 2015 meeting [25] (Item 10). A second example of the new concentration approval process is the request to add the concentration of Manufacturing Sustainability to the Professional Science Master's degree program (PSM). A proposal to add this new concentration was placed on the GSEC February 4, 2014 agenda [26] (Item 10), and GSEC approved the concentration as reflected in the meeting minutes [27] (Item 10 on Page 7). The proposal was placed on the March 2014 agenda of the Academic Council and approved at that meeting [28]. TTU then submitted the request to the TBR who then approved the new concentration and notified TTU on September 8, 2014 [29] for implementation.

## Conclusion

The faculty and administration at TTU have authority to approve educational programs and program modifications. Through the TTU policies and the academic program approval procedures, the University has demonstrated that each educational program is approved by the faculty and the administration. The process for approval of academic programs is listed on the website and in the University Catalogs. Therefore, TTU is in compliance with Comprehensive Standard 3.4.1.

## Sources

 [01] New Programs and Program Modifications

-  [02] Procedures for New Degree Program Approval
-  [03] Procedures for Modifications of Academic Programs
-  [04] Program Approval Process
-  [05] TTU Policy No 224
-  [06] TTU Policy No 221
-  [07] TBR Policies for Approval of Academic Programs
-  [08] THEC Academic Affairs Division
-  [09] THEC Complete College TN Act Summary
-  [10] University Curriculum Committee Minutes Oct2012
-  [11] University Curriculum Committee Minutes Mar2011\_Items 13 and 14\_Pages 9\_12
-  [12] University Curriculum Committee Minutes Sept\_22\_2011\_Item 9\_Pages 17\_23
-  [13] Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee Minutes Sept. 8\_2011
-  [14] Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee Minutes
-  [15] University Curriculum Committee Minutes Mar\_15\_2012\_Item 3\_Pages 3\_9
-  [16] University Curriculum Committee Minutes Sept\_2013\_Item 19\_Pages 14\_15
-  [17] Academic Council Minutes - November, 2012
-  [18] Academic Council Minutes - October, 2011
-  [19] Academic Council Minutes - January, 2012
-  [20] Academic Council Minutes - April, 2012
-  [21] Academic Council Minutes - October, 2013
-  [22] THEC TTU LOI Approval MS Human Ecology Dec 17 2014
-  [23] GSEC AGENDA MARCH 3-2015
-  [24] GSEC MINUTES MARCH 3-2015
-  [25] Academic Council Agenda - April, 2015
-  [26] GSEC Agenda 2-4-2014 GSEC
-  [27] GSEC Minutes 2-4-2014 GSEC
-  [28] Academic Council Minutes - February, 2014
-  [29] TBR Approval PSM Concentration September 2014