FAQS Proposing Curricular Changes

1. ***Why do new academic programs and curricular changes require approval?***

   We review and approve proposals advanced by faculty for new programs and curricular changes to provide a broader institutional perspective and ensure programs meet established internal and external quality standards. Does the department have the resource capacity to offer a new program? Is the proposed program aligned with OHSU's mission and strategic goals or does it stretch the boundaries of the institution? Is there student demand for the program? What are the likely job prospects for a graduate? The review process creates and delivers value to enrolled and prospective students and citizens of Oregon.

   The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities requires its member universities to maintain carefully documented and enforced work processes related to ensuring program quality.

2. ***What is the review of curricular changes, including new programs?***

   We have three review levels for proposals of curricular changes, depending on whether the proposed change is substantive or minor.

   - *Category I* proposals are substantive changes to a curriculum, such as adding a new academic program (the unique combination of a specific degree/certificate as well as a specific major), that require the vote of OHSU Faculty Senate, approval by the provost, subsequent approval by the State and may also require notification to and/or approval of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

   - *Category II* proposals are minor, but still change the curriculum, such as substantially redesigning the curriculum of an already authorized program. These changes require the vote of the Educational Policy Committee and administrative review by the provost. *Category II* proposals do not typically require review and approval by either the Faculty Senate or State but notification may be required. Notification to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities may also be required.

   - *Category III* proposals are minor or cosmetic changes that require an administrative review by the provost, which (depending upon the change) may be operationalized through the Office of the Registrar, and usually require notification by the dean or program coordinator a quarter in advance of the change.

3. ***What are the steps in the process for reviewing and approving new programs?***

   a. If you are contemplating the development of a new program, it is wise to check in with the dean before designing the curriculum and completing the required proposal. The dean will indicate when it is appropriate to notify the provost of the intent to begin planning a new program. The acceptance of the Notice of Planning Intent (NOPI) by the provost is the clear signal to begin.

b. The provost will confirm the category type and template to be used for developing the proposal. *Category I* proposals use the OUS template, *Category II* proposals use an OHSU template and *Category III* proposals require a memorandum from the dean or program coordinator to the provost or Office of the Registrar.

c. After completing the proposal, you are to go through the school-level process that each school has mapped out on how to get approval from the faculty and dean.

d. When the proposal is approved by the dean, the presumed program director presents the proposal to the provost to initiate the institutional-level review process: (i) administrative review, (ii) Faculty Senate Educational Policy Committee review, (iii) Faculty Senate review and (iv) provost review. (This is the end-point for most *Category II* proposals.)

e. If you are making a substantive change, the program must be approved at the state-level. The provost will carry the proposal forward to the Provosts' Council and State Board of Higher Education. Pending their approvals, the proposal will be advanced to Oregon's Office of Degree Authorization and the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

4. ***How long will it take to get a proposed academic program approved?***

The process can take 12 months or more. Developing either a *Category I* or *II* proposal requires a significant investment of faculty time. But, you can take steps to increase the speed. First, it will help to have your department chair and dean as champions for the proposal. Second, the provost's office will keep the review process moving, scheduling the Faculty Senate reviews and providing feedback. Third, be aware of the organization's rhythms that can facilitate or delay reviews. For example, the Faculty Senate Educational Committee does not meet over the summer months. Thus, if the proposal gets out of the school-level review in June, the Faculty Senate would not pick it up until September or October. Finally, as you go through each level, expect and respond to any feedback as quickly as possible.

5. ***What things should we consider when developing a proposal for a new academic program?***

Limit the length to 15 to 20 pages for *Category I* proposals and 5 to 10 pages for *Category II* proposals. The most important thing you can do is to address the criteria in the template. Be direct and stay on topic.

Simple words will help you express your program clearly. Too many complex words slow reviewers down, and readers often skip over professional jargon and abbreviations they do not understand. We recommend spelling out abbreviations, acronyms and specialized language that are well known to you, every time it is used. These include the names of specialized accreditors, such as Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) or Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH); terms (e.g., student learning outcome statements over SLOs as well as names of unique things, e.g., name of the proposed program, faculty governance structures).

The reviewers are intelligent, but are not likely experts in your discipline. They are also very busy and doing this as service to the university. Thus, they are likely to skim over anything they cannot understand and look to see if the proposal has done the required analyzing and designing needed to implement a new program. Always keep in mind what you would want to see and how much time you would have to spend on reading a proposal from another school or university.

6. *How can we easily identify our budget needs to start up and sustain a program?*

   With respect to new program requests, the University is interested only in the total direct costs – existing or reallocated costs as well as incremental or out-of-pocket costs – associated with implementing the proposed new program. The full cost of the program, which would include indirect costs or institutional overheads (for example, central university administration or library operations or utilities), need not be reported, unless the curricular change requires substantial new library resources.

   The Budget Outline is required as an attachment to the all *Category I* proposals, and some *Category II* proposals. The total direct costs of the program are reported under three categories: (1) the direct costs, such as salaries and benefits, associated with the existing FTE faculty who are in the department(s) as well as any new faculty lines needed to offer the program and who will teach courses in support of the program, (2) all other direct costs (e.g., support staff salaries, travel expenses, supplies) associated with existing resources that are to be used in support of the program, and (3) all incremental or out-of-pocket direct costs associated with implementing the program.

   The revenues that will be used to meet the total direct costs of the program are reported under four categories: (1) internal reallocation within a school or OHSU, (2) new student tuition derived from students who would not otherwise attend OHSU, (3) other or non-state funding sources (e.g., federal funds, training grants, community contributions, and income from contractual arrangements with other institutions, private firms, or not-for-profit agencies), and (4) state appropriations through additions to the OHSU's base budget.

7. *Who has the final word on whether a new program can be implemented?*

   The provost has the final authority on whether a new program can be implemented. The decision to approve (or disapprove) will be made at the conclusion of the institution-level process.

8. *If we already offer a master's degree in our department, do we have to get approval to offer another master's degree?*

   In a word, yes. If the proposal is to: (i) develop a new academic program (the unique combination of a specific degree/certificate as well as a specific major); (ii) establish a new school, department, center or institute; (iii) change the name of any school, department, center or institute; (iv) offer an existing degree or certificate program at new off-campus locations; or (v) develop a joint degree program with another university, you are required a develop a *Category I* proposal and submit it though the review process.

   If the proposal is to offer a non-thesis option for an already authorized M.S. program, a *Category I* proposal would still be required. In this case, a non-thesis masters would be a new academic program (which could have the same major as an already approved M.S., but the degree itself would be different).

9. *If we already offer a master's degree in a major, do we have to get approval to offer a doctorate in the same major?*

   Yes, as this is a different level of study, it is a new academic program. Given the resource requirements of doctoral programs, they always require a *Category I* review.

10. *Does a major curricular revision require a review and approval process?*

   Yes, the major redesign of the curriculum including developing new courses, modes of delivery, different student learning outcomes and assessments requires a *Category II* proposal.

11. *Can we market the program and recruit students before we have final approval?*

   Yes, under some circumstances. In advertising new academic programs that are still undergoing the review and approval process, the content in oral and written communications should be literally accurate and not capable of being misinterpreted

   a. When the final version of the proposal has been submitted to the OHSU Faculty Senate for review, proposed academic programs may be advertised as "Pending OHSU and OUS approval".

   b. When the proposed academic program has been approved by OHSU and submitted for review by the OUS Provosts' Council and the Oregon State Board of Higher Education, the proposed programs may be advertised as "Pending OUS approval."

12. *Where can we get help in developing a new program?*

   The required proposal formats and other reference material are available online.