



MINNESOTA STATE

ACADEMIC PROGRAM APPROVAL PROCESSES AND CRITERIA

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Academic Programs and Quality Assurance Unit

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Minnesota State is an affirmative action, equal opportunity employer and educator.

Background

Minnesota State’s colleges and universities offer approximately 4,000 academic programs leading to certificates, diplomas, and academic degrees at the undergraduate and graduate level.

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees is authorized by the state legislature to approve all decisions to add, revise, or delete programs of study at system institutions. The legislature further instructed the Board to avoid duplicate program offerings and place a high priority on ensuring the transferability of credit (MINN. STAT. ANN. 123.45 (2008)).

In June 2019, we set a critical goal: By 2030, Minnesota State will eliminate the educational equity gaps at every Minnesota State college and university. It is a staggeringly ambitious goal and one that will require both intentional systems and culture change and innovation, as well as advocacy and leadership with partners and stakeholders across the state.

While there is only one goal for Equity 2030 – closing the educational equity gaps across race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and geographic location by the year 2030 – achieving that goal requires:

- Intentional systems and culture change
- Coordination, innovation, and capacity building
- Steadfast focus of leadership and empowerment
- Collaboration with partners and stakeholders across the state

In order to assist in eliminating the equity gap by 2030, the Academic Affairs Unit in the Division of Academic and Student Affairs is prioritizing work to ensure the quality of our academic programming to reduce equity gaps.

The following Program Approval process has been adopted to improve program quality and equitable outcomes across the system. At the core of this process is a common framework for the review and assessment of new academic program proposals that not only incorporates an equity lens but aligns with regional and program accreditation requirements.

1. Letter of Inquiry

The approval process starts with the submission of a Letter of Inquiry. **Six months to one year prior to the expected new program implementation date**, colleges and universities must notify the system office of their intent to offer a new program by submitting a “Letter of Inquiry” in Program Navigator. The Academic Program Director will serve as the point of contact throughout the new program application development. The Academic Programs and Quality Assurance unit will work with the campus until the new program is approved or denied.

2. Notice of Intent (NOI)

A Notice of Intent (NOI) application will be developed by the campus staff in consultation with the Academic Program Director. The NOI must include the following data: 1) student interest; 2) labor market data documenting need for the program; 3) catalog description; 4) curriculum

structure and required courses; 5) credit length; 6) award; 7) CIP Code recommendation; 8) delivery mode; 9) location; 10) program learning outcomes; and, 11) Equity 2030 considerations outlining how the proposed program will support Minnesota State's work to close educational equity gaps across race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and geographic location.

- Notices of Intent will be posted on the [Minnesota State](#) website in an accessible format for a 20-day review and comment period.
- Any comments or concerns submitted during the 20-day review and comment period must be addressed by the campus proposing the new program within 10 days.
- Campuses who submitted the comments or concerns will have 10 days to respond to the additional information provided by the campus proposing the new program.

The Notice of Intent criteria along with the public comment data will be considered by the Academic Programs and Quality Assurance unit. The applicant will receive one of the following notifications:

- 1) The applicant may proceed with the submission of a new program application.
- 2) The applicant may not submit a new program application at this time.

3. Appeal Process

Applicants may appeal the decision of the Academic Programs and Quality Assurance unit to the Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs within 30 days of the decision notification by submitting a **Letter of Appeal** and any additional supporting documentation.

Upon receipt of the *Letter of Appeal*, the Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs will forward the letter and supporting documents to the Chair of the Academic Affairs Council for review.

The Academic Affairs Council has up to 60 days to review the appeal. The review shall be based on program duplication, student interest, labor market need, program service area need, program justification, Equity 2030 considerations, public comments/concerns, and other relevant information.

The Academic Affairs Council will submit their recommendation to the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs.

Within 30 days of receipt of the recommendation from the Academic Affairs Council, the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs shall make a final determination regarding disposition of the appeal

The decision of the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs is binding.

4. New Program Application Submission

When the campus is notified of the decision to proceed with a new program application, all required program information must be entered into the new program application form in

Program Navigator. Campus staff may direct any questions about the application to the Academic Program Director.

Applicants will receive one of the following notifications regarding the new program application from the Academic Programs and Quality Assurance unit:

- Full approval: The applicant may begin offering the program.
- Conditional approval: the applicant may begin offering the program with conditions.
- Denial: the applicant may not offer the proposed program.

The college or university is responsible for notifying and/or receiving authorization to offer the new program from the Higher Learning Commission, the U.S. Department of Education or appropriate program accreditors and licensing agencies.

The decision of the Academic Programs and Quality Assurance unit may be appealed.

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New Program Approval Rubric	Met	Met with Concerns	Not Met	Notes:
<p><u>Aligned with Minnesota State mission, strategic goals, board policies and procedures, including but not limited to:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision and mission statements, Board Policy 1A.1, Part 2. • Access and accommodation for individuals with disabilities, Policy 1B.4 • Equity 2030 lens for program development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ By race and ethnicity ○ First Generation Status ○ Socioeconomic status <p><i>Identify equity gaps in student populations and a plan to address gaps. Curriculum created is inclusive and course outlines reflect the inclusive curriculum development.</i></p>				
<p><u>Aligned with institution mission and statutory authority:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proposed program complies with Board Policy 3.24 and System Procedure 3.24.1 				
<p><u>Transfer considerations:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signed articulation agreement • Elaboration of program/course transferability • Draft semester-by-semester program guide 				
<p><u>Shared governance decision making:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AASC/Curriculum Committee minutes documenting approval of the proposed program ▪ Program advisory committee minutes documenting the recommendation to add the proposed program (Board Policy 3.30 and System Procedure 3.30.1) 				
<p><u>Student involvement in decision-making</u> (Board Policy 2.3 and System Procedure 2.3.1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Documentation of student committee participation, or ▪ Letter from the student association president affirming the program proposal 				
<p><u>Proposed program meets workforce and community needs, if applicable:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Labor market supply/demand data supporting the need for the proposed program ▪ Occupations in Demand star rating <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MN Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) projection of rate of growth-average, above average, etc. ▪ Supply of graduates compared to DEED projections of occupational demand and other input from offering institution on local employment levels ▪ Market share data ▪ High proportion of graduates from private colleges and universities for region or service area ▪ Evidence of industry partner needs (statements of support from key industry partners) ▪ Projected demand in the MN Economic Development area served by the institution ▪ Occupational demand that outpaces current supply for programs in the region or service area 				

New Program Approval Rubric	Met	Met with Concerns	Not Met	Notes:
<p><u>Institutional capacity to support the proposed program.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Written confirmation by the chief financial officer that the institution has the capacity to support the proposed program ▪ As appropriate, evidence of up-to-date facilities, plan for equipment purchase and maintenance, and financial resources to develop and sustain the program 				
<p><u>Regional planning:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meeting minutes documenting regional discussion/decisions regarding the proposed program. ▪ Indication of objections, support, resolutions, and other documentation demonstrating the results of regional dialogue 				
<p><u>Program duplication:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Institution service area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identified service area as based on origin of students in similar programs ▪ Enrollment data for existing programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Current programs fully enrolled and/or able to take on capacity ▪ Projected enrollment for proposed program ▪ Existing program completion data ▪ Impact on supply/demand data and potential for significant oversupply <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Related program completions by other institutions in the service area ▪ Justification for adding a duplicate program, if applicable <p>Demonstrated niche for program in its content, delivery, and associated student market</p>				
<p><u>Expedited program approval:</u></p> <p>Program is characterized by one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ First of its kind generally or for the identified region or service area ▪ Responds to an emerging and/or unique opportunity ▪ Responds to a critical industry need ▪ Expands potential market of institution or system ▪ Existing workforce need not being met by current programs in service area 				
<p><u>Student interest:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. IPEDS data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Program enrollments ▪ Related course/program waiting lists ▪ Course enrollments ▪ Program completions 2. Other data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Current student surveys ▪ Employee needs surveys ▪ Employer needs surveys ▪ Entering student surveys ▪ Graduate follow-up surveys ▪ High school counselor surveys ▪ High school student surveys ▪ Undeclared student surveys ▪ Attendance at information sessions 				

New Program Approval Rubric	Met	Met with Concerns	Not Met	Notes:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Website analytics ▪ Student clubs that represent an interest in a potential program or discipline ▪ Published reports on emerging markets 				
<u>Program learning outcomes</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outcomes should provide a framework for determining the more specific educational objectives of a program ▪ Assessment plans demonstrating connection through the program learning outcomes 				
<u>Professional accreditation/certification requirements, if applicable</u>				

For further information contact:

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