



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER EL PASO

Operating Policy and Procedure

HSCEP OP: 59.08, **New Degree and Certificate Programs, Changes to Existing Programs, and Degree and Certificate Program Termination**

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso (TTUHSC El Paso) Operating Policy and Procedure (HSCEP OP) is to outline the procedure for initiating, developing, and implementing new degree and certificate programs; changing delivery format of existing degree and certificate programs; and terminating or merging existing degree and certificate programs.

REVIEW: This HSCEP OP will be reviewed by August 1 of every even-numbered year (ENY) by the dean of each school, the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) or designee, and the Academic Council, with recommended revisions submitted to the President or designee by September 15.

POLICY/PROCEDURE:

I. Degree-granting Authority

Legal authority to confer undergraduate, graduate, and/or professional degrees, as well as academic certificates is granted to TTUHSC El Paso by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). Formal THECB approval is required before a new degree or certificate program can be offered at TTUHSC El Paso. In order to obtain THECB approval and degree/certificate-granting authority, proposals for new degree and certificate programs must have the prior approval of the Texas Tech University System (TTUS) Board of Regents (BOR), and must be submitted by the VPAA on behalf of the Office of the President to the THECB in the format prescribed by that agency.

II. Academic Program Accreditation

Each school is responsible for maintaining compliance with professional program accreditors, and shall ensure all relevant professional accreditation requirements are approved by the relevant accrediting body (e.g., Liaison Committee on Medical Education, Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, Commission on Dental Accreditation), prior to implementation of a new degree or certificate program.

In order to ensure maintenance of institutional accreditation, new degree programs require notification and/or submission of a substantive change prospectus to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), per the [SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy](#), prior to program implementation (see [HSCEP OP 59.07, Substantive Change Reporting](#)). SACSCOC requires institutions to possess all necessary legal authority, including state authorization, to operate and grant degrees before submitting notification and/or a substantive change prospectus for a new academic program.

III. Proposing New Degree and Academic Certificate Programs

A. A proposal for a new degree or certificate program typically originates with faculty at the department or school level. In those instances where the new program impetus originates at levels other than the faculty, the subsequent new program proposal needs to include active faculty participation in all aspects of development. New program proposals normally are developed and refined through an iterative process of collaboration among faculty, department chair, as relevant, appropriate faculty committee(s), and the school dean. Issues related to mission congruence, resource availability, effects on existing programs and long-term market sustainability must be addressed early in the proposal development process by the faculty, department chair, and the dean.

- B. Prior to development of a formal THECB proposal (Section II. C.), the dean, or designee, will present a summary of the proposed program to the Academic Council for preliminary review, based on school and institutional priorities, and analysis of expected benefits versus costs of the proposed program. (See [HSCEP OP 10.06, Academic Council](#) and [HSCEP OP 59.08, Attachment A, Request for New Degree or Certificate Program, Academic Council Review](#).)
- C. Once preliminary review by the Academic Council is complete, development of a full proposal for submission to the THECB will begin. As guided by the appropriate school-level administrator (e.g., dean, department chair) and in collaboration with the THECB/SACSCOC Liaison, the program requestor will prepare a formal new program proposal, in accordance with the guidelines of the THECB, using proposal forms that are available on the [THECB "New Program Development" website](#). Program proposals must address the following THECB areas of priority:
- 1) Need for the program and benefits that will accrue to Texas from approval and implementation of the proposed program;
 - 2) Market demand and relevance for the program, including analysis of availability of existing or similar programs in the state and region;
 - Quality of the program, including appropriateness of degree requirements and description of the program curriculum, including required Semester Credit Hours (SCH);
 - 3) Numbers and kinds of students who likely will enter the program;
 - 4) Adequacy of faculty, facilities, and funding to undertake the program;
 - 5) Cost and relative impact on existing programs;
 - 6) Long-term market and educational sustainability;
 - 7) Alignment with school and university missions; and
 - 8) Alignment with THECB program and resource allocation priorities.
- D. Upon completion of the development phase, new program proposals approved by the dean will be presented to the Academic Council for review and approval (see [HSCEP OP 10.06, Academic Council](#) and [HSCEP OP 59.08, Attachment A, Request for New Degree or Certificate Program Academic Council Review](#)). After the Academic Council has approved the proposal, it will move forward to the VPAA for review and approval, and to relevant institutional departments for sign-off (see [HSCEP OP 59.08, Attachment B, Approval of New Degree and Certificate Programs Routing Sheet](#)). The president will provide final review and approval, and as required, the president will submit the proposal to the TTUS BOR for approval.
- E. After BOR approval has been secured, the THECB/SACSCOC Liaison will collaborate with the program requestor to prepare the proposal for submission to the THECB. In addition to securing state authorization, the THECB/SACSCOC Liaison will also notify SACSCOC, and will consult regarding specific SACSCOC submission requirements as needed. If submission of a substantive change prospectus is required, the THECB/SACSCOC Liaison will guide the program requestor in the development, and will submit the prospectus to SACSCOC for review of the change.
- F. State and federal regulatory agency reviews of program changes require processing time, as defined by each agency's policies and procedures. The THECB/SACSCOC Liaison will advise on respective agency requirements, communicate with agency contacts, and guide program requestors in the development of required documentation, within each agency's stipulated timeline. It is important to be cognizant of agency timelines prior to planning a new academic program, given the direct implications for the timing of program launch.

- 1) THECB requirements for new program development differ based on the level of the proposed new academic program (see [THECB New Program Development website](#)). For example, notification of the plan to offer a new doctoral program has to be submitted to the THECB one year prior to program proposal submission, which in turn should occur one year prior to expected THECB action. Additionally, the review process may be extended, if a site visit by external reviewers is required per THECB policy.
 - 2) The timeline for a SACSCOC substantive change review typically takes three to six months, depending on the new program's degree level and whether the new program represents a significant departure from existing offerings. For new doctoral programs the review process may take longer, if a site visit by SACSCOC reviewers is required (see [SACSCOC website](#)).
- G. State and federal agency program approvals, as required by the THECB and SACSCOC, have to be secured, and documentation has to be submitted to the VPAA, prior to the implementation of a new academic program offering.
- H. Each school at TTUHSC El Paso is responsible for establishing a formal faculty review process to ensure that the amount and level of credit awarded for the school's courses are compatible with sound academic practice in the given field (see [HSCOP 59.09, Definition and Calculation of Credit Hours](#).) Minimum requirements for degrees and certificates are determined by discipline-specific curriculum committees in accordance with the relevant external accrediting organizations, the THECB and SACSCOC.
- I. Programs that propose to deliver 25% or more of the curriculum via distance education or at off-campus locations require THECB and SACSCOC notification and may require approval prior to implementation. In some cases, SACSCOC may require submission of the proposal and other substantive change documentation. The THECB/SACSCOC Liaison will provide timely notification per SACSCOC requirements prior to the anticipated implementation of degree programs that are considered distance education programs, or programs that include off campus instruction.
- J. All agreements for delivery of 25% or more of a degree program in collaboration with other institutions should be prepared as specified in Section II.B. and approved as specified in Section II.C.
- K. Agreements to provide degree or certificate program curricula with less than 25% delivery via distance (but more than one distance education course) or include off-campus instruction should be submitted to the VPAA for review and approval prior to implementation. Based upon this review, the proposal may be sent to the Academic Council for review and approval.

IV. Changing Existing Degree Programs

- A. Changes to existing degree programs require notification and/or review by regulatory agencies, as specified in the THECB regulations for [Program Modification](#) and [SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy](#) (see [HSCOP 59.07, Substantive Change Reporting](#) and [SACSCOC website](#)). Changes may include, but are not limited to, changes in total required SCH, delivery modality, CIP code, degree title, etc.). With respect to professional degree programs, each school is responsible for ensuring changes are reported to the professional accrediting body, as required.
- B. Changes in method of delivery of existing degree programs that result in 25% or more of the degree program being offered via distance learning require Academic Council approval. These proposals may also require TTUS BOR, THECB and SACSCOC notification and/or approval and may require the submission of a substantive change prospectus to SACSCOC. The THECB/SACSCOC Liaison will consult regarding THECB and SACSCOC regulations and will collaborate with the program coordinator to develop appropriate documentation, ensuring continued agency compliance.

- C. The following routing is required to approve changes in method of delivery for previously approved degree programs: program director, chair (if applicable), dean, Academic Council, VPAA, president, TTUS BOR, THECB, and SACSCOC.

V. Termination or Merger of Existing Degree Programs

- A. A degree program may be terminated, or two or more programs may be merged, for various reasons. Such action will be preceded by a comprehensive review and consultation involving the department faculty, department chair (if applicable), dean, Academic Council, VPAA, and president.
- B. Before any degree program is terminated or merged with another program, the rationale for such action will be presented to and reviewed by the department faculty, program director, department chair (if applicable), and dean. After such review, the dean will make a recommendation to the Academic Council, VPAA, and president who will render the final decision.
- C. The THECB and SACSCOC will be notified by the THECB/SACSCOC Liaison of any degree program termination or merger. Closing a program is a SACSCOC substantive change and requires notification, approval, and teach-out processes.