

Program Approval Rule Revision

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1

Goals

- Better align degree and certificate approval processes to the agency’s refreshed Strategic Plan.
- Bringing the agency rules and procedures in line with statute.
- Minimizing institutions’ regulatory burden and supporting innovation.
- Prioritizing the board meetings on the most meaningful program approval questions.
- Achieving the policy objective of having a comprehensive catalog of all credentials offered in the state; and
- Improving administrability of program review and approval with policies/process that are feasible, efficient, and flexible.

2

Stakeholder Engagement

To facilitate in this process, the Coordinating Board established a workgroup, with representatives from the public universities, two-year institutions, and health-related institutions. Workgroup members have been meeting since March to discuss the existing opportunities and challenges that currently exist in the program review and approval process.

Reorganization of Proposed Rules

The proposed rules will be established in Texas Administrative Code Chapter 2. There will no longer be separate chapters depending on the type of institution making the request. Community Colleges, Universities, and Health-Related Institutions, will all have program approval rules in the same chapter.

Existing Criteria for Board Approval

The proposed rule removes the requirement for all new bachelor’s/master’s programs with five-year costs exceeding \$2 million and new bachelor’s/master’s programs in engineering to be approved at the Board level.

The proposed rule adds that for requests for a new degree program that would initiate a required level change from the accreditor be approved at the Board level.

General Criteria

In Existing Rule	New Proposed Rule
Need	Comments
Duplication	Cost
Finances	Alignment with Talent Strong Texas
Academic/Workforce Standards	

Draft Rule Approval Process Endpoints

1. Notification Only
2. Assistant Commissioner Approval
3. Commissioner Approval
4. Board Approval

Approval Categories (1) Notification Only

This approval is obtained when the institution of higher education successfully submits and receives confirmation of its submission to Board Staff.

Examples: All certificates currently requiring notification only and possibly any new credentials that are not currently captured by the agency.

Approval Categories

(2) Assistant Commissioner Approval

This category of approval would be obtained when an institution of higher education (universities, health-related institutions, or community colleges) requests a new program or administrative request and has meet all criteria provided in rule. There are two types of Assistant Commissioner Approval depending on the type of action the institution requests.

Approval Categories

(2) Assistant Commissioner Approval

There are two types of Assistant Commissioner Approval depending on the type of action the institution requests.

Regular Review – An institution is subject to Assistant Commissioner Approval for bachelor’s and master’s programs if the proposed program contains not greater than 50 percent new content.

Approval Categories (2) Assistant Commissioner Approval

Expedited Review – An institution submits for review and approval the information required by rule and obtains approval from Board Staff once staff confirms that the institution’s request is administratively complete and the Assistant Commissioner confirms that the institution’s request qualifies for Expedited Review.

Examples: changing CIP Code, reducing the number of SCH so long as the reduction does not reduce the number of required hours below the minimum requirements of the accreditor, increase the number of SCH if the increase is due to a change in programmatic accreditation requirements, changing degree designation, creation, consolidation, or closure of an administrative unit, etc.

Approval Categories (2) Assistant Commissioner Approval

Timeline for Assistant Commissioner Approval: If the Assistant Commissioner recommends denial of a program or does not take action to approve the program within six months of Board Staff’s determination that the program proposal is administratively complete, then the program approval will be subject to the process for Commissioner approval.

Approval Categories

(3) Commissioner Approval

This category of approval would be obtained when an institution of higher education (universities, health-related institutions) requests a new bachelor’s or master’s program if the proposed program contains greater than 50 percent new content. This review will include a staff recommendation about whether the program meets the criteria for approval.

Approval Categories

(3) Commissioner Approval

Timeline for Commissioner Approval: If the Commissioner does not approve or deny the proposal within *nine months* of Board Staff’s determination that the proposal is administratively complete, the proposal will move to Board Approval. In addition, at the Commissioner’s sole discretion, the Commissioner may elect to require Board Approval of the proposed program. Board approval must occur not later than one year after the institution’s application was administratively complete.

Approval Categories

(3) Commissioner Approval

Commissioner Denial

If the Commissioner recommends denial of the program, Board Staff shall notify the institution and provide *ten business days* in which the institution may request in writing final consideration from the Board. If the institution requests final consideration from the Board, Board Staff shall ensure the Board considers the request not later than the first anniversary of the institution's administratively complete submission.

If Board Staff does not receive a request for Board consideration within ten business days from the date the institution was notified of the Commissioner's recommendation for denial of the program, the application shall be considered withdrawn.

Approval Categories

(4) Board Approval

This category of approval would be obtained when an institution of higher education (universities, health-related institutions, or community colleges) requests a new doctoral or professional program, or the new degree program would initiate a required level change from the accreditor. This review would require that the proposal be taken to a Board meeting not later than the first anniversary of agency staff's determination that the application is administratively complete. This approval will include a recommendation from the Commissioner about whether the program meets the criteria for approval.

Examples: New doctoral or professional programs or the proposed program will instigate a level change (offering a bachelor's for the first time at a community college)

Approval Categories

(4) Board Approval

Timeline for Board Approval: If the Board fails to approve or deny the program by the first anniversary after Board Staff deems the proposal administratively complete, the program is considered approved by operation of law.

Intent to Plan

Prior to initiating the planning process for a new degree program, an institution proposing a new degree would provide a notification to the Coordinating Board of its intent to plan prior to seeking approval from its governing board.

Doctoral and Professional programs will still be required to submit an intent to plan one year prior to submitting the new doctoral or professional degree proposal.

After the Coordinating Board receives the notice of intent to plan, within 60 days Coordinating Board staff would provide to that institution available labor market information and any other relevant information relevant to planning the proposed program, including the number of similar programs

New Baccalaureate Programs at Community Colleges

If the bachelor's degree will be the institution's first degree at that level, the new degree proposal will be subject to Board Approval.

If the bachelor's degree is not the institution's first degree at that level, the new degree proposal will be subject to the following levels of approval, except for pilot institutions:

- If the proposed degree contains 50 percent or less new curriculum content, then the proposal will be subject to Assistant Commissioner approval.
- If the proposed degree contains more than 50 percent new curriculum content, then the proposal will be subject to Commissioner Approval.

Next Steps

Rules were posted for public comment to the TX Register in mid-July

Comments will be reviewed by Board staff

The proposed rules and responses to comments will be presented at the October Board meeting

