UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
SACS

**University of South Carolina**
**South Carolina's Flagship University**

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**Comprehensive Standard 3.4.1**

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

**Judgment:** Compliant

**Response:**

**Columbia Campus**

In the early summer of 2009, the University of South Carolina (USC) implemented a series of policies clarifying and codifying what had been long-standing, but in some cases unwritten, procedures for creating and modifying programs, courses (including dual enrollment courses), academic administrative units, and international programs. A newly appointed Director of Academic Programs guided the draft policies through the institutional vetting process, and oversaw the establishment of an Academic Program Development website. The website provides links to each of the new policies, to step-by-step procedures for program actions, and to the newly designed forms.

The Provost's Office convened a new Special Advisory Committee in Fall 2009 consisting of Academic Program Liaisons (APL's) from each college, school and four-year campus, in addition to representatives from graduate and undergraduate faculty governance bodies, the Registrar's Office, the System Affairs Office (also the regional campus representative), the Library system, Distance Education, and the Office of Institutional Assessment and Compliance. This body assists and advises its chair, the Director of Academic Programs in the Office of the Provost, in complying with university, state and SACS guidelines governing academic program actions.

USC policy requires that each educational program it offers for academic credit at any of its eight campuses is approved by the appropriate faculty governance body and the administration. Academic Affairs Policy (ACAF) 2.00, "Creation and Revision of Academic Programs" states that "the faculty of the University has legislative authority over matters pertaining to the curriculum on the campus where they serve. The Provost's Office oversees the system-wide approval process and ensures that all ongoing academic program development is in compliance with South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE) and Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) regulations and in alignment with University strategic goals and priorities." ACAF 2.00 delineates the approval process, and distinguishes between the steps required at the Columbia, two-year regional, and four-year senior campuses (the latter are separately accredited by SACS, but are governed jointly with the Columbia and regional campuses by a single President and Board of Trustees).

Program development normally begins in a department or unit of a campus, college or school, and is vetted by that unit's academic affairs official, and relevant committee(s), prior to review by the appropriate faculty governance body. On the Columbia campus at the faculty governance level, program proposals are reviewed first by the relevant curriculum committee. When reviewing proposals for new programs, the curriculum committees ask the following questions:

- Does the Program Planning Summary provide sufficient information and rationale for the proposed program?
- Is there sufficient justification and demand for the proposed program within the University? Within the State? Within the discipline?
- Is the proposed program consistent with the mission of the University?
- Are there sufficient resources to support the program? If not, how are the necessary resources to be acquired? Is there an adequate plan to acquire them?
- Does the proposed program curriculum have sufficient intellectual rigor and contain the current and relevant theories and practices of the discipline?
- Is there potential for overlap with other disciplines and/or are other programs affected by the proposal?
- Have affected programs, if any, reviewed the proposal and provided a letter of support?

The curriculum committees also use these questions in ruling on the elimination or revision of a program.

At the undergraduate level, the body reviewing program proposals is the Curricula and Courses committee of the Faculty Senate. For all graduate and professional programs, there are two separate curriculum committees of the Graduate Council: 1) the Curriculum Committee on Humanities, Social Sciences, Education, and Related Professional Programs, which deals with all proposals concerning the humanities, arts and social sciences in the College of Arts and Sciences, and all proposals in the colleges of, Education, Law, Mass Communications and Information Science, Music, and Social Work; and 2) the Curriculum Committee on Science, Math, Engineering, Health Sciences, and Related Professional Programs, which handles all the natural, physical and mathematical science proposals from the College of Arts and Sciences, and all proposals from the colleges of Business, Engineering, Hospitality, Retail and Sport Management, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, and Public Health. For programs on the regional campuses, the relevant committee is the Systems Affairs Committee. After curricular action at the committee level, the proposal proceeds to either the full Faculty Senate (Columbia undergraduate programs), the Graduate Council (Columbia graduate programs), or the Regional Campus Faculty Senate (regional programs). Minutes of these meetings over the preceding decade offer evidence of program review and faculty approval – full Faculty Senate minutes; Graduate Council minutes; and Regional Campus Faculty Senate minutes.

Upon faculty governance approval, all new program proposals across the eight USC system campuses require the endorsement of the Provost, the President, and the USC Board of Trustees. The Provost's Office of Academic Programs coordinates the processing of all new program proposals through the USC Board of Trustees, and forwards them upon Board approval to the State of South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE). The South Carolina Code of Laws, Section 59-103-35 requires all new programs undertaken by public institutions of higher education to be approved by CHE. At CHE, proposals are reviewed by the Advisory Committee on Academic Programs (ACAP), the Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing (CAAL), and the full Commission. Programs are entered into the appropriate Academic Bulletin only after the Provost's Office receives formal notification of approval from both CHE and SACS.

The faculty assumes responsibility for and exercises oversight over distance and correspondence education, ensuring both the rigor of programs and the quality of instruction. ACAF 2.00 assigns faculty program leadership the responsibility for "ensuring that programs meet the academic expectations of the University and are assessed annually, including monitoring program offerings using specific delivery methods…"

USC policies require that faculty within all educational programs specify expected student learning outcomes, as stated in ACAF 2.00:

All academic programs should be developed using measurable learning outcomes and expectations. Achievement of these outcomes must be assessed on an annual basis by the individual academic unit as well as by the campus, college or school dean, or chief academic affairs officer. A program assessment project is implemented each year by the Office of Institutional Assessment and Compliance for the Columbia campus and Regional campuses. Senior campuses conduct their own assessments and maintain separate assessment records.

Academic programs using distance technology must also regularly assess the extent to which the program has maintained the same level of quality in both the portions of the program delivered traditionally and those employing distance technology.

Learning outcomes for all graduate and undergraduate programs are included in the program's entry in the appropriate Academic Bulletin. As outlined in the University's Center for Teaching Excellence guidelines, course syllabi are also required to include learning outcomes for the course. Sample syllabus components are available through the Center of Teaching Excellence and through the Graduate School. As part of the assessment project cited above, faculty within each academic program assess program learning outcomes and submit an annual assessment report and assessment plan to the Office of Institutional Assessment and Compliance. In the professional programs, learning outcomes are assessed in the context of their competency-based accreditation processes. Professional school assessment and curriculum committees are charged with reviewing learning outcome success. For further information on the achievement of outcomes and use of results, see Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1.

### Regional Campuses

The Regional Campuses' curricular activities are linked to the University System through faculty self-governance mechanisms and entities. Curriculum and educational program development, maintenance and approval rest in the coordinated activity of the faculty. Each Regional Campus has a faculty organization that is responsible for the integrity of that campus' authorized academic degree programs. The right to grant these programs was granted to each campus by the state of South Carolina through its agent, the Commission on Higher Education.

Coordination assuring that each educational offering exists within the framework of the greater University is accomplished by review by the campus faculty, the Regional Campuses Faculty Senate, and the Columbia Faculty Senate. The primary entity within the Columbia Senate that addresses educational program content is the Committee on Courses and Curricula upon which the Regional Campuses, through election by the Regional Campuses Faculty Senate, has representation. The mission of this committee is as follows:

"The committee shall consider, and recommend to the faculty, action on all requests for new or revised curricula leading to any formal recognition other that graduate degrees or first professional degrees in law, medicine and pharmacy. The committee shall also consider, and recommend to the faculty, action on all requests for the institution, modification, or deletion of courses and of any proscribed programs of study that do not fall within the purview of the graduate faculty. The committee shall review the various university curricula with special attention to duplication or obsolesce of courses. In addition to the members elected by the faculty, there shall be one member appointed by the president to serve ex-officio, one representative from the regional campuses, and two student members."

Administrative oversight and involvement is assured through the organizational structure of the university in which authority rests with the Board of Trustees who, in turn, delegate authority, including educational program approval to university administrators. In the case of Regional Campus programs, administrative responsibility rests first with the campus Dean who then forwards requests to the Vice Provost and Executive Dean for System Affairs and Extended University. Finally, it should be noted that system wide coordination concerning activity about program development is assured by the designation of Academic Program Liaisons for each appropriate entity (campus, school/college). These APLs serve as information resources for their respective units.

Externally, program approval is coordinated with the aforementioned Commission on Higher Education, from which requires approval by the Commission before any new program may be implemented by a public institution of higher learning. While in effect since the Commission was created in 1967, this requirement was reemphasized in Act 359 of 1996, which specifically mandated that the Commission "examine" the "curriculum offerings" of each public college and university in the state "and the respective relationships to services and offerings of other institutions." Act 359 also reaffirmed that "no new program may be undertaken by any public institution of higher learning without approval of the Commission."

Finally, all program development is guided by SACS criteria. A full rendering of the procedures for program approval is found in the USC Policy and Procedures 2.00 and 2.00a.  All academic programs publish learning outcomes in the appropriate Academic Bulletin and submit an annual assessment report and assessment plan to the Office of Institutional Assessment and Compliance.  The processes for assessing learning outcomes at each Regional Campus are described in Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1.

**Supporting Documentation:**

| Description | Source |
|---|---|
| *Policies and Procedures* | |
| Academic Affairs Policy (ACAF) 2.00 | http://www.sc.edu/policies/acaf200.pdf |
| ACAF 2.00a | http://www.sc.edu/policies/acaf200a.pdf |
| Section 59-103-35 | http://www.scstatehouse.gov/CODE/t59c103.htm |
| Act 359 of 1996 | http://www.che.sc.gov/Finance/Perf_Fund/Perform/ACT359.HTM |
| *Committees and Minutes* | |
| Committees | |
| Curricula and Courses Committee | http://ipr.sc.edu/pdf/FacultyManualColumbia.pdf#Curricula |
| Curriculum Committees of the Graduate Council | http://ipr.sc.edu/pdf/GradCouncilManual.pdf#CurricComm |
| Systems Affairs Committee | http://saeu.sc.edu/RCFS/newsenator/index.html |
| Special Advisory Committees | http://ipr.sc.edu/pdf/SpecAdvComm0910.pdf |
| Minutes | |
| Full Faculty Senate | http://www.sc.edu/faculty/meetings.shtml |
| Graduate Council | https://gradschool.sc.edu/gradcouncil/minutes/ |
| Regional Campus Faculty Senate | http://saeu.sc.edu/RCFS/minutes.html |
| *Programs/Commissions* | |
| Academic Program Development | http://www.sc.edu/provost/acadprog/index.shtml |
| Academic Program Liaisons | http://www.sc.edu/provost/acadprog/contacts/ |
| South Carolina Commission on Higher Education | http://www.che.sc.gov/ |
| Southern Association of Colleges and Schools | http://www.sacs.org/ |
| *Other Documentation* | |
| Academic Bulletin | http://bulletin.sc.edu/ |
| Sample Course Syllabus | http://ipr.sc.edu/effectiveness/sampsyll.htm |
| Academic Plan Composer Tool | http://assessmentplan.ipr.sc.edu/ |
| University Organizational Structure | http://hr.sc.edu/USC_Summary_Org_Chart.pdf |