

Academic Program Guidance

The purposes of this guidance document are to assist UNC faculty, staff and administrators 1) in meeting the expectations of UNC General Administration and the UNC Board of Governors regarding the development and approval of new degree programs or new modes of program delivery, and 2) in using maintaining and using information available through the Academic Program Inventory (API).

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Definitions

Certificate program

A certificate program provides an organized program of study that leads to the awarding of a certificate rather than a degree. Constituent institutions may offer other certificate programs that do not meet these IPEDS reporting requirements. A post-baccalaureate certificate is designed for persons who have completed a baccalaureate degree, but it does not meet the requirements for a master's degree. A post-master's certificate is designed for persons who have completed a master's degree, but it does not meet the requirement of academic degrees at the doctoral level. In 2015, IPEDS eliminated their established standards for Federal reporting on certificates. Through Student DataMart, UNC General Administration (UNC GA) collects and can make available information on approved certificate programs at any credit hour threshold. Until further notice from IPEDS, however, UNC GA is continuing its practice of Federal reporting only on post-baccalaureate certificates requiring at least 18 credit hours and post-master's certificates requiring at least 24 credit hours.

Degree program

A degree program is a program of study in a discipline specialty that leads to a degree in that distinct specialty area at a particular level of instruction. As a general rule, in order to be considered for degree program status, a course of study should require at least 27 semester hours in the proposed program area at the undergraduate level; at least half the number of hours required for the degree at the master's level; and at least 21 hours in the proposed program area at the doctoral level. Anything less than this within an existing degree program should be designated a concentration, a decision that can be made at the constituent institution level.

Degree level

Post-secondary academic degree programs in the 16 constituent universities of the University of North Carolina are categorized by degree level according to Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) definitions and accepted practices.

Distance education

The SACSCOC and IPEDS definitions for distance education are nearly identical. In short, distance education occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. See also *online education* and *site-based distance education*.

Off-campus

Although not clearly defined in SACSCOC policy, their regulations pertaining to off-campus sites appear to address the specific scenario where students and instructors are together at a site geographically separate from the campus.

Online education

Online education is a subset of distance education where, regardless of instructor location, the student engages with content and interacts with the instructor and other students through the Internet.

Site-based distance education

Site-based distance education describes a scenario where a student is present at a site away from the campus, but the instructor is not present at that same location. Their interaction is mediated by means other than the Internet (see *Online education*), such as audioconferencing, one-way or two-way transmission broadcasts, etc.

Teacher licensure program

Constituent institutions with teacher education programs approved by the State Board of Education may offer specific course clusters in approved teacher licensure areas which meet licensure requirements of the State Board of Education but do not lead to the conferral of a particular degree or certificate. These may be at the entry level or advanced level of teacher licensure. When an institution receives authorization to offer teacher licensure in a specific area from the State Board of Education, UNC GA should be notified. A current inventory of teacher licensure programs approved by the State Board of Education is available from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction¹. For teacher education programs, the President of the University may issue regulations and/or guidelines setting parameters for required second academic concentrations.

Teacher licensure specialty areas

UNC maintains a list of teacher licensure specialty area codes to ensure accurate annual reporting and ongoing research around teacher production and quality. These codes reflect areas of teacher licensure that can be obtained through degree programs. Constituent institutions can request that one or more teacher licensure specialty area code(s) be associated with or removed from a degree program through the Academic Program Inventory (API).

Program Request Portal (PREP)

Processes to approve new degree programs and new delivery modes are managed according to the flowcharts in the Regulations for Academic Program Planning and Evaluation 400.1.1[R]. Constituent institutions should submit proposals for new degree programs, new modes of delivery for existing programs, and other change requests to UNC GA through the Program Request Portal (PREP) at <https://prep.northcarolina.edu>. UNC GA Academic Affairs maintains and makes available training references on the use of PREP. Only individuals authorized by each Chancellor to act on his or her behalf can submit documents to UNC GA in PREP; these individuals are referred to as Campus Program Coordinators or CPCs in PREP.

¹ See <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/ihe/approved/>

Degree Program Classification in the Academic Program Inventory (API)

CIP Codes

All degree programs are categorized individually in the University's Academic Program Inventory (API) at the six-digit CIP code level. The University of North Carolina uses the most recent edition of the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) to classify its programs in the API. The CIP classifies all post-secondary degree programs into major discipline divisions.

Discipline divisions are divided further into discipline specialties, which for the most part are represented by six-digit CIP codes. For example, the discipline division Engineering (14) consists of such discipline specialties as General Engineering (14.0101), Aerospace, Aeronautical and Astronautical Engineering (14.0201), Architectural Engineering (14.0401), Chemical Engineering (14.0701), and Civil Engineering (14.0801), etc.

In proposing a 6-digit CIP code for a new degree program, constituent institutions should ensure that the CIP fits the curriculum content. In cases where no single CIP encompasses the full breadth of a program, and similar programs exist within UNC, a CIP should be selected that is consistent with other existing programs. CIPs should align with the unit offering the degree; for example, a program in Science Education offered in a School of Education would carry an education CIP rather than a science content area CIP. Requests for CIP code changes that result in a move between Instructional Area funding categories will be closely scrutinized.

UNC-Generated Identifiers

In addition to the 6-digit CIP, all degree programs in the API are assigned a 3-digit degree code and, as needed, a sequence number.

Degree codes

Degree codes identify the degree awarded and are created and maintained by UNC GA (for example, 027 = B.S.). In selecting a degree (B.S., B.A., etc.), constituent institutions should strive for simplicity. For example, the Master of Science in Sample Engineering Area should have a degree code of M.S., not M.S.S.E.A. Exceptions can be made for degrees that are widely accepted in a field (such as M.S.W., M.B.A., etc.).

Sequence number

In cases where a single campus offers two degree programs in the same CIP and same degree code, then those degree programs are further assigned a sequence number (01, 02, etc.). In addition to distinct degree program titles, this sequence number helps to distinguish between these programs in reports and analyses.

Categories of Evidence in New Program Proposals

Proposals for new degree programs will be evaluated by UNC General Administration, UNC system faculty, and in the case of all doctoral programs, external reviewers. Reviewers are asked to evaluate proposals against the approval criteria in the UNC Board of Governors policy on academic programs, 400.1. Guidance specific to some of those criteria is offered below.

Mission and strategic plan

A constituent institution can propose a new degree program outside of the scope of its current mission statement. A revised mission statement must be presented to the BOG at the same time as the degree proposal comes before them for consideration and approval. Any such revised mission statement must have been appropriately approved through institutional processes before presentation to BOG.

Student demand and enrollment projections

Student demand evidence will be used to determine if enrollment projections are reasonable. As such, quantifiable evidence of student demand is always desirable. Recommended sources of evidence include enrollments of similar existing programs in UNC or nationally, survey data from prospective student pools, or enrollments in feeder programs.

Societal demand

Proposals should provide evidence of post-graduate opportunities specific to the degree level being proposed. For example, national projections may indicate only that a baccalaureate degree is entry level to a profession for which it projects significant growth. If the degree program being proposed is at a master's or doctoral level, then more evidence must be provided specific to opportunities for graduates at that program level. Current job posting analyses are often useful, as is evidence provided by other existing programs regarding their students' post-graduate employment.

Collaboration and unnecessary duplication

Collaborative opportunities with UNC institutions, including joint and dual degree opportunities, should be explored in every case and early in the proposal development process. The exploration of these opportunities is of particular concern when proposed programs are high cost or potentially duplicative. Constituent institutions are encouraged to seek and identify concrete opportunities where partnerships can address student demand, reduce program cost, and meet societal need. Institutions are encouraged to include documented evidence of partnership agreements (such as signed MOUs) when they exist.

Objectives, curriculum, and evaluation

Educational objectives should specify what students will have learned, accomplished, or be able to do upon completion of the degree program. It is often helpful to reviewers to include a model curriculum plan that clarifies concentration requirements or other pathways. While formal campus course approval documents are not required, course descriptions should be robust enough for a reviewer to assess course content and objectives.

Educational objectives, curricular requirements, and program evaluation should be clearly aligned. For example, an institution may indicate that a proposed degree program will emphasize

preparation to work with military and veteran populations. This should be reflected in educational objectives and obvious in the requirements of the program and/or individual courses. The program evaluation may include tracking the number of students who gain employment in positions with this target population.

Faculty capacity

Although CVs are not required for proposed baccalaureate or master's programs, proposals should include enough information to answer questions reviewers could have on faculty credentials, preparation, and experience. For example, if a degree program targets industry professionals, and faculty industry experience or consulting is important for course delivery or advising, then include relevant information in a chart display or discussion of faculty credentials. Other relevant examples are when a proposed degree program has a particular focus (military health, rural populations, etc.) or when accrediting organizations require certain faculty experience or credentials.

Administration

While program administration is sometimes straightforward, these questions must be thoroughly considered and explained for degree programs that span distinct units (departments, colleges) or institutions. For example, it should be clear how decisions will be made to admit, advise, and supervise students and to regularly assess program performance against outcomes. Joint degree programs are required to complete additional questions specific to program administration.

Budget

The budget request should match the projected enrollment, faculty needs, and other resources needs described elsewhere in the narrative of the proposal. If the budget to implement a new program depends on differential tuition and/or enrollment increase funds, an institutional commitment letter from the Chancellor and/or Chief Academic Officer should be included to clarify institutional plans in the event these sources do not materialize.

UNC Policy 1000.1.1

Tuition supports the general provision of instruction, and, per UNC Policy Manual 1000.1.1., fees are for "limited, dedicated purposes." Tuition rates are set by the BOG based on 1 FTE for a traditional (Fall & Spring) academic year. By policy, tuition rates are only set per semester credit hour for distance education courses. Tuition rates for courses delivered during the summer are set by the President. Each fall constituent institutions submit summer tuition rate requests for the upcoming summer session based on the rates approved for that academic year.

Differential tuition

New graduate program proposals requesting differential tuition generally do so based on one of two arguments. Market-based arguments for differential tuition are strengthened by comparing the proposed tuition with that of similar programs; this is particularly important for non-resident rates. Cost-based arguments for differential tuition suggest that the program requires unique instructional costs (faculty with highly specialized expertise, laboratory construction or equipment purchase, etc.).

Joint degree proposals

Campuses proposing joint degree programs are asked to provide evidence of decisions around several administrative considerations such as the admissions, registration, and enrollment processes. While the partner institutions may not have worked out the fine procedural details at the

time of proposal submission, the institutions should, at minimum, provide convincing evidence that the decisions reached are feasible (and not theoretical).

Comparison of Regulatory Actions between UNC and SACSCOC

UNC thresholds and reporting requirements are not always identical to those of SACSCOC. The following tables were created to provide a foundation from which to understand cases where UNC and SACSCOC requirements differ. Table 1 shows how UNC definitions were derived, based upon student and instructor location and matching terminology used by SACSCOC. Table 2 presents several SACSCOC substantive change scenarios, including for off-site programs and distance learning, where the degree of actions required by SACSCOC and UNC regulations differ. The UNC Scope of Concern column provides the rationale behind those differences. Roman numerals from Table 1 are referenced in relevant scenarios of the off-site program and distance learning sections.

Table 1. Matrix of terminology for degree program delivery, per student and instructor location
Where is the student?

		Where is the student?		
		On campus	At the site	Online
Where is the instructor?	On campus	On campus (I)	Distance education (IV) / site-based	Distance education / online (VII)
	At the site	Distance education (II)	Off-campus site (V)	Distance education / online (VIII)
	Online	Distance education (III)	Distance education (VI) / site-based	Distance education / online (IX)

Table 2: Comparison of SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy Statement scenarios and UNC regulation

Type of Change	SACSCOC Substantive Change Procedure	UNC Regulation (before 2/1/2016)	UNC Regulation (after 2/1/2016)	UNC Scope of Concern (where different from SACSCOC)
<i>Distance learning</i>				
Offering 50% or more of a program via distance learning for the first time (IV, VI-IX)	1	Appendix F/G required for online and site-based delivery	Request to Plan/Establish (new program) or Request to Deliver (approved program) required	

Type of Change	SACSCOC Substantive Change Procedure	UNC Regulation (before 2/1/2016)	UNC Regulation (after 2/1/2016)	UNC Scope of Concern (where different from SACSCOC)
Offering 25-49% of a program via distance learning for the first time (IV, VI-IX)	2	NA	Request to Plan/Establish (new program) or Request to Deliver (approved program) required	
Offering 24% or less of a program via distance learning for the first time (IV, VI-IX)	NA	NA	NA	
<i>Off-Campus sites</i>				
Initiating off-campus sites where students can obtain 50% or more credits toward program (V)	1	Appendix F/G required	Request to Plan/Establish (new program) or Request to Deliver (approved program) required	
Initiating off-campus sites where students can obtain 25-49% credits toward program (V)	2	NA	Request to Plan/Establish (new program) or Request to Deliver (approved program) required	Systemwide review of all proposed degree offerings for off-campus sites, regardless of credits offered, ensures that UNC avoids unnecessary duplication.
Initiating off-campus sites where students can obtain 24% or less credits toward program (V)	NA	NA	Request to Plan/Establish (new program) or Request to Deliver (approved program) required	Systemwide review of all proposed degree offerings for off-campus sites, regardless of credits offered, ensures that UNC avoids unnecessary duplication.

Type of Change	SACSCOC Substantive Change Procedure	UNC Regulation (before 2/1/2016)	UNC Regulation (after 2/1/2016)	UNC Scope of Concern (where different from SACSCOC)
Expanding program offerings at previously approved off-campus site; program not significantly different from current programs at site (V)	NA	Appendix F/G required	Request to Plan/Establish (new program) or Request to Deliver (approved program) required	Systemwide review of all proposed degree offerings for off-campus sites, regardless of whether the proposing institution already delivers one or more degree programs at the site and of the nature of those degrees, ensures that UNC avoids unnecessary duplication.
Expanding program offerings at previously approved off-campus site; program is significantly different from current programs at site but not at the institution (V)	NA	Appendix F/G required	Request to Plan/Establish (new program) or Request to Deliver (approved program) required	Systemwide review of all proposed degree offerings for off-campus sites, regardless of whether the proposing institution already delivers one or more degree programs at the site and of the nature of those degrees, ensures that UNC avoids unnecessary duplication.
Expanding program offerings at previously approved off-campus site; program significantly different from current programs at site and at the institution (V)	1	Appendix F/G required	Request to Plan/Establish (new program) or Request to Deliver (approved program) required	
<i>Certificates</i>				

Type of Change	SACSCOC Substantive Change Procedure	UNC Regulation (before 2/1/2016)	UNC Regulation (after 2/1/2016)	UNC Scope of Concern (where different from SACSCOC)
Initiating certificate program using existing approved courses	NA	Institution submits data on certificates that meet minimum IPEDS reporting thresholds via web-based portal	Data on certificates offered by an institution, regardless of credit hour, will be accessible to the API through UNC Student DataMart	Ability to inventory, search, and report on all certificate programs offered by an institution, regardless of whether or not the certificate was comprised of existing courses, ensures that UNC avoids unnecessary duplication.
Initiating certificate program at a new off-campus site (previously approved program)	1	Institution submits data on certificates that meet minimum IPEDS reporting thresholds via web-based portal	Data on certificates offered by an institution, regardless of credit hour, will be accessible through UNC Student DataMart. API will display only those meeting historical IPEDS reporting thresholds until further notice.	
Initiating certificate program that is a significant departure from previously approved programs	1	Institution submits data on certificates that meet minimum IPEDS reporting thresholds via web-based portal	Data on certificates offered by an institution, regardless of credit hour, will be accessible to the API through UNC Student DataMart	
<i>Joint Degrees</i>				

Type of Change	SACSCOC Substantive Change Procedure	UNC Regulation (before 2/1/2016)	UNC Regulation (after 2/1/2016)	UNC Scope of Concern (where different from SACSCOC)
Initiating joint program with another SACSCOC accredited institution	2	Appendix A/C required for new joint degree programs	Request to Plan/Establish required for new joint degree programs	
Initiating joint program with an institution not accredited by SACSCOC	1	Appendix A/C required for new joint degree programs	Request to Plan/Establish required for new joint degree programs	
<i>Dual Degrees</i>				
Dual programs	2	NA	NA	Upon BOG approval for an institution to offer a degree program, the institution may enter into SACSCOC-compliant dual program arrangements, which are essentially course/credit articulation agreements, based on the approved degree program and without additional approval from UNC GA.

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