



UTAH SYSTEM OF
HIGHER EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

April 13, 2023

R401, Approval of New Programs, Program Changes, Discontinued Programs, and Program Reports

Board [Policy R401, Approval of New Programs, Program Changes, Discontinued Programs, and Program Reports](#) needs to be updated to clarify the distinction in credentials offered by academic and technical education institutions. The policy includes credential characteristics, and approval and reporting requirements. Additionally, the policy defines other training types including short-term, basic instruction, and community education.

If Policy R401 is updated, the Office of the Commissioner will recommend Utah System of Higher Education Technical College [Policy 200, Program/Course Approval and Reporting](#) be rescinded.

Following are concepts relating to the technical education aspects of the policy for the Technical Education Committee's discussion and feedback.

Credentials

Credentials in Statute

In accordance with [Utah Code § 53B-16-101](#), the Utah Board of Higher Education (Board) is responsible for prescribing the general course of study to be offered at each institution of higher education, including research universities, regional universities, comprehensive community colleges, and technical colleges.

While statute generally defines credential types by institution, the Board is to further clarify the level of program (primary credentials) that each institution offers. Additionally, the Board is responsible for determining the extent to which institutions of higher education provide career and technical education, which is a primary role for all institutions except for the University of Utah. ([53B-16-101\(2\)](#))

Proposed Technical Education Credentials and Other Training

The following are proposed for the updated R401:

Technical Education Certificates are awarded to students who complete programs that include educational experiences intended to meet the needs of Utah's employers for technically skilled workers by preparing adult and secondary students for employment in occupations that do not require a degree.

Technical education programs are approved or recognized by an accrediting body and do not include general education.

Short-Term Training includes limited educational activities or experiences that contribute to the development of knowledge and skills needed to maintain or support existing employment.

Basic Instruction includes instruction in areas such as reading, language arts, and mathematics that are necessary for student success in a chosen technical education program. *Note: Offered to help prospective students develop foundational academic skills needed to meet minimum program admission requirements.*

Community Education includes educational experiences or activities intended to enhance student skills for personal interest and to introduce the community to other educational opportunities at the college.

Program Approval

Program Approval in Statute

Reference: [Utah Code § 53B-16-102](#)

Definition

"Program of instruction" means a program of curriculum that leads to the completion of a degree, diploma, certificate, or other credential.

Program Approval

The Board must establish procedures and guidelines for institutional boards of trustees to consider a proposed new program, and criteria to include identified workforce needs, collaboration with other institutions, the institution's role and mission, and any other criteria determined by the Board.

The institutional board of trustees may approve new programs that meet the criteria defined by the Board, subject to review for pathway articulation. An institution must notify the Board of a proposed new program of instruction, including how the program meets the criteria defined by the Board.

Proposed Approval Process

Institutions notify the Office of the Commissioner of their intent to implement a new program. The Office of the Commissioner informs the institution if a similar aligned program already exists. If so, the program information is shared and faculty are connected with the chair of the appropriate Technical Education Faculty Program Committee. If the program does not exist in any form, other institutions will be notified to determine if a new Faculty Program Committee should be created.

The proposed program approval template (attached) includes work that naturally occurs when an institution develops and implements a new program (see Office of the Commissioner Comments below). The template includes information the board of trustees should consider when committing institutional resources and approving new programs. Institutions will use the template to request the board of trustees approve a new program and send the template and associated attachments with trustee approval to the Office of the Commissioner.

Comments from the Office of the Commissioner

While technical colleges strive to be nimble in responding to emerging industry needs, implementing a new program requires significant planning. Institutions evaluate workforce data and coordinate a program advisory committee consisting of employers from at least three companies to understand broad employment, program, and instructor needs. Institutions may incubate courses in potential programs for a brief period in continuing occupational education. If a program appears to be viable, institutions assess physical facility needs, secure budget for the program, hire faculty, develop curriculum, purchase instructional equipment and resources, and evaluate potential academic and industry partnerships. If a program requires programmatic accreditation, there may be additional requirements. When this work is complete, the institution can begin recruiting students.

The program alignment initiative may provide efficiencies and valuable resources to institutions and faculty responsible for developing new programs. Program and course descriptions and objectives will be in place. Curriculum, labs, and assessments can be shared. Faculty who may not have teaching experience can observe and learn from their peers. Some programs with longstanding industry partnerships have equipment and material donations they may be able to contribute. If a program requires programmatic accreditation, institutions that have completed the process can provide helpful insight and guidance.

Program Review

Program Review in Utah Statute

Reference: [Utah Code § 53B-16-102](#)

The Board is responsible for reviewing all new programs of instruction at an institution of higher education including those funded by gifts, grants, and contracts, no later than two years after the first cohort completes the program of instruction. The Board must also review every program of instruction at least once every seven years. Annually, the Board must conduct a review of academic disciplines across the system, including enrollment, graduation, and workforce placement.

After any review, the Board may modify, consolidate, or terminate a reviewed program of instruction, after providing the institution an opportunity to respond.

In making decisions related to career and technical education curriculum changes, the Board shall coordinate on behalf of the institutional boards of trustees a review of proposed program changes by the State Board of Education to address overlap and duplication of course work with high schools and technical colleges.

Proposed Program Review Process

Annually, program data will be presented to the Board for evaluation of enrollment, graduation, and job placement. This data will be also presented within two years of the implementation of a new program.

Commissioner’s Recommendation

The Commissioner recommends that the Board Technical Education Committee provide feedback on policy concepts relating to credential types, program approval, the approval template for technical education programs, and the program review process.

Attachment

Technical Education Program Approval Template