



UTAH SYSTEM OF
HIGHER EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

June 6, 2024

Instructional Program Approval Policies

The Office of the Commissioner proposes updates to Board Policy R401, *Approval of New Programs, Program Changes, Discontinued Programs, and Program Reports*, which defines the instructional program approval processes within USHE. The policy updates include processes for approving technical college programs and better distinguishing between the programs offered by technical colleges and degree-granting institutions. As part of this update, portions of R401 are being moved into other policies, and two new policies are being added.

Board Responsibility to Define Program Approval Policies and Processes

Utah Code defines particular roles and geographic regions for the institutions within the Utah System of Higher Education and broadly outlines the types of instructional programs they may offer. The code requires the Utah Board of Higher Education to clarify each institutional role by determining the level of instructional programs and types of credentials offered within them. The Board also has a statutory responsibility under [Utah Code 53B-1-402](#) to "develop strategies for providing higher education, including technical education, in rural areas." As a result, the Board has encouraged a robust system of colleges and universities across multiple geographic regions to fully meet the state's needs. The Board assigns geographic service regions to each institution and gives each institution the primary responsibility for ensuring broad access to instructional programs that fit the institution's role within those regions.

State code grants institutional boards of trustees the authority to approve instructional programs within their assigned institutional role, geographic region and parameters for credential structures defined in Board policy. All institutions must seek approval from the Board to offer instructional programs that are outside the institution's role, its geographic service region, or the established structure for credential types.

Proposed Policy Updates

The proposed updates to policy are as follows:

- The process for requesting permission from the Board for out-of-role programs is moving from Board Policy R401 into Policy R312, *Institutional Roles and Missions*. That policy will be renamed Board Policy R312, *Institutional Roles and Missions and Approval of Out-of-Role Instructional Programs*. The update to this policy also clarifies some language around institutional roles, particularly around distinguishing between technical and academic roles.

- The process for requesting permission from the Board for programs outside of a geographic service region is moving from Board Policy R401 into Board Policy R315, *Designation of Geographic Service Regions*. The update also defines a process for approval of branch campuses, instructional service centers, and extension centers. The policy will be retitled Board Policy R315, *Designation of Service Regions and Approval of Out-of-Region Instructional Programs, Branch Campuses, Instructional Service Centers, and Extension Centers*.
- Policy R401 is being refocused exclusively on the approval process for in-role and in-region programs and administrative units. It will be renamed Policy R401, *Approval and Modification of Instructional Programs and Administrative Units within Institutional Role, Mission, and Designated Service Regions*.
- Policy R402, *Certificate and Degree Structures*, is a new policy that encompasses the definitions previously found in R401 around credential structures such as program length, undergraduate and graduate classification, and special curricular conditions of certificates and degrees that may be approved by institutional boards of trustees. It includes definitions and structures for technical certificates and distinguishes academic programs from technical certificates. Credentials that fall outside the parameters defined in Board Policy R402 must receive approval from the Board.
- Policy R403, *Short-Term Training*, is a new policy that defines how institutions may offer microcredentials, short-term occupational training, continuing professional development, and community education that fall outside the structure of for-credit certificates and degree structures.

Commissioner's Recommendation

The Commissioner recommends that the Board approve the following Board policies:

- R312, *Institutional Roles and Missions and Approval of Out-of-Role Instructional Programs*;
- R315, *Designation of Service Regions and Approval of Out-of-Region Instructional Programs, Branch Campuses, Instructional Service Centers, and Extension Centers*;
- R401, *Approval and Modification of Instructional Programs and Administrative Units within Institutional Role, Mission, and Designated Service Regions*;
- New R402, *Certificate and Degree Structures*
- New R403, *Short-Term Training*

Attachments

- Attachment 1 — Redlined R312
- Attachment 2 — Clean R312
- Attachment 3 — Redlined R315
- Attachment 4 — Clean R315
- Attachment 5 — Redlined R401
- Attachment 6 — Clean R401
- Attachment 7 — New R402
- Attachment 8 — New R403