

Memo To: All UH-Downtown/PS Holders
From: Loren J. Blanchard, President
Subject: Changes to Curricula, Courses, Programs, and Credentials

UH-Downtown/PS 03.A.12
Issue No. 7
Effective date: 06/14/2021
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1. PURPOSE

This Policy Statement standardizes the procedures by which course alterations, new courses, and new degree programs are developed. It outlines the processes by which the curriculum changes are approved and added to the University catalog and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board inventory. The Policy Statement describes how program changes are sent to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools-Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 Relevant Faculty: All full-time faculty, including tenure, tenure-track, instructors, lecturers, visiting, and clinical faculty within a teaching discipline are members of the academy and have the right to participate in the discussion and development of curricula. Such full-time faculty in a discipline are considered “relevant faculty” in this policy for the purposes of sharing information and gathering curricular ideas.
- 2.2 Responsible Faculty: Per the traditional standards of the academy, tenured and tenure-track faculty are charged with the responsibility of owning the curriculum. At a minimum, therefore, “responsible faculty” include any tenured and tenure-track faculty in the teaching discipline, but may also include any other full-time faculty as determined by the department or comparable academic unit. In cases where a department or discipline has fewer than three relevant tenured or tenure-track faculty, the responsible faculty are defined as a group comprised of the available relevant faculty plus additional tenured or tenure-track faculty with appropriate expertise from outside the academic unit or discipline, as determined by the department or comparable academic unit.
- 2.3 Course: A unit of instruction that includes a set of lessons, lectures, or other assignments or methods of instruction lasting one academic term. A course is formally defined by the combination of its title, description, prerequisites, and learning outcomes as enacted by the University’s curriculum approval process, although other elements, such as a syllabus, may contribute to the full understanding of a course and its practical implementation.
- 2.4 Curriculum: A defined and prescribed set of courses, which students must successfully complete to qualify for receiving a diploma or certificate of

completion. In its broadest sense, the term “curriculum” may also refer to all of the formal courses offered at the University.

- 2.5 Program: For the purpose of this Policy Statement, a program is the equivalent of the curriculum required for an academic degree, a major, a minor, a certificate, a badge or any other specialized area of study required as a part of an academic degree.
- 2.6 Course Inventory: The complete list of courses, including course descriptions and credit hour designations that are offered by the University and approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.
- 2.7 Measurable Course Learning Outcome: The measurable activity confirming the knowledge and skills a student is expected to acquire or achieve upon completion of a course or academic program. Measurement may be quantitative or qualitative, depending on the subject matter of the course.
- 2.8 Program Learning Outcomes: The broader learning goals of a program establishing the intended knowledge and skills upon graduations.
- 2.9 Program Inventory: The complete list of academic majors and types of degrees associated with each program. Program inventories have to be approved periodically by the Board of Regents, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the SACSCOC.
- 2.10 Unjustified Duplication: A duplicate course or program proposal is one that is so similar to one previously established that there are no substantive differences. For courses, a test would be whether a reasonable advisor would accept the new course as transfer credit for the existing course.
- 2.11 Substantive Change: According to the SACSCOC substantive change policy, “a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution.” <https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/SubstantiveChange.pdf>

3. POLICY

- 3.1 All course changes, new course proposals, new academic programs, and curriculum changes must be approved by an academic department curriculum committee or by a curriculum support committee as per [PS 03.A.34, Curriculum Support Committees](#) for degree programs not housed within a single academic department. New majors and degree programs must receive subsequent approval by the Board of Regents of the University of Houston System, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the SACSCOC before they may be implemented for student enrollment.
- 3.2 All new curricula or curriculum changes must be approved by the Department Chair or Program Chair (for degree programs not housed within a single

academic department), by the academic college Dean, by the University Curriculum Committee, and by the Provost/Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs.

- 3.3 Program and courses that are duplicates of existing curricula (as defined in this policy) must have a valid justification for this duplication that is agreed upon by UCC and the provost. Faculty are highly encouraged to share proposal plans widely ahead of their consideration in the shared governance process, and, in particular, with other programs housing courses or programs that might meet the definition of “duplicate”. Collaboration across departments and programs is, when practicable, highly encouraged to allow for effective use of existing curricula and faculty expertise.

There are legitimate circumstances wherein a duplication is preferred. For example, a course may be superficially similar but have necessary elements not found in the existing curriculum that meets additional requirements. Furthermore, the duplicate course may be needed at a location, at a time, in a modality, with prerequisites, or to a volume that the academic unit offering existing course is unable or unwilling to provide. However, faculty should exhaust alternative for using an existing course before resorting to creating a duplicate course, and must sufficiently and convincingly document the need for the duplication in the proposal documents.

- 3.4 As required by state law or rules associated with external governing bodies and accrediting agencies including the THECB and SACSCOC, the Office of Academic Affairs shall submit course changes, new courses, new academic programs, and curriculum changes to the appropriate oversight bodies for approval.
- 3.5 The Office of Academic Affairs will maintain the Course Inventory and Program Inventory for the University of Houston-Downtown.
- 3.6 With the approval of the college dean, a new course may be offered initially under a “Special Topics” designation and course number. No approval is required at higher administrative levels for a “Special Topics” course, but the following limits apply.
 - 3.6.1 Once a new course is taught under a “Special Topics” designation, it may be offered in subsequent terms without additional approval.
 - 3.6.2 Once a new course is taught under a “Special Topics” designation, it may be offered no more than two more times within a five-year period.
 - 3.6.3 After three offerings within a five-year period, a course designated as “Special Topics” must be submitted for approval through the normal process as a regular, permanent course to be approved for inclusion in the Course Inventory, in order to be taught another time.

4. PROCEDURES

4.1 Approval of New Courses and Course Changes

- 4.1.1 The originating department or authorized curriculum support committee prepares an online Course Inventory Update Form for each new proposed course or course change and circulates the proposal to relevant department faculty members. New courses to be offered as “Special Topics” courses also must be described using the online Course Inventory Update form.
- 4.1.2 After verifying that all relevant faculty members in the department are notified of the proposal, the Department Curriculum Committee or authorized Curriculum Support Committee reviews and approves the proposed new course or course change. The committee chair signs the approved Course Inventory Update form electronically and transmits it to the Department Chair or Program Chair for approval.
- 4.1.3 The Department Chair or the Program Chair reviews proposed new course or course change, approves the Course Inventory Update form online, notifying the college Dean. Course requests that are not approved trigger the digital workflow to send an email to the Departmental Curriculum Committee or the Curriculum Support Committee.
- 4.1.4 The Dean reviews the proposed new course or course change and transmits an approved new course or course change proposal to the University Curriculum Committee.
- 4.1.5 The University Curriculum Committee reviews proposed new course or course change as outlined in 4.3.
- 4.1.6 “Special Topics” courses follow the same procedure for approval as other courses except that the college Dean has final approval authority and is not required to transmit a Course Inventory Update form for a “Special Topics” course proposal to the University Curriculum Committee. The approval goes to the Provost’s Office for filing. The college also will maintain a file of all approved “Special Topics” courses.

4.2 Approval of New Degree Programs

- 4.2.1 All relevant faculty members are notified of any proposed new major or minor degree program proposal.
- 4.2.2 An originating department or support area representative files a “Notice of Intent to Plan” document with the relevant department chair or program director, who will discuss the idea with the dean and convene a

meeting within 10 semester weekdays. Upon agreement, the parties will select a faculty liaison to the provost's office, who will submit and notice to the appropriate AVP. The AVP will inform the provost and convene a meeting to go over the development process and answer questions about new program requirements and support, as needed. If the faculty intend to move forward, the AVP will inform the University Curriculum Committee about the potential program and provide support to the department for the next steps.

- 4.2.3 An originating department or support area representative works with the department or program Chair, Dean and Provost to prepare a preliminary request for a new program using the appropriate current forms and systems provided by the provost's office. The provost forwards the request to the UH System Provost Council. If approved, the originating department or support area representative works with the chair and dean to produce a more comprehensive new program request for the internal approval workflow in the appropriate system.
- 4.2.4 The department curriculum committee or curriculum support committee verifies that the majority of relevant faculty members accept the proposed new major or minor degree program. The department curriculum committee or authorized curriculum support committee reviews and, as appropriate, approves the proposed new major or specialized area. The committee chair forwards approved proposals to the department chairs or program chair for consideration.
- 4.2.5 The department chair or program coordinator/director reviews proposed new programs or specialized area of study and, as appropriate indicates approval to the college dean using the curriculum system. Program requests that are not approved are returned to the departmental curriculum committee or the curriculum support committee.
- 4.2.6 Proposals approved in the system by the dean are transmitted to the University Curriculum Committee and the dean submits the [UHD Compliance Change form](#) to the SACSCOC liaison.
- 4.2.7 The University Curriculum Committee reviews the proposal according to 4.3. Program proposals that involve new or significantly changed courses should have the courses reviewed before or simultaneously with the program proposal.
- 4.2.8 Modifications to degree programs follow the process outlined in 4.1.
- 4.2.9 Approval of minors follows the procedure outlined for the approval of new course and course changes as outlined in 4.1.
- 4.2.10 Approval of interdisciplinary majors or specialized area of study follows the same procedure as outlined in 4.2 with the exception that such

proposals must be approved by all relevant department curriculum committees, department or program chairs and deans. Approval of interdisciplinary minors follow procedures outlined in 4.1, but also requires approval by all relevant department curriculum committees, department or program chairs, and deans.

4.3 Role of the University Curriculum Committee

- 4.3.1 The membership of the University Curriculum Committee is governed by [PS 01.A.03, Academic Shared Governance Policy](#). The University Curriculum Committee receives, reviews, and makes recommendations pertaining to every course and program offered for academic credit by the University.
- 4.3.2 The University Curriculum Committee ensures that there are not any unjustifiable duplications of effort among courses or programs. Through discussion and deliberation the Committee recommends approval of courses and programs that provide the greatest opportunities for enrollment, retention, graduation, and student career success.
- 4.3.3 Each member of the University Curriculum Committee has the responsibility to review courses and programs to ensure that adequate communication has taken place between academic units, so that courses and programs are not poorly designed, or that there is not unjustifiable duplication or overlap with existing courses or programs. The Committee has the responsibility for requesting additional information from the academic units involved and/or bringing the units together to resolve specific problems or issues.
- 4.3.4 The University Curriculum Committee has the responsibility of ensuring that each course that they review is accompanied by a descriptive list of measurable outcomes as required by [Texas Education Code, chapter 51, Sections 51.96851 and 51.974\(g\)](#). The descriptive list may be accompanied with examples of the quantitative or qualitative metrics that will be used to evaluate the outcomes.
- 4.3.5 It is the responsibility of the University Curriculum Committee to ensure that each course that they review is accompanied by the major elements of the course syllabus as required by [Texas Education Code, Chapter 51, Section 51.974, Parts \(1\)\(B\) and \(1\)\(D\)](#) and [PS 03.A.29, Course Syllabi](#).
- 4.3.6 If the University Curriculum Committee approves a proposal for a new course, a course change, a curriculum change, or a new academic program, the Committee will forward the appropriate form to the provost. Course and program proposals that are not approved are transmitted back to the dean in the originating department.

- 4.3.7 The provost has the final authority to approve or reject a proposal for a new course or course change. Changes that are approved will be forwarded for inclusion in the UHD catalog. Changes that are not approved will be returned to the dean in the originating college.
- 4.3.8 The provost forwards approved new undergraduate majors and new undergraduate and graduate degree programs to the Provost's Council of the University of Houston System and the Board of Regents of the University of Houston System for review. New majors and degree programs must receive subsequent approval by the Board of Regents of the University of Houston System, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the SACSCOC before they may be implemented for student enrollment.
- 4.3.9 The appropriate dean's office, in consultation with the SACSCOC liaison and with approval of Provost, will ensure a review of the SACSCOC substantive change policy: 'Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges' to determine substantive change reporting and complete the [UHD Compliance Change form](#).

4.4 Maintenance of Course and Program Inventories and University Catalog

- 4.4.1 The Office of Academic Affairs has the responsibility for maintaining course and program inventories on campus and at external governing agencies. The Office will maintain and make readily available to faculty a repository containing proposal documents from the most recent approval decision, including the tentative syllabi, the formal course definition, including current description and approved learning outcomes.
- 4.4.2 The Office of Academic Affairs has the responsibility for ensuring that the University Catalog contains an accurate list of courses, programs and program requirements, including current course descriptions, prerequisites and corerequisites, and learning outcomes for each course.
- 4.4.3 Each department has the responsibility of ensuring that courses are taught according to their approved formal definitions, as enacted through the curriculum approval process.
- 4.4.4 The Office of Academic Affairs has the responsibility for maintaining UHD compliance change forms, notifications, proposals and recommendations/approvals in adherence to [SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy](#).

5. REVIEW PROCESS

Responsible Party (Reviewer): Senior Vice President for Academic and Student

Affairs and Provost

Review: Every five years on or before October 1st.

Signed original on file in the Office of Human Resources.

6. POLICY HISTORY

Issue #1:

Issue #2:

Issue #3: 04/11/86

Issue #4: 01/29/14

Issue #5: 02/08/16

Issue #6: 08/15/16

7. REFERENCES

[PS 01.A.03 Academic Shared Governance](#)

[PS 03.A.29 Course Syllabi](#)

[PS 03.A.34 University College Curriculum Support Committee](#)

[PS 3.A.32 Monitoring and Reporting of Substantive Changes](#)

[SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy](#)

[Texas Education Code, Chapter 51, Sections 51.96851 and 51.974\(g\)](#)

[Texas Education Code, Chapter 51, Section 51.974, Parts \(1\)\(B\) and \(1\)\(D\)](#)

[UHD Compliance Change Form](#)