UW-Madison Planning and Approval Guidelines for New Degree/Majors

Policy history: Alignment of UW-Madison policy with UW System and Board of Regent policy was first specified in 1976. Several minor revisions were implemented in the 1990's and 2000's.   The System/BOR policy was subject to a major revision in 2012 and the new guidelines were adopted by the Board of Regents in August 2012. See "Revised Process for Program Planning - September 2012" at http://www.uwsa.edu/acss/planning/ .
UW-Madison guidelines revised to align with new System/BOR guidelines, to maintain consistency with previous UW-Madison governance decisions, and to add additional flexibility in the approval process.
Existing UW-Madison guidelines are posted at http://apir.wisc.edu/degreesmajorsoptions.htm
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Introduction

Offerings of academic degree/major programs require a significant commitment to students by the University and a formal planning process ensures that commitment is met. The Board of Regents authorizes degree/major programs and confers the responsibility and authority for these programs on program faculty, the dean (as the chief academic officer of the school/college), and the provost.

The planning process is structured to ensure that:
1. There is communication about the program with all of the campus units that will play a role or that the program will impact,
2. The proposal is reviewed through a structured governance process as a form of peer review, and
3. All of the elements needed to make a program ready for students will be put in place by the time of implementation.

Process Overview

The planning process usually starts with informal discussions among faculty, and with deans and deans' staff.   This informal consultation stage is quite important for building widespread support for the program and for uncovering any potential sticking points.   In addition, early in their planning, program faculty should contact the director of Academic Planning and Institutional Research who can provide advice and help navigate the process. For graduate programs, program faculty should also consult with the Graduate School.

The planning process is a two-cycle process. The first cycle of approval focuses on early planning and the "Notice of Intent", which is approved through UW-Madison governance and then is circulated to all of the UW institutions for comment.

In the second cycle, program faculty members prepare a full proposal for authorization. This longer proposal expands on information in the Notice of Intent. The full authorization proposal is approved through UW-Madison governance. The process includes a review of the proposal by a small committee. After UW-Madison approval is completed, the proposal goes to the Board of Regents for final approval.

In some circumstances, the two-cycle approval process may be compressed into a single cycle. (See the section on Expedited Review at the end of this document.)

Approximately five years after implementation the dean is required to initiate a program review of the new degree/major program.

Each of these stages is described in more detail below.

Notice of Intent

1. Department/program faculty members prepare a brief "Notice of Intent" that they are planning a new program. The Notice of Intent should include the following elements:

   a. Specify the name of proposed degree/major, departmental or unit home, school/college. If the program has an academic home that is not a regular academic department, then also describe how the program will be governed.

   b. Provide a clear and focused explanation of how the proposed program fits with the institutional mission, the University's strategic directions, and the program array. In other words, why is this program an important offering for UW-Madison?

   c. What is the need for the program, in the context of existing programs at UW-Madison and System-wide? Include any available data on student demand and market demand for graduates. If this is an emerging field, explain how it will be important in the future.

   d. Provide a brief description of the program. All of the curricular details do not need to be worked out at this stage but a general outline of what is intended is helpful.

   e. Describe the resources requirements of the program. If it will be supported from reallocation or existing resources, provide a summary explanation. If unusual resources, such as program-revenue, will support this program provide a description and summary business plan. (The vice chancellor for administration will review the proposal before it is advanced to the UAPC and will approve any resource considerations).

   f. Provide a list of the program faculty who are central to the planning process and who will participate in the program when it is implemented. For graduate programs that will include a thesis or major project, this list should include faculty who are likely to be major professors in the new program.

   g. Attach letters of support or concurrence from departments, schools, and colleges that are contributing courses to the program; units that will have an interest in the program; or units that may offer existing programs that potentially overlap with the proposed program in name

or content. It is especially important to include letters from units outside the home school/college.

2. The Notice of Intent document must be approved by the home department/unit. After approval, the lead program faculty member sends the proposal forward to the appropriate dean(s).

3. The dean or dean's designee arranges for the proposal to be considered by the school/college academic planning council. If approved, the dean sends the proposal to the provost with a cover letter. The cover letter signifies the dean's support of the program in their role as the school/college chief academic officer.   For graduate program proposals, the dean also sends the documents to the dean of the Graduate School.

4. The director of Academic Planning and Institutional Research reviews the proposal when it is received by the Provost's Office. If it is a proposal for a graduate program (s)he will coordinate with the Graduate School. The purpose of this review is to make sure all of the required elements are included in the proposal.

5. The director of Academic Planning and Institutional Research (APIR) will consult with the vice chancellor for administration and the provost. The vice chancellor for administration must sign off before the proposal is advanced to the University Academic Planning Council (UAPC). This provision is in keeping with a UAPC requirement endorsed in October 2004 to assure that the resource needs and budget plan for the proposal are determined early in the planning stage.

6. When all of the documents are assembled, governance groups will consider the Notice of Intent proposal for approval. Graduate program proposals will be considered for approval by the Graduate Faculty Executive Committee (GFEC), and subsequently by the UAPC. Undergraduate and professional program proposals will be considered only by the UAPC.

7. If approved by these governance groups, the director of APIR (or other provost's designee) will prepare the materials for submission to conform to UW System guidelines, which limit the Notice of Intent to two pages and require fewer elements that for UW-Madison governance review (1 a, b, c, and d).

8. The Notice of Intent is sent to UW System Administration and the provosts and designees at all UWs. The other UWs have two weeks to send comment to the director of APIR (or other provost's designee). Other UWs may comment on: 1. opportunities for potential collaboration; 2. serious concerns, including questions of duplication; 3. general comments regarding other aspects, such as the compatibility of the proposed program with the institution's mission. UW System Admin may also comment on matters related to how the proposed program fits with the overall System program array.

9. At the end of the comment period, the director of APIR compiles all of the comments and sends a report back out to System Admin and all of the UWs. If there are no objections, UW-Madison faculty may proceed with the authorization proposal. If there are objections or comments of

substance, then the program faculty members and the director of APIR work with UW System Administration according to an established process.

Authorization Proposal – General Considerations

As noted in the Overview section, the authorization proposal communicates the plan for the program to the university community. It meets the needs of governance: communication to interested parties, standards of peer review, and being ready for students.   The authorization proposal provides the rationale for the program, describes the curriculum, outlines student support services, and outlines plans and resources for assessment and program review.   The process is intended to insure that the program is ready for students at the time of implementation and that program faculty members are prepared for this long-term commitment.

The document should be clearly written to convey the purpose and need for the proposed program; the benefits of the program to the institution; the ability of the institution to carry out the program; and the likely value to, and impact on, students and the residents of Wisconsin.

The proposal is a public document. The intended audience for the authorization proposal is UW-Madison faculty and staff. After UW-Madison approval steps are complete, members of the Board of Regents, UW System Administration, and members of the public will view a version of the proposal.

Program faculty members are invited to work with the director of APIR on the development of the proposal; for some sections of the proposal, standard language is available. For graduate programs, the program faculty will also want to consult with the Graduate School.

Authorization Proposal – Structure and Format

Although there is no set page limit, proposals should be no longer than necessary. Proposals longer than 25 pages may contain more detail than is required. Information from the Notice of Intent may be repeated. Some detailed information can be included in appendices. The version that is submitted to UW System Administration for Board review is limited to 10 pages.

A. Abstract: A description of the proposed program in 50 words or less.

B. Program Identification

1. Institution name
2. Title of proposed program
3. Degree/major designation
4. Mode of delivery (residential/face-to-face, distance delivered, mixed formats)
5. Single institution or collaboration
6. Projected enrollment over the first five years of the program
7. Tuition structure (i.e., standard tuition, differential tuition, etc.)
8. Departmental home or functional equivalent

9. College, school, or functional equivalent
10. Proposed date of implementation

C. Introduction

1. Why is the program being proposed? What is its relation to the institution's mission? (Consider the mission broadly as a major research university with missions in teaching, research, service, and the Wisconsin Idea.)
2. How does it fit into the institution's overall strategic plan?
3. Do current students need or want the program?
4. Does market research indicate demand?
5. How does the program represent emerging knowledge, or new directions in professions and disciplines?

D. Description of Program

1. Describe the general structure of the program, including

    a. The ways in which the program fits into the institutional program array and academic plan.
    b. The extent to which the program is duplicative of existing programs in the University of Wisconsin System.
    c. The collaborative nature of the program, as appropriate, including specific unit or institutional responsibilities.
    d. The ways in which the program prepares students through diverse elements in the curriculum for an integrated and multicultural society (may include inclusion of diversity issues in the curriculum or other approaches).
    e. Governance and leadership structure.

2. Describe the programmatic curriculum, including

    a. Provide detail on how the curriculum will be structured including any program milestone requirements. For doctoral programs, provide detail on how breadth will be achieved. Include details on inclusion of existing courses and development of new courses.
    b. Typically, undergraduate programs will have curricula that can be completed in 120 credits and within four academic years. Additional school/college and university standards should be addressed in the curriculum. Typically, Master's level programs will include 30 credits of requirements.
    c. If new courses are included, provide information on their status in the course approval process.
    d. What are the admission requirements for the program? Provide information on recruiting and admissions relevant to implementation and success of the program.
    e. Progress to degree, including the expected time-to-degree, should be discussed. Describe any potential barriers to timely degree completion and ways these issues will be addressed. (In May 2000, the following motion was passed unanimously: As part of the review of new undergraduate program approvals, the UAPC will examine whether

proposals make it clear how students can complete the degree in four years or in a timely fashion if more than four years are necessary.)

3. Explain briefly program's plan for assessing student learning outcomes, including:

   a. Specifying what students will know and be able to do as a result of completing the program. (in other words, what are the program's learning goals?)
   b. How the program will continuously assess (using both direct and indirect assessment measures) the extent to which the learning outcomes are accomplished.
   c. Describe the processes that will be in place to make use of assessment evidence to improve the quality of the program.

4. Describe the plans for advising and student services:

   a. Describe the advising services that are needed for the program and how they will be provided. Include information on both academic and career advising.
   b. Has the program made provisions for a range of other programmatic and student support services, for example maintaining web and Catalog information, communications with the Registrar's Office and appropriate dean's office, professional development opportunities for graduate students, and other student support services?

5. List program faculty, instructional staff, and other key personnel

   a. Provide a list of program faculty, instructors, and key support staff. Indicate an estimated FTE contribution to the program. If this information is available on a web site, provide the URL.

6. Describe resource and fiscal considerations – how will the program be funded?

   a. Provide an overview of plans for funding the program including but not limited to program administration, instructional/curricular delivery, technology needs, and program assessment.
   b. Are the faculty, instructional staff and key personnel existing or new faculty and staff. If they already serve existing programs, how are they able to add this workload? If new faculty and staff will be added, how will they be funded?
   c. What impacts will the program have on staffing needs beyond the immediate program? How are those needs being met?
   d. For graduate programs, describe plans for funding students including but not limited to funding sources and how funding decisions will be made.

7. Summarize the program review process, including:

   a. How and when the program will be reviewed. Note: By UW-Madison UAPC program review policy, new academic programs are reviewed five years after they are first

implemented; the dean initiates this review. The Office of the Provost will provide a reminder.

   b. A discussion of what aspects will be evaluated to determine the quality of the program. Note: Programs may use the standard UW-Madison program review guidelines. See http://www.apir.wisc.edu/programreview.htm

   c. How the review will consider issues of diversity, equity, and climate, as appropriate.

   d. Need for external accreditation.

8. Letters of Support

   a. Letters of support must accompany the proposal.

   b. The cover letter is a letter of support from the dean, which signifies the school/college commitment to the program including curriculum, student services, assessment, and program review.

   c. Additional letters should be included from all departments or units that contribute courses and units that will experience an impact from the program. This includes programs with similar names or programs that may experience increases or decreases in enrollment as a consequence of the new program.

Authorization Proposal – Process for UW-Madison Approval

1. The authorization proposal must be approved by the home department/unit. After approval, the lead program faculty member sends the proposal forward to the appropriate dean(s).

2. The dean or dean's designee arranges for the proposal to be considered by the school/college academic planning council. If approved, the dean sends the proposal to the provost with a cover letter signifying his/her support. For graduate program proposals, the dean also sends the documents to the dean of the Graduate School.

3. The director of Academic Planning and Institutional Research will review the proposal when it is received by the Provost's Office. If it is a proposal for a graduate program (s)he will coordinate with the Graduate School. The purpose of this review is to make sure all required elements are included in the proposal.

4. The provost may appoint a program review committee under certain circumstances. If a decision is made to establish a review committee, the committee will consist of a chair from among the UAPC membership, and two additional faculty members. For graduate programs, one of those additional faculty members will be a Graduate Faculty Executive Committee member.   A representative of the program faculty joins a committee meeting to answer questions. The director of Academic Planning and Institutional Research serves as a consultant. After discussing the proposal, the review committee prepares a brief report (1-3 pages) for the provost that includes observations about program planning and a recommendation on whether the program should be implemented.

A review committee at this stage will not be routinely appointed. A review committee will be used in cases when the proposal has elements that differ from standard academic programs, for programs that represent new models or modes, for collaborations with other universities, or for programs that are controversial. A review committee may be deemed appropriate by school/college, or Graduate School deans, the provost, or the director of APIR and a decision to establish a committee is typically one that is shared by these leaders.

5. When the review is completed, governance groups will consider the authorization proposal and review report for approval. Graduate program proposals will be considered for approval by the Graduate Faculty Executive Committee (GFEC), and subsequently by the UAPC. Undergraduate and professional program proposals will be considered only by the UAPC.

6. If approved by these governance groups, the director of APIR works with the program faculty to prepare the materials for submission to conform to UW System guidelines, which limit proposal length to 10 pages.

Authorization Proposal – Approval by UW System Admin and the Board of Regents

1. A "Letter of Commitment" from the provost accompanies the authorization proposal when it is submitted to the president of UW System. This letter affirms that: i) the program has been designed to meet the institution's definition and standards of quality and to make a meaningful contribution to the institution's overall academic plan and program array; ii) there is institution-wide support for the program, including faculty governance approval; iii) the necessary financial and human resources are in place and/or have been committed to implement and sustain the program; iv) program evaluations are in place and there is a commitment to review the program five years after implementation.

2. The authorization proposal is reviewed by System officials, who will notify the provost of the decision to recommend the proposal to the Board of Regents for approval. The Board will make a decision about whether or not to authorize the program.

3. After authorization, the provost notifies System Administration of the implementation date for the approved program.

4. Five years after implementation the Office of the Provost will notify the dean's office that a five-year review is due to be conducted under the auspices of the dean's office.

Expediting the Process - Combining the Notice of Intent and Authorization Proposal

Program faculty may elect to prepare and submit the Notice of Intent and the authorization proposal simultaneously. For program proposals that are well developed and are fairly straightforward, as so deemed by the school/college dean, the dean of the Graduate School, the director of APIR, and the

provost, this may be a good option. The decision to proceed in this manner is made collaboratively among the program faculty, school/college dean's office, Graduate School (for graduate programs), the director of APIR, and the provost.

In such cases, the two documents must conform to the content requirements specified above. The Notice of Intent will be circulated to other UWs as required by System/BOR policy. The authorization proposal is subject to the approval process noted above.

By submitting both sets of documents at once the approval of the Notice of Intent and the full proposal can proceed through a single cycle, rather than the usual two-cycle process.   The two-cycle process will be more common given that most new programs take significant planning and benefit from two cycles.