

A Guide to Faculty Senate Program and Course Approval Procedures

February 2016

The Legal Foundation

Commonwealth of Massachusetts General Laws: Title XII, Section 75

[Basis of Existence and Governance]

Section 1. There shall be a University of Massachusetts consisting of campuses to be maintained at Amherst, Boston, Dartmouth, Lowell, and Worcester, which shall continue as a public institution of higher learning within the system of public higher education and shall be governed by the board of trustees established herein.

[Delegation of Governance Powers]

Section 3A. The trustees may, except as to duties imposed or powers granted under sections two, three, four, and five, delegate their authority or any portion thereof to the president or other officers of the university whenever in their judgment such delegation may be necessary or desirable.

University Governance - Board of Trustees Document 73-098

I.B.1 The Board of Trustees recognizes that while it must exercise general authority over the University, certain components of the University, such as the President's Office, the campus administrations, and the representative and administrative governing bodies of the faculty and the students have, by virtue of interest, training, and experience, a special concern and competence in certain areas. Subject to precedents established by components on each campus and/or the restraints and procedures specified in their constitutions, these components shall have primary responsibility in their areas of special competence and concern. Whenever the phrase "primary responsibility" appears in this statement, it shall mean the capacity to initiate recommendations, after appropriate consultation, in accordance with the procedures specified in section II. D below. Such recommendations will be overruled only by written reasons stated in detail. While it in no way is intended to contravene the authority and participation of the Board of Trustees in governance, the following is a general statement of primary responsibility in the major areas of University life.

Faculty Areas of Primary Responsibility

as defined in Board of Trustees Document 73-098, paragraphs I.B. 2 and 3

ACADEMIC MATTERS: the faculty will exercise primary responsibility in such academic matters as curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, admissions, libraries, and other aspects of University life which directly relate to the educational process.

Lead Faculty Body:
Faculty Senate

FACULTY STATUS: the faculty will have primary responsibility for matters of faculty status, such as appointments, reappointments, promotions, tenure, and salary adjustments.

Lead Faculty Body:
Massachusetts Society of Professors

What needs Faculty Senate Approval?

Creation/Merger/Dissolution of

- ❖ *Colleges*
- ❖ *Schools within Colleges*
- ❖ *Departments*
- ❖ *Centers and Institutes*

items also requiring UMass System level approval

Creation/Changes/Suspension/Elimination of

- ❖ Graduate *Degree Programs* (PhD, Master's)
- ❖ Undergraduate *Majors* and Minors
- ❖ Undergraduate Concentrations within Majors
- ❖ Certificates - Graduate or Undergraduate
- ❖ Permanent Courses
- ❖ Undergraduate Course Designations (GenEd, IE, JYW)

What does not need Faculty Senate Approval?

Interim Existence of Centers and Institutes (3 years) approved by Vice Chancellor for Research & Engagement
 Experimental Courses (can be taught three times) approved by Secretary of the Faculty Senate
 Special Topics Seminars
 Letters of Specialization

General considerations guiding the Faculty Senate and its Councils and Committees in Program and Course approval

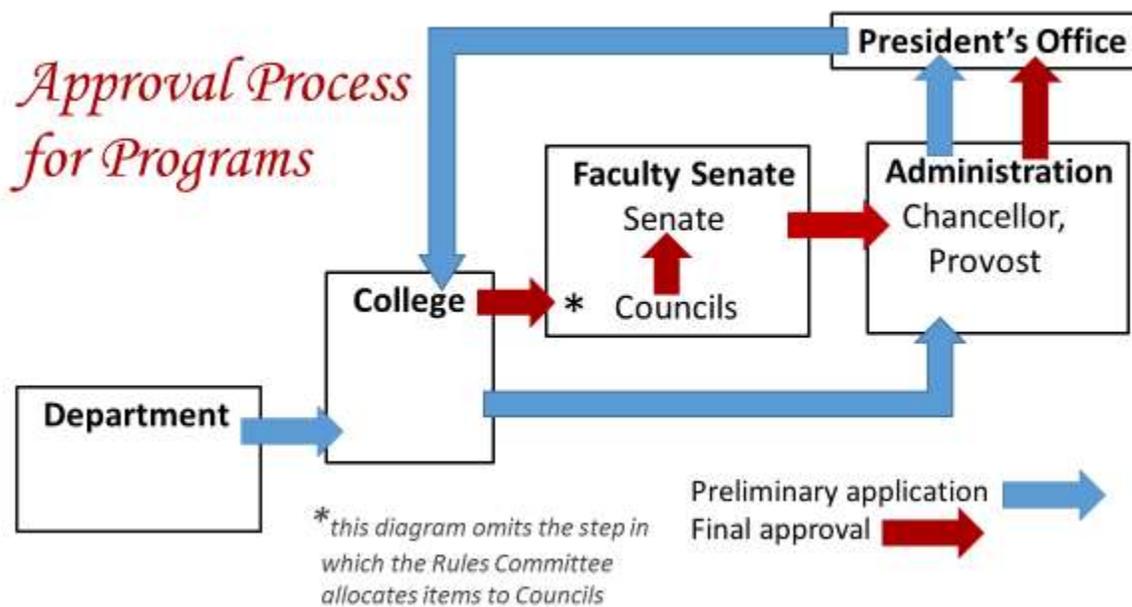
The members of the Faculty Senate and its Councils and Committees want to foster faculty innovation while maintaining the coherence and integrity of the educational enterprise. Faculty are experts in their fields, and thus the members of the University who know where their discipline is going, have the best sense of how their discipline should be changing in light of new knowledge or newly-identified social and individual needs, where our current programs and courses have become less adequate than they once were, and how to alter them to best convey the current state of knowledge in the field or address student interests and intellectual needs. At the same time, the members of the Faculty Senate and its Councils and Committees have a collective responsibility to ensure three things. First, that the various elements of the University's teaching mission, whether they be degree programs, majors, concentrations, certificates, minors, or individual courses, all fit together and contribute to providing students with an excellent education. Second, that courses and programs are not being used – or, more accurately, abused – for pursuing rivalries by “poaching” students from other departments or colleges. We recognize that students themselves often change interests and want to move in new directions; we are concerned to minimize the likelihood that students will become the objects of sharp-elbowed competition between departments seeking to maintain or increase enrollments. Third, that the Institutes and Centers created to advance the research mission of the campus undertake activities that advance campus values as well as knowledge in their respective areas of interest.

We are in many ways “shock absorbers” for the campus; we work on balancing outside pressures to make university curriculums more utility-oriented, that is, to prepare students for the careers that can be identified now, and the faculty's awareness that the purpose of higher education is to prepare persons for life as a whole, not just pursuit of a particular career to form academic programs that serve both individuals and society. Our concern with considerations beyond immediate career utility is reinforced by our realization that even in relation to careers higher education should be preparing students for a future time when the jobs and careers of today are superseded by others and they need to redirect their work life.

We are not looking for excuses to reject proposals. A Committee or Council or even the whole Senate may reject a proposal that is intellectually weak or materially infeasible, but such a decision will come after deliberation. Councils and Committees having doubts or questions about a proposal prefer to work with the faculty making proposals by providing comments meant to help them think through their own goals more carefully and reformulate their proposals into improved versions that will serve the campus well.

Proposal Consideration

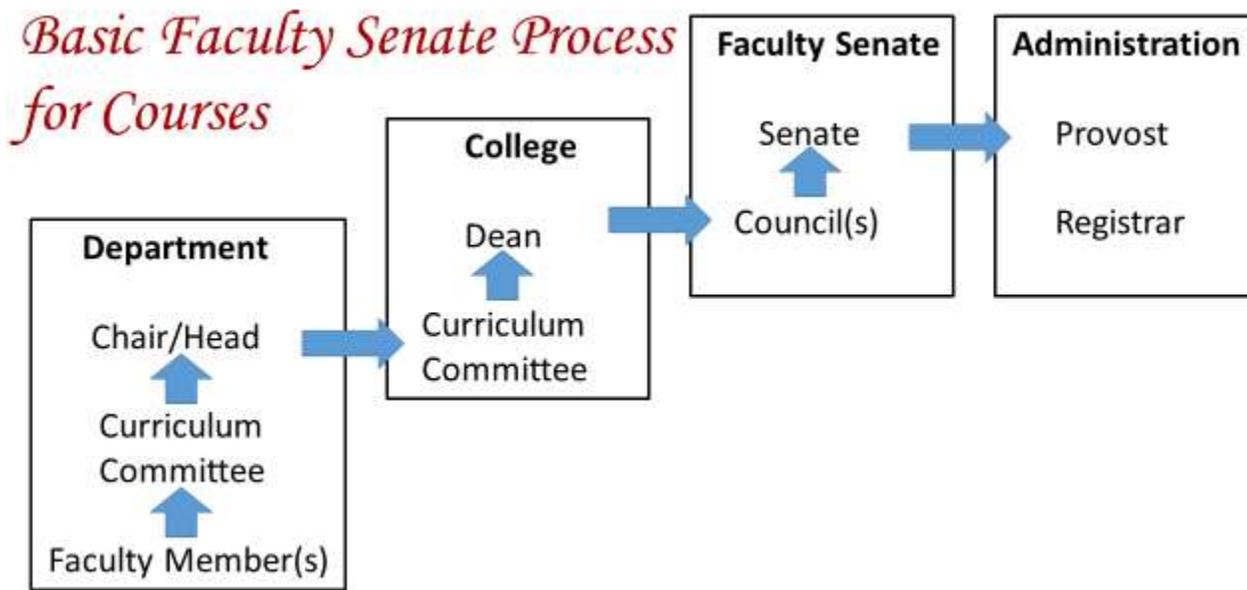
The processes for approving programs and for approving courses are distinct. Program proposals, which involve larger portions of the curriculum and greater commitments of campus resources than individual courses, go through two extra steps: securing preliminary approval from the UMass system level to formally propose the program and securing final approval from the Board of Trustees after the proposal has been approved on campus. Departments and colleges wishing to propose new programs seek preliminary approval through the campus administration; when that arrives they refine their proposal as needed and submit it for Faculty Senate review. This diagram indicates the steps in Faculty Senate review:



All programs are referred to the Academic Priorities and Program and Budget Councils; undergraduate programs are referred to the Academic Matters Council and graduate programs to the Graduate Council.

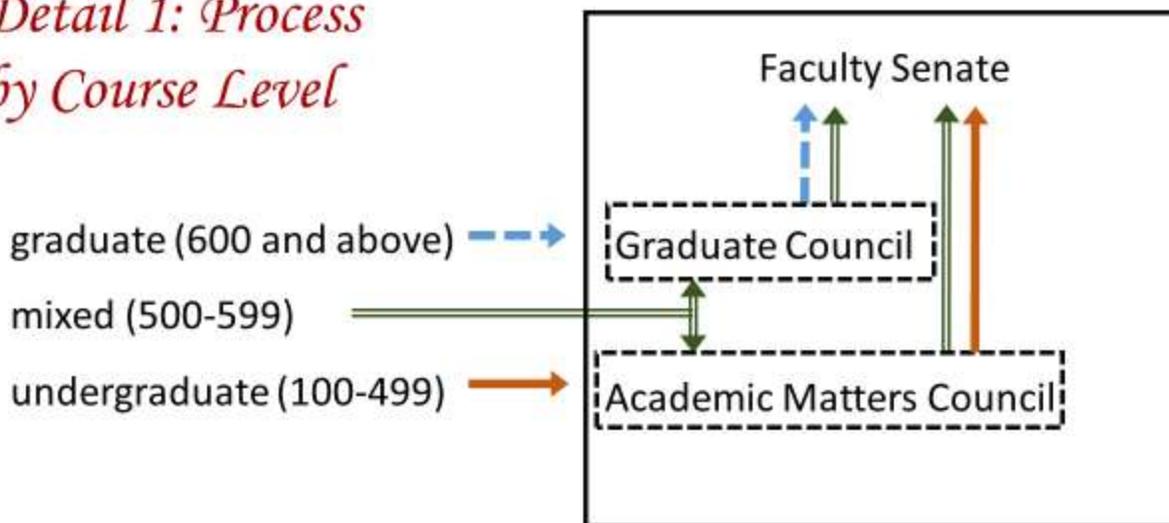
Revisions to the General Education requirements are referred to the General Education Council, and if they appear to require significant new spending they would also be referred to the Program and Budget Council.

The course proposal process is simpler, as indicated in this diagram:



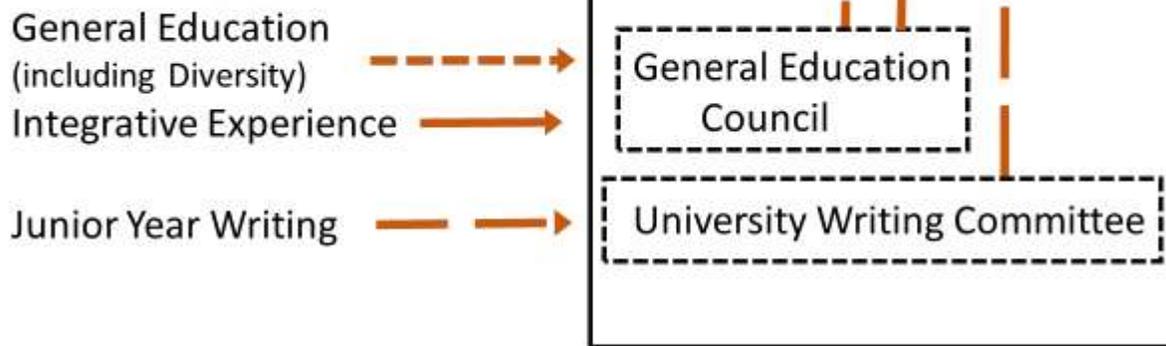
Course proposals also begin with individual faculty, proceed through their department’s curriculum committee, are approved by the department chair/head, then go to the College curriculum committee and the dean. When they arrive at the Faculty Senate Office, they are allocated to the Councils depending on their course level:

Detail 1: Process by Course Level



When faculty members want special course designations (Gen Ed, Global or US Diversity, Integrative Experience, or Junior Year Writing), the proposal also goes to the Council in charge of coordinating the designation:

Detail 2: Process for Undergraduate Course Designations



13

The full Senate waits for both the course and the designation to be approved before acting on the course.

Note on Timing of Course Proposals: To be sure of approval in time to be included in preregistration for any particular in a particular fall or spring term, the proposal needs to reach the Faculty Senate Office by the end of the second week of the preceeding fall or spring term to have a reasonable expectation of approval by the time preregistration opens for the desired term. Approval may take longer if General Education designations are also sought.

Proposing new Units or Reorganizing Existing Units

Occasionally faculty will be involved in efforts to develop new units – colleges, schools within colleges, departments, and centers or institutes. Whether proposed by an administrator for instance a Dean) or a group of faculty, they affect academic programs so also come through the Faculty Senate for approval.

A Center or Institute can be given “Interim Approval” for a period of no more than three years by the Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement and the Provost. Information on Interim Approval is available from the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement (see their webpage on Centers and Institutes at www.umass.edu/research/engagement/centers-and-institutes). This permits the originating faculty to try out their Center or Institute, raise outside money to help support it – donors do typically want to know that the Center or

institute they are being asked to support actually exists, and work out all the operational details. Faculty involved in a Center or Institute who want it to continue in existence after the three years do need to secure Faculty Senate approval before the three years end. Otherwise, it dissolves. The process for Faculty Senate approval is similar to that of programs, except that Centers and Institutes typically do not offer courses, so they are seldom referred to the Academic Matters or Graduate Council. They are referred to the Research Council since fostering research is their primary purpose.

Though proposals to create new Colleges, Schools within Colleges, and Departments do not need preliminary approval from the system office, any new degree programs that they would offer do need such approval. Creation of the units does require system level approval after campus approval.

Submitting Proposals

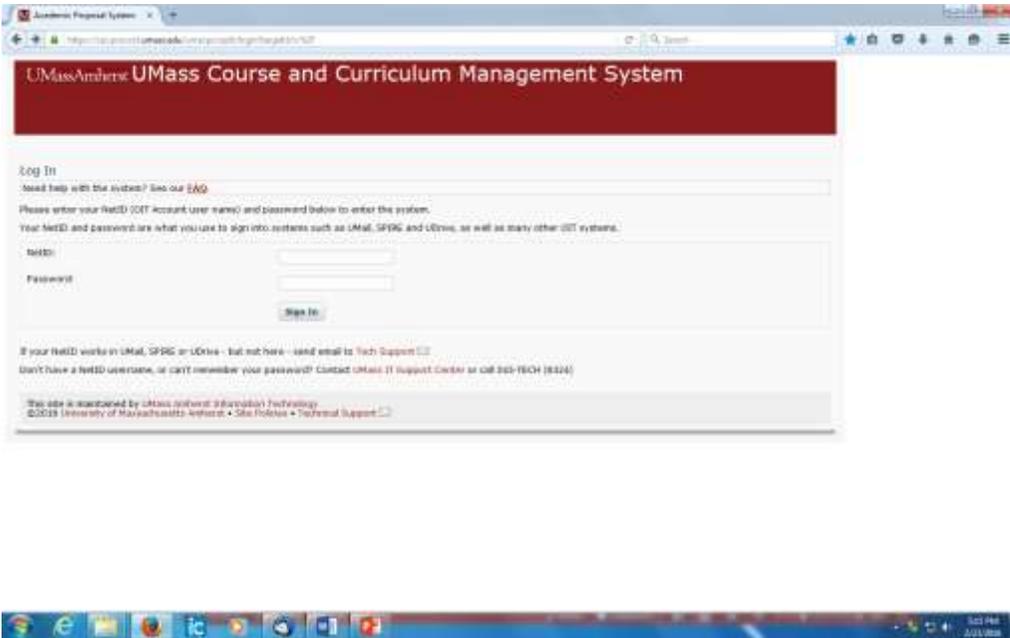
All program, course, and unit proposals (except Interim Approval of a Center or Institute) must be submitted through the curriculum management system. Doing so speeds the process considerably as compared to pace prevailing back in the days of using 50 copies of paper files, and also allows recording of Council and Faculty Senate decisions in one place where proposers and others can track the progress of any particular proposal through the process. Sometimes Council or Committee recording of approval is a bit delayed, but we work hard at the Senate Office to keep those delays to a minimum so proposers know where things stand. The system generates e-mails to proposers when actions are recorded.

Proposers can put a draft of their ideas onto the system but not share it more widely by designating it as a “draft” and specifying who can see it while it is in “draft” status. They should remember to remove the “draft” status once they have a document they regard as ready for review. Many proposers prefer not to post anything until they have a document ready for review, and that is fine.

When making a proposal, pay attention to the prompts for each type of proposal and answer the questions. In particular, those proposing a new permanent course and seeking a Gen Ed, Diversity, IE, or JYW designation need to fill out the forms for both “propose a new course” and “add a designation.”

Proposers can also indicate that particular proposals are related to one another. This is helpful for degree program revisions that also involve proposing new courses or for creation of new colleges, schools within colleges, or departments being organized to offer new degree programs.

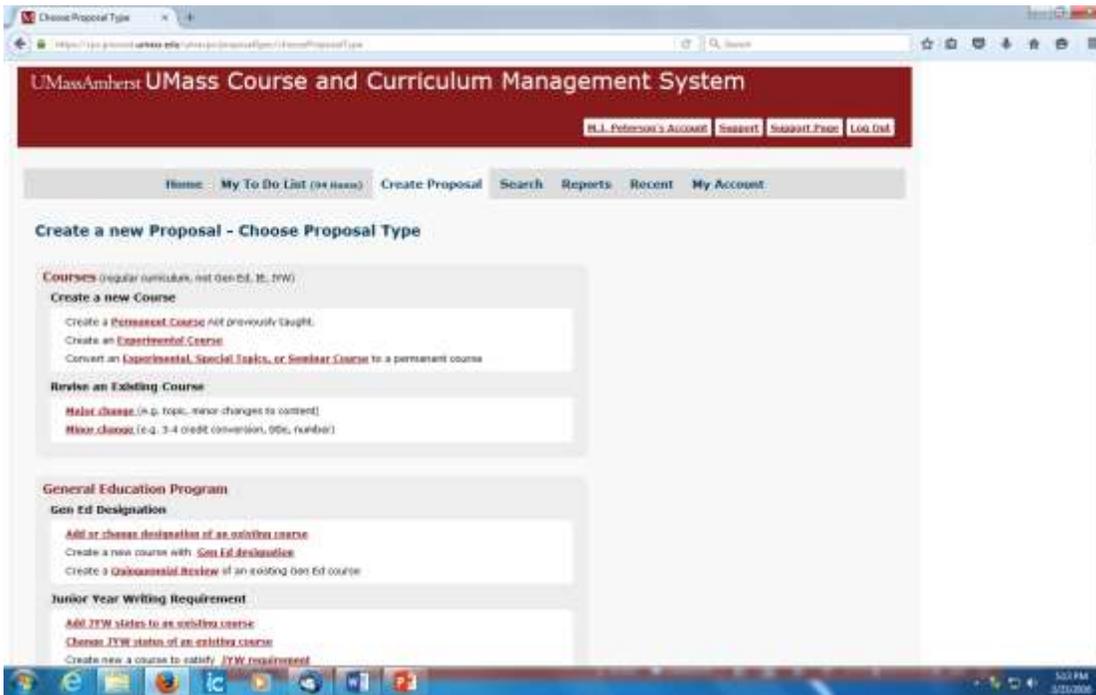
To initiate a proposal or post a draft, go to the system’s login page at <https://cps.provost.umass.edu/umacps/auth/login?targetUri=%2F> :



After logging in with your Spire ID you will see this page. Select “Create a New Proposal”



Then this page comes up. The image is only the top portion of a long page with places for starting each type of proposal:



Scrolling down this page reveals all of the other lines.

Frequently Asked Questions: All Types of Proposal

If I want to propose a course or my department wants to propose a program change should I or it just put it on the system or can I or we talk to people first?

You should always feel free to discuss possible proposals with the Chairs of the Councils where it is most likely to be sent. As a general rule, the importance of prior discussion increases with the complexity of the proposal. If you have a particularly ambitious proposal in mind, such as creating an entirely new department together with some new degree programs, or you want to create a school within a college, is also a good idea to talk to the Secretary of the Faculty Senate to get advice about navigating through the various aspects of the process. Though all proposals now go through the online computerized system, remember that humans are running the system, and that many problems can be avoided if the faculty members who are developing proposals talk to their colleagues who are involved in the review process.

How do I find out who are the right people to consult about my proposal?

Go to the Faculty Senate website at www.umass.edu/senate



and click on the link reading “Councils and Committees.” This will take you to a page listing all the Councils and Committees. Each has its own sub-page giving membership, meeting schedules, and an e-mail address for the chair.



If my proposal is returned to me with comments asking for revisions does that mean it has to go all the way back to the beginning of the approval process?

No, the proposal returns to the Council or other reviewer that had the comments. Other councils can see the comments on the curriculum management system and if they have not yet acted on the course they can look at the revised proposal but if they have already acted, they typically do not go back and look again because they have looked at the proposal in light of their particular concerns and defer to the other council in its areas of concern. The Faculty Senate Office waits for all Councils to recommend in favor before moving the proposal along to the full Faculty Senate for its consideration.

Frequently Asked Questions – Program Proposals

What are the current policies on Programs?

Board of Trustees Document T92-012 addresses system level policies for creating, changing, and ending academic degree programs.

Additional policies apply to certain types of graduate degree programs:

Dual Masters Degree Option (Senate Document No 05-009)

Requirements for a Dual Masters Degree (Senate Document No. 02-040)

Accelerated Master's Degree Options (Senate Document No. 10-043)

Undergraduate Majors and Minors

Those developing new majors or proposing revisions to majors should also pay attention to the Policy on Continuation Requirements in the Major for Designated Programs (Senate Document 12-041).

Certificates

The policy documents relating to Certificates are quite scattered, so the best way to start is by reading the Explanation of Grad and UG Certificates available in the Senate Documents under the Heading Certificates – Information for Proposers.

Graduate Certificates are addressed in and the Amendment to Supplemental Guidelines for Graduate Certificates (Senate Document No 14-024)

Creation of Undergraduate Certificates is addressed in several documents; use the information for proposers as a guide.

The primary documents on periodic review of Certificates are the GRAD Process for Review of Certificates (Senate Document No, 15-049) and the Process for Periodic Review of Undergraduate Certificates (Senate Document No. 15-035A).

The process for merging existing academic programs is addressed in Procedures to be followed in the Merger of Academic Programs (Senate Document 02-022A)

What features cause the most difficulty with program proposals?

Many proposers of new degree programs and new undergraduate majors forget that they need to complete an application for preliminary approval and submit it to the campus administration so it can be submitted to the system office for its permission to submit a formal application. Note that this need for a preliminary lap through the Boston office adds a significant amount of time to the total application process. Once approval to file a formal application received, then the Faculty Senate approval process can start. Though the General Education Council and the Councils considering course proposals indicate a timeframe within which they will consider proposals, we do not do the same with program proposals because they are typically more complex and require more careful consideration. Proposals to organize new departments, centers, schools within colleges and colleges are also complex and, like degree program proposals, need final approval by the UMass System President and the Board of Trustees.

The most frequent on-campus source of delay in consideration of degree programs arises when the originators specify that their proposed program or major will be using courses from other departments – sometimes within the same college but in other colleges – as part of the requirements in their program. Many proposers forget that they need to talk about this with the other department and get a statement of support indicating that the other department is able and willing to accommodate students from the department proposing the new program in the courses specified. That statement of support should be added to the proposal as a related document.

Another source of delay is a statement that the new program will not require any additional resources that lacks any detail about why there will be no new costs. As experienced faculty members and administrators, Councils know that originators are tempted to say that a new program will not require additional resources and have rather good instincts for detecting when that is not likely to be true. So proposers of program changes need to provide clear information upfront about the extent to which the department will need additional resources and either why it does not or where the additional resources will be secured if they want to minimize delay.

How should a department proceed when it wants to make big changes in its curriculum, for instance it has had a major organized into distinct subfields, each involving a separate sequence of courses, and it now wants instead to organize its programs in a more cross-field fashion?

How a department handles such a proposal depends on whether it needs to propose new permanent courses along with the change in the major requirements. If all the courses already exist, the department need only put in a proposal to change the major. If, however, the change would also require creation of new courses, the department needs to propose the new courses and the Faculty Senate would usually wait for the courses to be approved before approving the program change. Both proposals – the one to change the major rules and the one or ones seeking approval of new courses – can be submitted simultaneously, and their relationship indicated through the “linked proposal” tab on the Curriculum Management System. The course elements would go to the course subcommittee of the Academic Matters Council (and to the course subcommittee of the Graduate Council if any new 500 level courses are involved). The change of major rules element would go to the program subcommittee of the Academic Matters Council and the program subcommittee of the Program and Budget Council. It would also go to the Academic Priorities Council, which considers proposals through ad hoc review groups who report to the whole Council.

Librarians often hear about new programs only after they have been approved by the faculty Senate. Sometimes they are concerned that the library really does not have sufficient materials to support the new degree program or the new major. Does the Faculty Senate take the library’s facilities into account when considering program proposals?

The councils that consider program proposals have librarians among their members. So if there were a problem of this sort the Council would expect to hear about it from their librarian colleague.

When does the system level need to approve changes to an existing graduate program?

Trustees Document T92-012 specifies that system approval is needed if the change is “material and substantial” but not if the change involves “new concentrations, tracks, options, certificate programs or the like within existing degree programs.” The system level also determines what process it will follow in approving material and substantial changes depending on the extent of the change involved. Its most extensive process would be similar to that for new degree programs, which includes review of the proposal by established scholars in the field who are not affiliated with the University of Massachusetts

Frequently Asked Questions – Course Proposals

What are the current policies on creating courses?

These are fairly well consolidated in the Approval Process for New Courses (Senate Document 09-059), which covers seminars, special topics courses, experimental courses, and regular (sometimes known as permanent) courses.

There is also a standardized course numbering scheme covering the level of a course (first digit of the course number), use of numbers in the 90 range of the second and third digits, and use of certain alphabetical extensions (letters following the course number). They can be consulted on the Registrar Office webpage at

What are the policies on course designations?

The requirements for the Gen Ed designations have been revised several times. The best way to get the current rules is to go to the General Education webpage at www.umass.edu/gened and hit the button reading “course review and governance” that appears close to the top of the page. The relevant background documents are Revisions to General Education Requirements (Senate Document 10-002A), Proposed New General Education Designation (Senate Document 04-019), Modifications in the General Education Program (Senate Document 90-015), and The Undergraduate General Education Requirement (Senate Documents 85-024A and 85-024B).

The IE requirements are given in Integrative Experience (Senate Document No. 11-093A)

The diversity criteria are given in Designation of Social and Cultural Diversity Courses (Senate Document 02-013).

The Junior Year Writing Program page (www.umass.edu/writing-program/jy.html) is the best guide to the requirements for Junior Year Writing designation.

Honors designations are addressed in New Honors Designations (Senate Document 09-016A)

Is there a particular order proposers should follow when seeking to get a new course approved and secure a Gen Ed designation for it?

Even though course approval and Gen Ed designation are referred to different Councils, proposals relating to the same course can be submitted simultaneously. Be sure to fill out all

of the required parts of the forms for each type of proposal even though there is overlap between the questions asked because the course approval is referred to the Academic Matters Council and its course subcommittee while the request for a general education designation question is going to the General Education Council. Each Council looks at its own forms. The biggest sources of delays in consideration of new courses for general education designations is the lack of a complete proposal for each aspect.

How long does it take to get a Gen Ed designation?

The total amount of time from idea of seeking a designation to actually receiving it depends in part on your own department and college since all course proposals, including those seeking a general education designation, need to be approved by the department curriculum committee, the department chair or head, the college curriculum committee, and the Dean before they go on to the Faculty Senate's consideration process. The General Education Council does have a guideline specifying that if it receives a proposal for a designation approved at the college level no later than the first day of classes of the semester, it expects to be able to act on the proposal in time for full Senate approval before the end of that semester. This timeline assumes that all of the parts of the proposal are complete and that the General Education Council has no questions about any aspect of it. If it has any questions it will be back in contact with the proposer to provide its queries and suggestions for strengthening the proposal. The proposer then needs to consider them and decide how to respond. Obviously, that stretches out the timing. Thus it is best to plan your sequence of time to include an interval for rewriting the proposal along the way. This means that if you really want to teach a newly-designated general education or integrative experience course starting in the spring semester you should probably get it through your college well before the end of the previous spring, and similarly for the fall.

The General Education Council is not looking to make trouble for proposers; its goal is to ensure that new courses added to the general education curriculum are helping to meet the learning goals of that curriculum. Members of the Faculty Senate and the Councils like seeing curricular innovation, but we also need to be sure that the general education program is meeting the stated objectives.

Why do course proposals need a bibliography in addition to the list of required readings?

Though we realize that some colleagues regard the request for a bibliography as a bit condescending, it is there for two main reasons. The bibliography helps council and subcommittee members from other parts of campus understand the intellectual background of the course. It also helps establish that there is a body of knowledge on which more than one instructor could draw because the Faculty Senate's presumption is that a permanent course is

not the personal property of an individual faculty member (the way a special topics seminar might be) but covers material that the department believes should be included in its general curriculum either as a requirement or as an elective course.

Is there a deadline for course proposals?

There is no formal deadline. Proposers and departments or programs should be aware that if they want to teach a new permanent course, or a permanent course converted from experimental status, in a particular fall or spring term, the proposal needs to reach the Faculty Senate Office by the end of the preceding fall or spring term to have a reasonable expectation of approval by the time preregistration opens for the desired term.

Frequently Asked Questions – Unit Proposals

What are the current policy statements relating to creation or termination of units?

Board of Trustees Document T92-012 contains the system policies regarding creation of new academic programs, changes in academic programs, and termination of academic programs. Campus policies on termination appear in the Procedure to be followed in the Review of Academic Programs Proposed for Termination (Senate Document No. 90-064B) and the modifications included in Amendments to the Termination and Reduction Procedures previously adopted (Senate Document No. 91-056).

Creating schools within a college is addressed in Schools within Colleges (Senate Document 21-021A).

The policy on merging existing academic programs also applies to merging existing departments, so follow the Procedures specified in Merger of Academic Programs (Senate Document 02-022A)

Board of Trustees Document T96-096 as amended, the UMA Policy on Center and Institutes, specifies the general rules regarding centers and institutes.

Creation, periodic review, and closing of centers or institutes is addressed in the “Centers and Institutes – Comprehensive Policy on Approval and Review Amended (Senate Document No 14-032A)

How important are letters of support from administrators?

Creating new units always involves giving people new roles and usually involves additional resources, so it is very important to have letters of support indicating where the resources will come from and that the administrative leaders of the units affected by the proposed new unit support creating it. Thus proposals to create a new department, center, or school within a college should include support statements from the relevant dean. Proposals to create institutes with activity crossing several colleges need statement of support from all the deans whose colleges will be involved. Proposals to create a new department and school within a college are also helped by indications of support from the Provost; this is particularly true if the new department of school will be collaborating with off-campus actors. The proposed Biomedical Engineering Department which expects to be cooperating with the UMass Medical School in Worcester in many of its activities, is a good example.

What are the biggest sources of delay in considering proposals to create new units?

As with other proposals, incomplete or vague answers to any of the questions asked on the proposal form will cause delays. Be clear and honest about the budget; be clear about the governance structure; be clear about the activities; be clear and honest about facilities needs.