Program Approval & Review

2024-25

UTAH
SYSTEM OF
HIGHER
EDUCATION

Approval Process for New Certificates & Degrees

Policies R401 and R402

Purpose of Program Approval

Balance the needs of students, the institution, the community, and the state with institutional capacity and faculty expertise.

State Code 53B-1-102

- Defines the type of credential that institutions are authorized to offer.

Board of Higher Education

- **Defines Credential Parameters:** Sets the limits on the types of credentials each institution can offer based on its role.
- **Establishes Program Criteria:** Creates guidelines for approving new instructional programs.
- **Delegates Program Approval:** Trustees approve programs within established criteria
- **Retains Program Approval:** The Board retains approval authority for programs outside those criteria.
- **Cyclical Program Reviews:** Oversees regular reviews to ensure program quality and relevance.

Boards of Trustees
Program Approval

Trustees may approve programs that are

- Aligned with the institution's role (*Policy R312*);

- Within the designated service region (*Policy R315*); and

- Meet defined parameters for length, structure, alignment, transferability, etc. (*Policy R402*).

Considerations for Approval

Trustees shall consider:

- Evaluations and assessments from the Commissioner's office.

- The program's impact on the broader System and needs of the institution.

Conditions Requiring Board of Higher Education Approval

- Programs outside the institutional role

- Programs outside the institution's designated service region

- New campus locations, colleges, or professional schools

- Programs outside credential parameters (e.g., programs with too many or too few credits, that don't comply with other Board policies)

Board's Oversight

The Board reserves the right to reexamine any Trustee-approved program if it believes the decision was not in the state's best interest.

Processes for Program Approval

Program Approval Process

Time: varies by institution from 2-12 months

Program Planning and Proposal Submission: 1) Institution conducts program planning via its internal processes; 2) Drafts the new program proposal; and 3) Submits the proposal to the Office of the Commissioner using the designated template.

Time: 1-2 days

Office of the Commissioner Review: Commissioner's staff reviews proposal for policy compliance and eligibility for trustee approval

Within Institutional Role, Credential, or Region

Time: 1 month

Peer Review Coordination by Commissioner's Office: Commissioner's staff forwards the proposal to Chief Academic/ Instructional Officers for peer review.

Commissioner's Office Program Assessment for Trustees: Commissioner's staff assesses the program's structure, alignment with Board policies, and checks for potential duplication. The review may include recommendations on the CIP code, transferability, economic data, and other relevant factors and encompasses feedback from peer review.

Commissioner's Office Submits Assessment Report and Recommendation to Trustees: Commissioner's staff prepares and submits a report to the trustees, including: 1) New Program Proposal; 2) Peer review summary and feedback; 3) Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education Assessment and a Commissioner's Recommendation regarding the proposed program.

Trustees Review and Action: The Board of Trustees reviews the proposal and Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education Report and decides to approve, defer, or reject the proposal.

Trustee Notification and Board Consent Process: The institution notifies the Office of the Commissioner of trustee approval. Commissioner's staff adds approved programs that meet policy requirements to the Board's General Consent Calendar.

Outside Institutional Role, Credential, or Region

Time: 1-6 months

Peer Review Coordination by Commissioner's Office: Commissioner's staff forwards the proposal to Chief Academic/Instructional Officers for peer review.

Commissioner's Office Program Assessment for Trustees: Commissioner's staff: 1) Examines the program's structure; 2) Conducts a comprehensive labor market analysis; 3) Evaluates the potential impact on existing programs and enrollments at other institutions; 4) Explores partnership possibilities with institutions that have the appropriate role to extend the program to the proposing institution's service region. Additionally, Commissioner's staff reviews the requesting institution's performance in fulfilling its primary role and considers the potential impact of the exception request on institutional performance.

Commissioner's Staff Submits Assessment Report and Recommendation to Trustees: Commissioner's staff prepares and submits a report to the trustees, including: 1) New Program Proposal; 2) Peer review summary and feedback; 3) Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education Assessment and a Commissioner's Recommendation regarding the proposed program.

Trustees Review and Action: The Board of Trustees reviews the proposal and Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education Report, deciding whether to reject it or forward the policy exception request to the Board of Higher Education.

Board Approval: Commissioner's staff adds the request to the Board meeting agenda. The Board reviews the proposal and may approve, defer, or reject it.

Proposal Submission

Time: varies by institution from 2-12 months

Program Planning and Proposal Submission: 1) Institution conducts program planning via its internal processes; 2) Drafts the new program proposal; and 3) Submits the proposal to the Office of the Commissioner using the designated template.

USHE Template

- Institutional capacity—faculty, resources
- Budget/fiscal considerations
- Local/regional/state needs
  - Workforce demand
  - Economic impact
  - Duplication of programs at other institutions
  - Possibility of partnering with existing programs
- National norms for credential type
- Program accreditation

Initial assessment

Time: 1-2 days

Office of the Commissioner Review: Commissioner's staff reviews proposal for policy compliance and eligibility for trustee approval

Award Level for Institutional Role (R312)

	Technical Colleges	Community Colleges	Regional Universities	Utah State University	University of Utah
Technical Education Certificate	X	X		X[1]	
Academic Undergraduate Certificate		X	X	X	X
Associate Degree		X	X	X	
Baccalaureate Degree			X	X	X
Select Master's Degrees That Meet a Regional Demand			X		
Any Master's Degrees (Research and Professional)				X	X
Post-Baccalaureate/Post-Master's certificate			X	X	X
PhD				X	X
JD					X
MD					X
DDS					X
EdD				X	X
DVM				X	
Other professional doctor degrees				X	X

Compliance with Award Structure, Program Alignment, and Transferability (R402)

Table 1 – Program Criteria

Program	Semester Credit Hours	Special Curricular Conditions	Unique Conditions
Technical Certificate	Must be a minimum of 3 credits and a maximum of 51 credits.	Under Utah Code sections 53B-1-101.5(8)(b) and 53B-2a-106(2)(b), technical education may provide basic instruction and shall not include general education.	• May only be offered by institutions with a technical college role. • Must use an appropriate technical CIP Code as outlined in the OCHE table.
Academic Undergraduate Certificate	Must be a minimum of 9 credits and a maximum of 36 credits.	May include general education courses as appropriate.	• May only be offered by degree-granting institutions. • Must use an appropriate academic CIP Code as outlined in the OCHE table.
Applied Associate of Science Degree	Must be a minimum of 60 credits and a maximum of 69 credits.	May include only a portion of the general education requirements (minimum of 9 credits) outlined in Board Policy R470, *General Education* in keeping with accreditation requirements.	Must use an appropriate academic CIP Code as outlined in the OCHE table.

Peer Review

Commissioner's Office Assessment

Trustee Action

Trustees Review and Action: The Board of Trustees reviews the proposal and Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education Report and decides to approve, defer, or reject the proposal.

Trustee Notification and Board Consent Process: The institution notifies the Office of the Commissioner of trustee approval. Commissioner's staff adds approved programs that meet policy requirements to the Board's General Consent Calendar.

Outside Role/Structure: Board Approval

Peer Review Coordination by Commissioner's Office: Commissioner's staff forwards the proposal to Chief Academic/Instructional Officers for peer review.

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Commissioner's Office Program Assessment for Trustees: Commissioner's staff: 1) Examines the program's structure; 2) Conducts a comprehensive labor market analysis; 3) Evaluates the potential impact on existing programs and enrollments at other institutions; 4) Explores partnership possibilities with institutions that have the appropriate role to extend the program to the proposing institution's service region. Additionally, Commissioner's staff reviews the requesting institution's performance in fulfilling its primary role and considers the potential impact of the exception request on institutional performance.

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Commissioner's Staff Submits Assessment Report and Recommendation to Trustees: Commissioner's staff prepares and submits a report to the trustees, including: 1) New Program Proposal; 2) Peer review summary and feedback; 3) Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education Assessment and a Commissioner's Recommendation regarding the proposed program.

Trustees Action

Trustees Review and Action: The Board of Trustees reviews the proposal and Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education Report, deciding whether to reject it or forward the policy exception request to the Board of Higher Education.

Board Action

Board Approval: Commissioner's staff adds the request to the Board meeting agenda. The Board reviews the proposal and may approve, defer, or reject it.

Out-of-Region

- For New Programs
  - Peer Review
  - Commissioner's Office Assessment
  - Trustee Approval
  - Trustee Approval and MOU between institutions on Board of Higher Education's General Consent Calendar
- For Expanding Existing Programs Outside the Service Region
  - MOU Between Institutions
  - Placed on the Board of Higher Education's General Consent Calendar

Criteria for Trustees Consideration

Workforce and Community Need

Employment outlook is excellent. In Utah, this field has been growing at the rate of 13% over the past three years. Job postings per completion stand at 2.6 open postings per every completion.

The only other USHE institutions that offer a XXX degree are University 1 and University 2. Between the two programs, fewer than thirty students graduate with a degree in XXX each year, but currently the annual demand far exceeds that number. The average cohort size over the past four years is ten students at the U1 and twenty at U2, this in no way meets the demand left by [private institutions which closed their presence in Utah], who had average cohorts of sixteen each, and had no difficulty filling their cohorts yearly. U2 has agreed to expand their numbers to 30-40 for the 2024 and 2025 cohorts, but do not have the resources to sustain those numbers for future cohorts, which makes the need to start an additional program in the state crucial. Long-term Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) estimates the 2024-2030 growth rate for XXX jobs within Utah to be faster than average with a projected increase of 38.2%. These occupations are projected to increase about 430 new job openings in Utah annually. According to the BLS, the median annual wage for these occupations is estimated to be $86,830 which is higher than the 2024 Utah median wage ($62,140). LaborInsight BurningGlass data indicates 923 job postings for in Utah during the past 12 months, twice as many as the BLS estimate.

Maximize Collaboration Rather Than Competition

"Although all USHE universities have departments in the discipline, this is a unique program, so we did not consult with any of the other programs."

"We have closely collaborated with University 1 and University 2 (both have XXX majors). They have helped to develop the core courses for the program, and we will focus the remainder of the program on special attributes XXX by working with our industry advisory committee in order to address gaps in XXX occupational training that are currently unmet by the two existing programs. This collaboration with U1 and U2 will allow students to start program basics at any of the three universities and then transfer to finish their specialization."

"We have deliberately designed this AAS degree to build off of the technical certificates offered by our partner institution, TC1. Students will be encouraged to begin the program at TC1, complete the certificate, and then finish at our institution where the certificate will comprise the first 30 credits required in the major."

Institutional Capacity to Offer the Program

"The Department has enough faculty to teach in the proposed program (with approved overloads) and we hope to hire an additional faculty member as major enrollments grow."

"Our department has been careful in planning for the addition of this major and the impact it would have on existing faculty. Working with the dean, we added a new faculty member in the 2022 academic year and one in the 2023 academic year in anticipation of developing this program. We introduced an XXX emphasis to our existing YYY program in 2022 and student enrollment in this emphasis is now at 33. With the addition of these two faculty members, we are prepared to execute a rather seamless transition to a free-standing XXX major that has sufficient faculty support. We do not anticipate having to hire additional faculty members for this major in the next five to seven years."

Peer Feedback

"Those with experience preparing students for the industry suggest the department should consider adding additional courses in X and Y that will help give graduates an edge in a field where employers have multiple student graduates to choose from. They also express great concern at the limited number of faculty with an appropriate level of expertise for the proposed program and suggest that if the major takes off, the proposed staffing will be unable to support the program adequately."

Benefits of the Program for Students & Communities

"Peer institutions voiced concern over the selected indicators of industry needs. They note that entry-level workers are in great supply, but the market requires very few management-level employment that would be the target of this degree. Graduates of XXX degree programs are often placed in entry-level jobs that require no advanced training. This implies that the cost and the time required for the program will not provide students with an employment advantage."
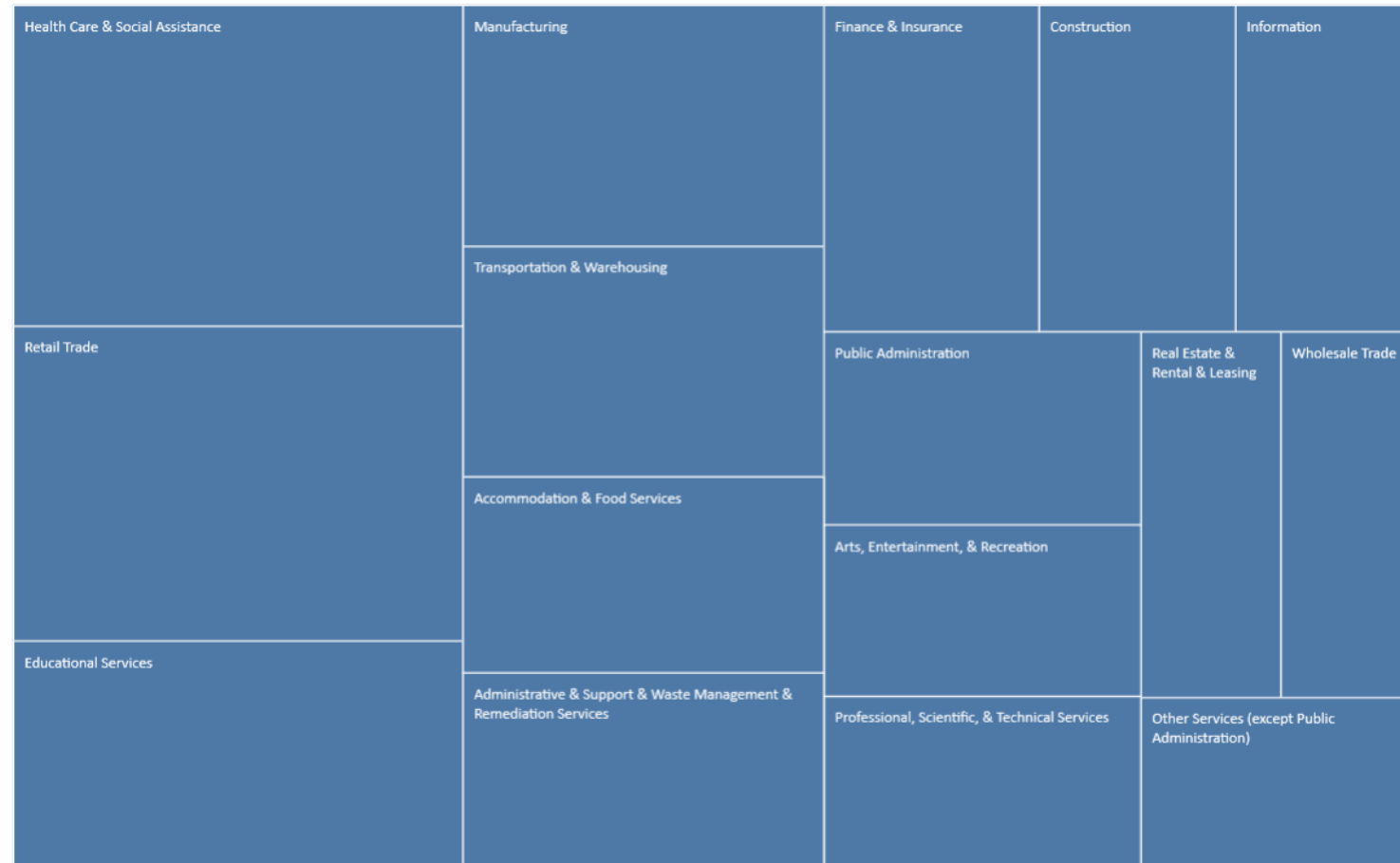
Some Programs Lead to Multiple Employment Opportunities for Graduates

2020-21 Graduates' Industries of Employment, One Year After Graduation
Hover over individual boxes for greater detail
Area of Study: Liberal Arts & Sciences, General Studies & Humanities
Award Level: All

Others are Linked to a Specific Industry with More Focused Options for Graduates

2020-21 Graduates' Industries of Employment, One Year After Graduation
Hover over individual boxes for greater detail
Area of Study: Construction Trades
Award Level: All

Construction	Administrative & Support & Waste Management & Remediation Services

Cyclical Program Reviews

Policy R411

Ongoing Program Reviews

New Program Review

- Conducted two years after the first cohort's expected time-to-completion.

Systemwide Disciplinary Reviews

- Comprehensive reviews across the system for specific disciplines.

Cyclical Program Reviews

- Regularly scheduled evaluations of individual programs to ensure quality and relevance.