



**Texas A&M International University  
Curriculum Policy Handbook**

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## Introduction

One of the hallmarks of institutions of higher education is the ideal of shared governance. Under faculty shared governance, faculty are responsible for jointly working with university administrators to effect positive change. While shared governance applies to areas including faculty hiring and tenure/promotion decisions, the most important aspect of shared governance is in relation to the university curriculum. Indeed, it is in this area that faculty exert the most influence on university decision-making. This is especially true at Texas A&M International University (TAMIU).

Faculty make curricular changes for a multitude of reasons. First, changes to the program curricula may be a result of regulatory requirements. New laws are passed or state/federal agencies update policies that may trigger needed changes in curricula. Second, subject-matter areas are often in a process of evolution: theories change, methodological approaches become outdated, and/or new avenues of study are identified. Whatever the reasons, these disciplinary changes can lead to necessary curricular changes predicated on these advancements. Third, modalities may become outdated. Thus, changes from in-person to either online classes or hybrid classes may be necessary in a particular field. Fourth, the addition of new faculty with new skill sets and subject matter expertise may lead to the creation of course content consistent with the faculty member's background. It is common for classes to be added in these instances. Finally, universities should strive to be on the cutting edge of the most recent teaching pedagogies. Enhancing learning outcomes for students is of key concern for universities attempting to stay relevant. Curricular change facilitates this.

The University Curriculum Committee (UCC) is a standing committee of the Faculty Advisory Council, which is deemed necessary to ensure that the programs and courses of the curriculum accomplish the mission of the University. The UCC reviews and approves all curriculum changes; if curricular proposals are found to be lacking, the UCC makes recommendations to the initiator on how to correct.

Curriculum decisions involve the review of:

- New degree programs
- Revised degree programs
- New courses
- Revised courses

New or revised degree programs include an assessment of local and regional demand as well as an analysis of hiring trends both statewide and nationally. New programs and changes to programs that include a substantive change may require the review of external bodies like the Texas A&M System Board of Regents (TAMU BOR), the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), and/or SACSCOC. New or revised course information includes title, course level, description, prerequisite(s), co-requisites, semester credit hours, course type, instructional method,

syllabi, student learning/program outcomes, and justification for adding or modifying the course. Other minor changes to courses are reviewed as well.

Composition of the University Curriculum Committee includes one representative per academic department or division or free-standing academic unit and the University Registrar. Faculty appointments are made by department chairs (or heads of academic units), who submit their choices through the Provost to the Faculty Advisory Council for concurrence. An Associate Provost, or other Provost designate, chairs the committee as an ex-officio member. The UCC utilizes Robert's Rules of Order in deliberations.

This handbook provides an overview of the entire curricular change process at TAMIU. This policy handbook standardizes the procedures and processes associated with new programs and courses, alterations to programs and courses, and any other changes to the academic catalog. It outlines the processes by which curriculum changes are approved and added to the academic catalog. Additionally, this policy handbook outlines curricular changes that will necessarily trigger external approvals from the Texas A&M Board of Regents, the THECB, and SACSCOC. No matter how small the curricular change is, it should be well considered and discussed amongst a large section of the faculty, which is what the curricular process at TAMIU does.

Only full-time faculty are permitted to submit curricular changes under this policy.

While this document outlines the functioning of the curricular process in general and the University Curriculum Committee in particular, colleges are also required to create their own curriculum policy to ensure robust deliberation of curricular proposals at the college level.

## Curricular Change Timeline

Due to the nature of the academic year, the timeline for completing changes to the curriculum (new programs, program changes, new courses, course changes, and/or general changes to the student catalog) is necessarily condensed. While the CourseLeaf CIM system is open year-round, processing through the system can only occur during the fall semester. Below is the timeline of key points in the curricular process.

**Table 1. Curricular Timeline**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Action</b>
August	Faculty discuss any curricular proposals with program/department faculty
September 1	The CIM System is officially "open" for proposals Faculty check on prior proposal submissions with the Department Chair Faculty submit new proposals Academic Department Chair Review Registrar Review
Mid-September	College Curriculum Committees meet (if proposals are ready) College Dean Review
End of September	University Curriculum Committee meets (if proposals are ready) Provost Review
October 1	Faculty submit new proposals Academic Department Chair Review
Mid-October	College Curriculum Committees meet College Dean Review Core Curriculum Committee Review (if necessary)
End of October	University Curriculum Committee meets Provost Review
November 1	Last day to submit proposals to the CIM system Academic Department Chair Review Registrar Review
Mid-November	College Curriculum Committees meet College Dean Review

End of November	University Curriculum Committee meets Provost Review
December	Curriculum Process concludes
January	Emergency Curricular Meetings Only Registrar works to complete the next Academic Catalog
Year Round	Course proposals may be submitted, but will not be processed until after September 1

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The timeline for curricular changes is largely immutable. The only overrides to this timeline come from Texas Lawmakers, the Texas A&M Board of Regents, the THECB, SACSCOC, or the President/Provost of TAMU. These are extremely rare circumstances and are based only on necessity. All academic units should adhere to the above timeline to ensure that all program and/or course changes go into effect the following academic year.

The above timeline is only for curricular business at TAMU. In instances of new program and substantive changes to programs, different timeframes will apply depending on the agency/organization that will have to review the proposal(s). These different timeframes will be examined below in relation to specific types of curricular proposals.

## Curricular Process

The curricular process begins when a faculty member, department, or combination of faculty/department and administration determine some change is necessary through natural evolution or there is a system/THECB/SACSCOC requirement that necessitates the change. **WHILE THIS INITIAL STEP CAN BE INDIVIDUAL, NO ONE PERSON SHOULD UNILATERALLY DECIDE TO MAKE SOME CHANGE WITHOUT CONSULTING THE PROGRAM/DEPARTMENT FACULTY FIRST.** Once an idea for change has occurred, there must be time for all program/department members to discuss the proposal before it is initially submitted. In the majority of instances, this will be a formality. However, some changes will require additional resources and may trigger reporting requirements to the Texas A&M System, the state of Texas, or other external organizations. Thus, any changes should be discussed between program/department faculty and the department chair before any proposal is submitted to the CIM system (also referred to as CourseLeaf) in Uconnect (see next section). If this step is omitted, a proposal can be sent back at any level of review should this knowledge come to light; copies of program meeting minutes should there be included in all proposals. The program/department should discuss the proposal and hold a formal vote on the approval of the proposal for accreditation purposes. If the proposal is denied, this should end the process; if the proposal is approved, the proposal can be formally submitted to the CIM system (complete with program/department meeting minutes). In the case of a denied proposal, there is an appeals process delineated later in this handbook.

After the faculty member has discussed the proposal with the program/department faculty and the department chair, the change can then be added into the CIM system. Only full-time faculty (tenured, tenure-track, and professional teaching faculty) are permitted to submit changes. No adjunct faculty can submit course/program proposals. University/college staff should not submit proposals to CIM on behalf of faculty; this is contrary to faculty shared governance.

After a proposal is reviewed by a program/department, approved, and submitted by a faculty member, the proposal will be reviewed in the following order:

1. Core Curriculum Committee (if needed)
2. Department Chair (formality based on program/department vote)
3. Registrar (to review course numbers, consistency, and other logistical concerns)
4. College Curriculum Committee
5. College Dean
6. University Curriculum Committee
7. SACSCOC Liaison
8. Provost (for final review)
9. Registrar (for final logistical review)

Voting at all levels is not confidential. Votes should be public to assure fairness in the process.

Expanding on the above list, Department Chairs review and approve course syllabi and curriculum changes and make recommendations to the initiator if necessary. Curriculum changes approved by the Department Chair are forwarded to the Office of the University Registrar. The Office of the University Registrar reviews documents and ensures that they are fully and properly completed, following TAMIU guidelines and compatibility with Banner, DegreeWorks, and the Online University Catalog. The Registrar reserves the right to return proposals that are submitted that do not meet all the criteria required by CIM or that impact another program or course offerings.

College/School Curriculum Committees review and approve requests submitted by the Department Chair; approval at this college level forwards them to the College/School Dean. Upon approval by the Dean, curriculum recommendations are forwarded to the University Curriculum Committee. The University Curriculum Committee (UCC) reviews and approves the requests submitted by the College Curriculum Committees as forwarded by the Dean of the College/School. The UCC evaluates the proposed new course/revisions, the appropriateness of the learning outcomes for the level of the course as well as the appropriateness of the credit hours. In evaluating new programs, the UCC assesses the program content, the appropriateness of the curriculum to the program outcomes and the connection to the mission of the University. The penultimate review is completed by the SACSCOC Liaison to ensure that all information has been collected and ready for submission to key external organizations for review so that the program can begin on time. The Office of the Provost reviews and approves documents to be added to the upcoming catalog once they have been reviewed and approved by the UCC.

Any new program proposals or changes to programs should be discussed with the SACSCOC Liaison prior to submission in CIM.

Curriculum changes involving the core will be reviewed prior to the chair's decision. More on this level of review is discussed below.

## **Course Levels and Semester Credit Hours (SCH)**

At TAMIU, course levels are denoted as 1000, 2000, 3000, and 4000 at the undergraduate level. Lower-level courses are numbered at the 1000 or 2000 level. These classes introduce students to the various academic disciplines, providing overviews of foundational theories, concepts, and methods, while preparing students for upper-level content. General education (core) courses are lower-level courses. These classes are typically taken by freshmen and sophomore students.

Upper-level courses are numbered at the 3000 or 4000 level. These classes build on content in lower-level classes, providing advanced approaches and requiring students to possess prior knowledge of an academic discipline. The completion of prerequisites may be required for advanced courses. These classes are taken by students with junior or senior standing.

Graduate-level courses are denoted by 5000 and 6000 levels. Courses at the 5000 level are for master's degrees. These graduate courses are manageable by graduate students who have completed a BA or BS in an appropriate field of study. Master's level courses provide knowledge beyond the undergraduate level geared towards practitioners trying to advance in their current positions and students preparing for advanced study (doctorates). Thus, master's level courses can differ by professional and academic disciplines. These courses expand the student's knowledge base by focusing on analysis and synthesis of data and information. These courses are taught by faculty with terminal degrees in their field.

Courses at the 6000 level are for doctoral degrees. Doctoral level classes build extensively on skills learned at both the undergraduate and masters' levels. These graduate courses emphasize theory, higher level critical thinking skills, include greater intellectual rigor, and integrate data and information into theoretical frameworks. Skills included in doctoral level courses lead to the production of knowledge through independent inquiry: scholarly writing skills, an understanding of research methodologies, and quantitative/qualitative analyses. These courses are taught by faculty with a terminal degree in their field; these faculty must be actively and empirically contributing to the field of study through peer-reviewed scholarship.

### **Semester Credit Hours (SCH) – Courses**

The Texas Administrative Code (Title 22, Part 22, Chapter 511, Subchapter C, Rule §511.51) defines a "Semester credit hour" as "a unit of measure of instruction consisting of 60 minutes, of which 50 minutes must be direct instruction, over a 15-week period in a semester system or a 10-week period in a quarter system." Semester credit hours (SCH) are in essence the number of contact hours a student spends in the classroom, physical or virtual. The number of SCH do not include time outside of the classroom required to complete readings, homework, term papers, projects, or any other type of course assignment.

College classes vary in length based on several factors. First, the number of SCH is linked to course requirements. The length of a class often depends on how much content needs to be

covered in each session. Courses that require in-depth discussions, hands-on activities, or extensive lectures may have longer class times to accommodate the material. Second, SCH is linked to credits. Classes are often designed to align with credit requirements. For example, a 3-credit course may meet for 3 hours per week (typically in one session), whereas a 1-credit course might meet for just 1 hour per week. Third, SCH is aligned to overall university scheduling. Universities and colleges design schedules to fit within the broader academic calendar and to allow students to balance multiple courses. This can result in classes being scheduled in blocks of 1, 2, 3, or 4 hours to maximize flexibility and accommodate student needs. Fourth, teaching style is also linked to SCH. Some classes may require longer sessions to facilitate activities like labs, workshops, or group projects, while others may be more lecture-based and require shorter sessions. Fifth, and most importantly, SCH is correlated with departmental/discipline-specific standards. Different departments or disciplines may have norms or standards for class lengths based on what is considered effective for learning in that field. In essence, the varying lengths of college classes are typically designed to best serve the educational objectives of the course while considering practical scheduling and logistical constraints.

At TAMIU, the second number in the course sequence (1000, 2000, 3000, 4000, 5000, and 6000) will indicate the number of SCH per course. For example, a course with the course number of 1315 is a 3-hour course. Courses are typically three (3) hours in SCH duration at TAMIU. The Texas Administrative Code (Title 22, Part 22, Chapter 511, Subchapter C, Rule §511.51) even indicates the normality of the “3-hour course”: The “Traditionally-delivered three semester-credit-hour course’ or ‘traditional course’ means a course containing 15 weeks of instruction (45 contact hours) plus a week for final examinations so that such a course contains 45-48 contact hours depending on whether there is a final exam.” This is consistent with most universities in the U.S. Any variation from 3 SCH is a function of the rationales listed in the previous paragraph.

Academic departments may develop and offer zero (0) credit courses as a requirement in a degree program to engage students in innovative experiences beyond the classroom. Examples of these experiences can include, but are not limited to:

- Experiential learning events
- International experiences
- Faculty mentoring
- Presentations at professional/academic meetings
- Orientation sessions
- Art installations/exhibitions/showcases
- Performances
- Labs
- Internships
- Capstone exams
- Certifications

In general, these courses are used to track student progress at TAMIU; this progress includes achievement of certain program admission, progression, or completion-related benchmarks or as a prerequisite of a subsequent course.

Requests for zero credit courses must be submitted through the existing curriculum approval process (described in this *Handbook*) and should meet the following conditions:

- Students will primarily work independently to complete course requirements
- Generally, the course does not meet on a regular basis
- The course requires a syllabus with student learning outcomes
- The course requires minimal use of TAMIU resources
- The course cannot be offered for credit
- The course uses Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory for grading (included on a student transcripts)
- The course will not impact the student's GPA

Regardless of course SCH, all new, and change of, course proposals must be submitted to the curricular process outlined in this handbook.

### **Semester Credit Hours (SCH) – Programs**

Degree programs (graduate and undergraduate), majors, minors, and certificates all have a minimum number of semester credit hours that must be completed in order for a degree or certificate to be awarded. These include:

- Undergraduate degree = 120 SCH
- Graduate degree = 30 SCH
- Minor = 18 SCH
- Certificate = 12 SCH

Undergraduate degrees generally contain 120 semester credit hours. The THECB is very strict on program SCH being set at 120. But, in some instances, more credit hours are required due to disciplinary standards, professional mandates, or academic norms. For instance, music degrees tend to require over 130 hours of SCH. This is due to the varieties of instrument training required for the degree. Nursing and Education degrees tend to have more SCH due to professional mandates associated with field work and licensing. Regardless of the number of program SCH, all undergraduate degree program proposals (new or changes) must be submitted to the curricular process outlined in this handbook.

Graduate degrees' SCH is determined by type of degree (master's or doctoral degree). Master's degrees are 30 SCH. Any changes for this revolve around thesis vs. non-thesis options or professional requirements (nursing for instance); non-thesis programs are required to add an additional 6 SCH to the program requirements. Regardless of the number of program SCH, all masters' degree program proposals (new or changes) must be submitted to the curricular process outlined in this handbook.

For doctoral programs, there is much more variability in semester credit hours. There is no set number of hours for doctorate degrees mandated by the THECB. The primary driver of the SCH variability for doctorates has to do with whether a program requires a master's degree prior to entering the program. If a master's degree is required, the number of SCH will be smaller, hovering around 50 SCH. If a master's degree is not required by the program, the number of SCH will be more intensive, most likely exceeding 70 SCH. Regardless of the number of program SCH, all doctoral degree program proposals (new or changes) must be submitted to the curricular process outlined in this handbook.

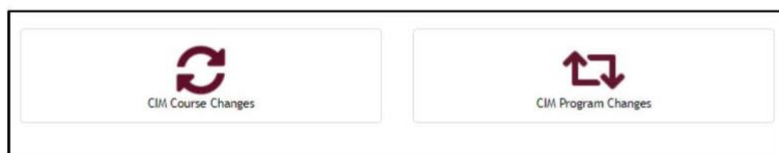
Minors and certificates require a minimum of 18 and 12 SCH respectively. There is generally not a great deal of flexibility to the SCH associated with these types of programs.

## Courseleaf (CIM)

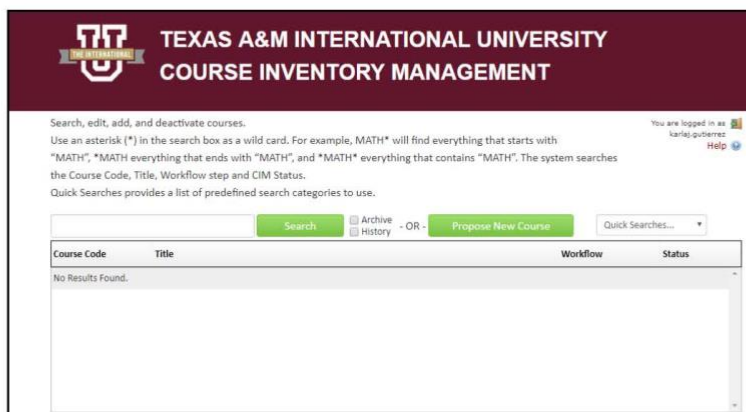
The system used to submit curricular changes is the CIM system (Courseleaf). CIM can be accessed through Uconnect. Faculty submitting proposals should enter their information in either the CIM Course Changes or CIM Program Changes widgets. The full process for entering information into CIM is:

To submit catalog changes, please follow the instructions below.

1. **Log in to UCONNECT and click on Click on the Course or Program Changes depending on the type of change necessary.**



2. **Search the class or program where the changes are necessary.**



3. **CIM provides an online support center that includes instructions, handouts, and videos for your convenience.**



Historically, anyone could submit proposals to CIM. Lack of knowledge with the system often results in proposals submissions that are lacking information or incomplete in relation to other courses or programs of study. Due to this, programs are being limited to a single submitter of all curricular proposals. Individuals selected for curricular submissions will undergo training in August/September annually. Training will be for both first-time submitters and as a review for experienced submitters. Should proposals have too many errors, the Registrar will return the proposal to the faculty member for editing.

For access to the CIM widgets, contact the Registrar's Office for assistance. For any issues with CIM, there are several avenues for assistance. First, consult with departmental faculty who have submitted program and course change proposals in the past; chairs can especially be helpful here. This level of assistance is invaluable. Second, consult with members of the college curriculum committee. Again, these individuals have a great deal of experience in operating CIM. Finally, if these avenues fail, which is extremely unlikely, contact the Registrar's Office for assistance.

As a reminder, **ONLY FULL-TIME FACULTY SUBMIT CURRICULAR PROPOSALS**. No staff or adjuncts may submit curricular proposals. Any proposals not submitted by faculty will be returned to the submitter; in most instances, this will be the program coordinator/director/chair.

## Committee Makeup

The University Curriculum Committee (UCC) is a standing committee of the Faculty Advisory Council, which is deemed necessary to ensure that the programs and courses of the curriculum accomplish the mission of the University. Composition of the UCC includes one representative per academic department or division or free-standing academic unit and the University Registrar. Faculty appointments are made by department chairs (or heads of academic units), who submit their choices through the Provost to the Faculty Advisory Council for concurrence; over 50% of these members should be tenure-track faculty. The Associate Provost (or representative) and the Registrar (or designate) co-chairs the committee as an ex-officio member.

The voting members of the committee include one member from each of the following:

- Biology and Chemistry
- College of Education
- Engineering
- Fine and Performing Arts
- Health Sciences
- Humanities
- International Banking and Finance Studies
- International Business and Technology Studies
- Killam Library
- Mathematics and Physics
- Nursing
- Psychology and Communication
- School of First Year Experiences
- Social Sciences
- Provost Designate

The committee also consists of several ex officio members:

- SACSCOC Liaison
- Distance Education (elearning)
- Graduate Studies
- University Registrar Designate
- Faculty Advisory Council Representative

To assist the committee in its efforts, lead advisors from every college shall attend all meetings. Lead advisors are permitted to engage in all discussions, solicited or unsolicited.

**Quorum of the committee shall be considered eight (8) voting members in attendance.**

## University Curriculum Committee – Co-Chairs

The University Curriculum Committee Chair plays a critical role in the curricular review process at TAMU. There are two co-chairs of the committee: the Provost designate and the Registrar. The co-chairs' responsibilities are as follows:

- Call Meetings – The Chair organizes meetings for the entire University Curriculum Committee. These always occur on Friday afternoons, once a month, during the Fall semester.
- Review Proposals – The Chair is responsible for reviewing all proposals in order to facilitate the discussion of proposals during meetings.
- Introduce Proposals – The Chair must be able to provide a brief summary of proposals to begin committee deliberations.
- Lead Discussions – The Committee Chair is responsible for leading discussions on all curricular changes.
- Project Proposals for Viewing – The Chair must show/project the proposals under review in case the committee has any questions/concerns.
- Make Minor Changes to Proposals – Should there be minor changes/edits required, the Chair can make these during the meeting; for major changes, the proposal will be returned.
- Take/Record Votes – Proper records of votes reflecting In Favor or Not in Favor are recorded by the Chair.
- Approve/Return Proposals in CIM – Upon approval or objection, the Chair processes all proposals through the CIM system to ensure they are managed in a timely fashion.
- Work with Proposal Submitters – The Chair works with proposal submitters to answer questions about or resolve issues with proposals.
- Provide Reports at the End of the Academic Year – The Chair reports are kept in CIM and are readily available after the completion of all UCC meetings; generally, this occurs in February.

## University Curriculum Committee – Members

Members of the University Curriculum Committee are ex officio or appointed by the department chair or the unit head (voting members). Following are the responsibilities of all UCC committee members. It is critical that voting committee members attend all UCC meetings, as the meetings must have a quorum before any committee business can begin. As noted above, quorum is eight (8) voting members present at a UCC meeting. If a member cannot attend, there will be no virtual option for the meeting, nor can another member act as a proxy vote due to lack of access to the CIM system.

The first responsibility of committee members is to review all proposals prior to meetings. Committee members are to evaluate proposals to ensure the following: that they relate to TAMIU's mission, that they are of high quality, that program/student learning outcomes are consistent and matched to the appropriate level, that there is not unnecessary duplication of programs/courses, and that consistency across proposals is monitored.

While there are often many proposals to be reviewed prior to a given meeting, careful review of all proposals is a critical function of the UCC. Proposals are made available to UCC members in CIM approximately 3 days prior to the scheduled UCC meeting. Committee members should read all proposals carefully prior to the meetings, identifying any issues with proposals in advance. Such issues may range from problems with catalog language to alignment with institutional or state requirements to typographical or other errors. As each proposal is discussed individually, identifying such issues in advance significantly streamlines the discussion process.

The second responsibility of committee members is to engage in e-votes. For proposals that require e-votes, UCC members should read through each proposal carefully and identify any potential issues with the proposal. If the committee member believes the proposal should be approved, they should vote "yes" in CIM; if they do not believe the proposal should be approved, they should vote "no." If the member has questions about or objections to the proposal, they are able to leave a comment outlining any such questions or objections in the voting box in CIM. Members are welcome to address any issues they find with e-vote proposals at the UCC meeting. All UCC members are able to view the votes cast by other members as well as any comments they leave. Time is allotted to discussing e-votes and accompanying issues at each UCC meeting.

The third responsibility of committee members is to engage in substantive deliberations on proposals. When reviewing proposals, committee members are to prepare questions, raise any objections, register their e-votes, and/or prepare to approve all course and program changes in the face-to-face meeting. For proposals that only require a partial review, members should have registered their e-votes prior to the meeting. Any comments about or objections to partial review proposals should be discussed and deliberated upon by the committee at the meeting.

For full review proposals, the committee should engage in a robust discussion about each proposal. Related proposals may be discussed as a group, especially those involved in large-scale program

changes or those relating to the creation of new programs or certifications. The discussion should include any objections to or questions about catalog language, alignment with institutional or state requirements, and typographical or other errors. Sponsoring faculty or departmental leadership may attend the UCC meeting to provide context or justification for their full review proposals. This provides UCC members with an opportunity to ask questions and gain fuller context for such proposals.

If UCC members raise concerns about a proposal, it can be sent back to the initial proposer for revision based on UCC feedback. Any revised proposals need to be resubmitted for consideration at a future UCC meeting.

The final responsibility of committee members is to hold formal votes on proposals requiring full review; Robert's Rules of Order are applied to these votes. Once the proposals have been discussed by members of the UCC committee, and any additional information has been presented, a committee member must move to open the vote on the proposal. The initial motion must be seconded by another UCC committee member. At that point, the chair(s) of the UCC committee will ask all UCC members to register their approvals or oppositions. If the proposal is approved by the majority of UCC members, it will be considered approved and sent to the next step in the curriculum approval process.

### **Full Review vs. Partial Review**

The chair(s) of the UCC determines whether course and program proposals require a full review or a partial review. Guidelines for those determinations are outlined below.

A full review is required for all substantive course and program changes. Proposals that are required to undergo full review will be made available to UCC members approximately 3 days prior to the scheduled UCC meeting. Proposals for course and program changes will be voted on, in person, at the UCC meeting. The proposal will only be approved if a quorum of UCC members (8) approve the proposal.

At the course level, full reviews are required for new course proposals and substantive changes to existing courses, such as those requiring major changes to course description, course title, etc. If the content of a class is changed, a full review is required.

At the program level, full reviews are required for new degree programs; new certificate programs; new minors; new concentrations/specializations; new tracks within existing degree programs; deactivation of degree programs, certificate programs, minors, or concentrations/specializations; changes to program requirements (with or without a SCH change); changes to the name of degree programs, certificate programs, minors, or concentrations/specializations; or changes to CIP codes. If the content of a program is changed, a full review is required.

Partial review is required for minor changes to courses and programs. Proposals that require partial review involve minor or editorial changes to courses, minors, or degree/certificate programs. UCC members will receive course vote proposals approximately 3 days prior to the UCC meeting; as such, these proposals should be reviewed by UCC members prior to the meeting at which they will be discussed in brief. Any questions about or objections to partial review proposals can be added as a comment to the proposal in Courseleaf's CIM Platform, and any such objections or questions should be discussed at the UCC meeting. Passage of such proposals occurs when they receive a quorum of e-vote approval by UCC members. E-voting closes the weekend after the course proposals are made available.

At the course level, partial reviews are required for course deactivations as well as changes to: instructional method (modality), pre- and/or co-requisites, classification restrictions, course type, grade mode, cross-listed courses, repeatability, minor changes to course descriptions, core curriculum, and WIN (writing intensive) designations.

At the program level, partial reviews are required for minor changes to graduation requirements, updates to program electives (to account for new and/or deactivated courses), and updates to account for changes in course prefixes, titles, and/or codes.

## Program Review

The most important proposals that are reviewed in the curricular process are those dealing with new or revised degree programs. According to the THECB, an “Academic Program is an instructional program leading toward a certificate, associate's, bachelor's, master's, doctoral, or first-professional degree or resulting in credits that can be applied to one of these degrees.” TAMIU defines an academic program as:

- ***Degrees:*** A degree program is a series of courses leading to a degree authorized by THECB. Undergraduate degrees will have a minimum of 120 semester credit hours, and graduate degrees at the master’s level will have a minimum of 30 graduate credit hours and at the doctoral degree level at least 75 total graduate credit hours. Degree titles as authorized by THECB will be noted on diplomas and on official transcripts.
  - *Majors:* A major within a degree consists of at least 24 credit hours in a discipline. Majors will be noted on the diploma if authorized by THECB and on the official transcript.
  - *Minors:* A minor consists of a minimum of 18 credit hours in a discipline or topic. Minors will be noted on the official transcript.
  - *Concentrations:* A concentration consists of a set of related courses within a major (the exception being the university’s education concentration in preparation for TEA certification) and is available only to students enrolled in that major. The number of credit hours for a concentration may vary. Concentrations will be noted on the official transcript.
- ***Certificates:*** A certificate consists of 12-15 credit hours in a subject or combination of subjects that represents the attainment of discrete knowledge or skills. Certificates are awarded to degree-seeking students at the time of completing the degree and are awarded to non-degree seeking students when they have met the requirements of the certificate. Certificates will be noted on the official transcript.

For the purposes of this policy, programs that require review include:

- New degree programs
- New certificate programs
- Minors
- New concentrations
- Dual degrees
- Joint degrees
- Combination programs
- Program closures
- Degree, minor, certificate name changes
- Semester credit hour (SCH) change for degree, minor, or certificate programs
- Changes to degree, minor, or certificate requirements
- Changes to CIP codes

Program changes, especially new program proposals, always require a full review. Information that may be required in new program and change to existing program proposals include:

- Has the program been approved by the THECB?
- Total number of new courses added to the degree program
- Total number of new SCH created for the degree program
- Total SCH required for the degree program
- Number of major SCH required for the degree program
- Is this a substantive change? (Checklist provided)
- Projected start date
- Program title
- CIP code
- Relationship of program to institutional mission, vision, and values of the institution
- Program level (graduate or undergraduate)
- Type of graduate program (Masters or PhD)
- Curriculum and instructional design of the program
- List of courses
- Program learning outcomes
- Program modality
- Program evaluation (program review and annual assessment)
- Marketable skills
- Years to completion of degree
- Additional admissions requirements
- Number of faculty (full-time and part-time)
- Faculty vitae
- Faculty scholarship
- Library and IT resources
- Projected revenue
- Expected number of students
- Institutional planning process
- Local and regional demand for the program

There are three types of program proposal outlined here: New Programs, Changes to Existing Programs, and Eliminating Programs.

### **New Programs**

According to the THECB, an “Academic Program is an instructional program leading toward a certificate, associate's, bachelor's, master's, doctoral, or first-professional degree or resulting in credits that can be applied to one of these degrees.” For the purposes of this policy, new academic programs include majors, minors, concentrations, specializations, and certificates. These may be initiated by the department, school, or administration. In all situations, the Provost and Vice

President for Academic Affairs and the AVP for Institutional Assessment, Research, and Planning will be contacted as soon as possible in the process to provide guidance and oversight in the development of the program. All new program proposals containing a majority of new content will require not only TAMIU curricular approval, but will also require review by the Texas A&M System Board of Regents (TAMU BOR), the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), and SACSCOC. The review process is long and arduous, taking anywhere from one to two years to complete. Indeed, new PhD program proposals require a one-year period of initial review before a proposal can be submitted to the THECB. There is more on external review agencies in the next section (substantive changes).

There are several items that must be addressed in the discussion phase of the new program proposal process. A new program is not as simple as the idea. There are many factors that must be considered. These include determining whether the program is necessary, if the program is consistent with the university mission, whether there are comparable programs already in existence on campus, student demand, projected revenue, and necessary resources (for example, are more faculty/staff needed for the program to operate effectively?). This means that all new programs will receive scrutiny from almost the entirety of the TAMIU administration.

Once the above issues have been addressed, the program/department will then begin work on the proposal in earnest. Before submission of a new program proposal, the proposal will be showcased to a variety of different campus stakeholders for feedback. There will be at least two presentations to these stakeholder groups. Feedback from these presentations must be incorporated into the final proposal; if feedback is not applied to the final draft of the proposal, members writing the proposal should be able to explain why this advice was not followed. After the penultimate draft of the proposal has been completed, the proposal will be presented to the President and all the Vice Presidents. Final guidance provided by this group will be incorporated into the final proposal.

After consultation with the faculty, departments, appropriate administrators, TAMIU's curricular process is the first stop for review. Faculty will submit the proposal through CIM and the review process will proceed according to this handbook. After approval at TAMIU, the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs will transmit the proposal to the TAMU BOR (which transmits to the THECB upon approval); at the same time, the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs will transmit the proposal to SACSCOC. Both the THECB and SACSCOC will review a given proposal simultaneously. Upon receiving final approval from TAMIU, the TAMU BOR, the THECB, and SACSCOC, the department chair works with the dean and others to develop a plan for recruitment, promotion of the program, and implementation.

The proposal of a new program that is already closely aligned with an existing major, minor, or concentration, that will not require new courses, and that will not require new faculty may not need as much initial discussion. For instance, if the new program does not represent a substantial expansion requiring additional resources (i.e., it is a new concentration in an existing major or a

new minor or certificate, and therefore does not require new resources or additional faculty), a proposal will still be required; in these cases, the question of any substantive changes associated with this kind of proposal will be determined by the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and the SACSCOC Liaison.

Duplication of existing programs, in part or in whole, is prohibited.

### **Changes to Existing Programs**

Departments may make changes they deem necessary to existing programs to ensure that they best meet the academic needs of students and include the most current and relevant content. Revisions to all existing majors, minors, and concentrations within a discipline will be managed within the department and be submitted through TAMIU's curricular process.

Modifying content, reducing course credit hours (i.e., moving 4- to 3-credit hours) or combining existing courses are examples of changes that departments may make. Before creating a new program or making a change to an existing program, faculty must consult department chairs, college deans, the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, and the SACSCOC Liaison. Such consultation provides guidance as to what changes should be effected and to what scale. Additionally, and most importantly, these discussions will allow for the determination of whether a change triggers a substantive change that would need to be reviewed by external organizations (TAMU System BOR, THECB, and SACSCOC) in addition to reviews through TAMIU's curricular process; see the next section for more details on the nature of substantive changes.

If the proposed change results in conflict with another department/program or requires the second department to add courses or faculty to compensate for the change, discussions, and possible votes, between the departments/programs must occur prior to any proposal submission.

### **Eliminating Programs**

Sometimes, programs do not work. In other instances, the need for the program diminishes with the advent of other programs. In either case, the elimination of programs is a curricular concern. The request to eliminate an existing major, minor, concentration, or certificate may be initiated by the department or by administration based on enrollment, employment trends, changes in educational focus, institutional finances, or other reasons.

If the request is initiated by the administration, the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs will discuss the rationale with the school dean and, if applicable, the department chair. If the decision is final, the dean or chair will notify the appropriate campus offices, including the Registrar's Office and the SACSCOC Liaison, of the change so that, at the earliest possible date, the website, marketing, catalog, admissions office, Graduate School, and other offices can be updated to accurately reflect the department's offerings. If the request to eliminate a major, minor, concentration or certificate is initiated by the department or school, the chair will submit the

request and rationale to the college dean, who will then transmit the proposal to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, and the SACSCOC Liaison for evaluation against the offerings and curricular needs of other departments; the department chair will work in cooperation with the SACSCOC Liaison through this process. If the request is approved, the dean will notify the appropriate campus offices of the change so that, at the earliest possible date, the website, catalog, admissions office, Graduate School, and other publications can be updated to accurately reflect the department's offerings.

Concurrently, a Teach-Out plan must be developed to make sure that all students currently enrolled in the program will be able to complete the program. Viable alternative programs can be provided to the students as well. A Teach-Out plan is developed by the institution and provides equitable treatment of students if an institution providing at least 25% of a program ceases to operate. This plan will provide a pathway to completion for students who are currently enrolled. Teach-Out plans must include:

- Teachout agreements with any other institutions;
- Commitment to teaching a specific list of students who are currently enrolled in programs at TAMIU;
- A commitment to assuming the educational responsibilities of the identified students, without compensation from any outside party, for the remainder of a current semester if TAMIU terminates operations.

Teach-Out plans are very important as they can have an impact on financial aid to an institution.

While the Teach-Out plan is being implemented, a program elimination proposal must be submitted through TAMIU's curricular process (CIM). The Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs will update the decision on the program's fate to the Texas A&M System Board of Regents and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). The AVP for Institutional Assessment, Research, and Planning will submit the correct paperwork to SACSCOC.

The elimination of an existing program is always considered a substantive change, which is the subject of the next section.

## **Low Producing Minors and Certificate Programs**

The Office of Institutional Assessment, Research, and Planning will annually produce an enrollment and graduation report on academic minors and academic certificates (both undergraduate and graduate) for the Office of the Provost by the 20<sup>th</sup> class day of each spring semester. The report will contain information for the current academic year (fall and spring terms).

A low-producing minor or certificate is defined as:

- Fewer than 5 students enrolled each academic year
- Fewer than 2 graduates per academic year

If a minor or certificate program is deemed to be low producing for three (3) consecutive academic years, it will be placed under administrative review by the Office of the Provost. A minor or certificate with zero enrollment and zero graduating students for three (3) consecutive years will be discontinued (deactivated) in accordance with the institution's policies and procedures for curricular processes.

**Administrative Review and Recommendations** (Note: for minors and certificates that are deemed low-producing for three consecutive years)

A review committee—including the Division of Enrollment Management, the Chair of the University Curriculum Committee, the Director/Associate Director of Academic Advising, the respective College Dean, the respective Department Chair, faculty who teach in the minor or certificate, and a representative of Faculty Advisory Council—will meet no later than the 20<sup>th</sup> class day of the spring semester following the issuance of the report to discuss those minors and certificates that have been deemed low-producing for three consecutive years. The committee will then make a recommendation to the Provost to:

1. Exempt the minor or certificate from the low-producing category for at least two years because:
  - Data (e.g., student demand surveys, workforce/industry demand, focus groups, etc.) indicate potential enrollment growth within two years or,
  - The decline in enrollment and graduation was likely due to factors such as faculty separations which impacted matriculation, but recent faculty hires will likely lead to enrollment growth within two years or,
  - It was a recent addition (launched within the last two years) to the catalog inventory and recruitment and student advising are still ongoing or,
  - It is central to the institution's mission, priorities, and strategic plan or,
  - A restructuring of resources (i.e., recruitment events, marketing campaigns, etc.) will likely lead to enrollment growth within two years or,
  - The program faculty have proposed redesigning/updating the curriculum to better align with student demand and workforce needs.

2. Discontinue (or phase out) the minor or certificate because:
  - Budget constraints led to faculty reductions and there are no immediate plans to hire new faculty.
  - It no longer aligns with the institution's mission, priorities, and strategic plan.

Note: As stated in the Faculty Handbook (Chapter 10, *Non-reappointment, Dismissal, and Separation of Faculty*), the phasing out of institutional programs or financial exigencies, which causes a reduction of faculty, may require exceptions to the normal tenure policy. In these cases, the faculty involved in the reduction will be given every advanced notice possible and every effort will be made by the University to place the affected faculty in other available positions in the University's employment for which they are qualified (TAMUS Policy 12.01, Section 7.2).

Should there be students matriculating in the minor or certificate, a teach-out plan will be implemented and no new students will be allowed to enroll.

The Provost will review the committee's recommendation and issue an independent recommendation to the President. The Provost may recommend to the President that:

- (1) the minor or certificate be exempt from being categorized as low-producing for a period of two years.
  - a. During this time, the minor or certificate will continue to be reviewed annually to assess enrollment and/or graduation.
  - b. Program faculty, together with the chair and dean, will meet periodically to discuss recruitment and marketing strategies and report such strategies to the Provost.

If enrollment and/or graduation are still deemed to be low after three years from the exemption, the minor or certificate will be discontinued.

- (2) it be discontinued due to: (a) lack of substantial evidence that enrollment or graduation will increase, (b) budgetary constraints impede the hiring of new faculty and/or reallocation of faculty resources or, (c) the minor or certificate no longer aligns with the institution's mission, priorities, and strategies.

**The Provost's recommendation to discontinue the minor or certificate can be appealed (see below).**

#### Appeals Process

An appeal to discontinue the minor or certificate can be filed by full-time faculty directly impacted by such decision. Faculty must submit their appeal and any supporting documentation to the Office of the Provost within 30 business days of the discontinuation notice. Within five business days, the Provost will then assemble a committee to hear the appeal composed of:

- The Vice President of Enrollment Management (or designee)

- Chair of the University Curriculum Committee
- The Director/Associate Director of Academic Advising
- The Dean of the college where the appeal originated
- The Chair of the department where the appeal originated
- Three tenured faculty members (one from outside of the college where the appeal originated to be selected by the program directly impacted, one selected by the dean of the college where the appeal originated, one selected by program impacted)
- Faculty Advisory Council representative

The committee will review all documentation and render a written recommendation to the Provost detailing reasons for their decision. The Provost, in turn, will review all documentation and the committee's recommendation and issue an independent recommendation to the President detailing reasons for the decision. The President will consider all information and make the final decision.

Should an appeal result in the continuation of a minor or certificate program, the program will remain on administrative review for a period of three years but will be assessed annually for enrollment and graduation numbers. If the program continues to maintain a low-producing status for three years, the program will be discontinued. A discontinuation in this scenario cannot be appealed.

## **Substantive Changes**

Changes to university functioning, academic programs, and curricula are a primary aspect of higher education. Scientific advancements, the evolution of academic programs, and changes in the job market all push towards necessary changes in universities and their programs. All programs have been initially approved by universities, possibly system offices, state boards of education, accrediting bodies, and, in some instances, the federal government. If a program changes too much, it necessarily no longer reflects what was originally approved. This is the essence of substantive changes, the focus of this policy.

For new programs and programs changes that are deemed “substantive,” faculty will likely need to go through several external bodies for the program to gain full approval (or reapproval). Substantive changes are:

based on the concept of “significant departures” from previously approved programs, off-campus instructional sites or mode of delivery as well as a change in institutional scope.

Texas A&M International University (TAMIU) will report in writing any actions defined as a substantive change to the Texas A&M System Board of Regents, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), and the Southern Association of College and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

This policy sets forth the steps and requirements to monitor and report substantive changes occurring at TAMIU. The Associate Provost who coordinates academic program approvals will work with the Accreditation Liaison to ensure accurate reporting of substantive changes to the appropriate external body (Texas A&M System Board of Regents, THECB, and SACSCOC). This policy statement is published on the university’s website and will be reviewed on an annual basis, updated as needed, and distributed widely.

This policy is organized as follows. First, substantive changes are examined by the guidance provided by THECB and SACSCOC. Following this, TAMIU’s definition and mechanisms for identifying substantive changes are outlined. The policy then outlines the various types of substantive changes at TAMIU with an emphasis on program closures and new academic programs. Third, this policy then outlines the procedures, process, and workflow of how substantive changes are treated at TAMIU. The policy then identifies those responsible for transmission of substantive changes to the appropriate external bodies and the key timelines associated with the processing of substantive changes. Finally, this policy outlines the annual review of substantive changes that have been processed and the annual updating of this policy.

### **Substantive Changes According to THECB**

The determination of whether a proposed degree program consists of 50% or more new content is made by the institution in preparing the degree program proposal and should align with the 50% new content guidelines provided by SACSCOC (see more below). Table 2 provides the

types of changes identified by the THECB that are most likely to be substantive in nature.

**Table 2. THECB Substantive Changes**

<b>Type of Change</b>	<b>Characteristics of the Change</b>
New Program	New Program comprised of more than 50% new content
Program Name	Associated with other changes to the program
CIP Code Change	Changes degree designator CIP code and title change in tandem
Degree Designation	Focus/purpose changes Completion requirements change Employment opportunities for graduates would change
Administrative Unit	Focus/purpose changes Completion requirements change Employment opportunities for graduates would change
Faculty	New faculty required New areas of expertise needed - Past three years or coming three years Existing faculty reassigned or terminated
Employment Opportunities	Graduates either lose or gain potential job opportunities
Specialization/Tracks	More than three new courses added to the track Increase in semester credit hours
Accreditation, licensure, certification	New accreditation required by program change New licensure becomes available to graduates due to change
Objective/Mission Statement	Change to scope of the program

### **Substantive Changes According to SACSCOC**

SACSCOC requires its member institutions to have a policy and procedure to ensure that all substantive changes are reported to the Commission in a timely fashion. Texas A&M International University as an accredited member institution adheres to the Commission's substantive change policy. The *Principles of Accreditation (2024)* states the requirement for an

institution to comply with Standard 14.2 which reads as follows:

*The institution has a policy and procedure to ensure that all substantive changes are reported in accordance with SACSCOC policy.*

According to SACSCOC, a substantive change includes a “significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution.”

### **Definition**

Substantive change is a significant modification or expansion in the nature and scope of an accredited institution. Substantive changes include high-impact, high-risk changes and changes that can impact the quality of educational programs and services. The SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy can be viewed on the SACSCOC website. <https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/SubstantiveChange.pdf>.

The TAMIU Standard Administrative Procedure (SAP) can be found at: <https://www.tamtu.edu/compliance/11.10.99.10.01substantivechanges.pdf>.

### **Types of Substantive Changes**

There are different types of substantive changes: Institutional and Program/Curricular, Off-Campus Instructional Site/Additional Location Changes. Institutional changes are typically initiated by the administrators.

Institutional substantive changes include:

1. Acquisition
2. Changing the way an institution measures student progress, whether in clock hours or credit-hours; semesters, trimesters, or quarters; or time-based or non–time-based methods or measures
3. Competency-based education (CBE) by course/credit-based approach-Institutional-level Approval
4. Distance Education-Institutional-level approval
5. Changing the governance of an institution
6. Institutional Closure
7. Institutional Relocation
8. Institutional Contingency Teach-out Plan
9. Level Classification and Level Authorization
  - a. Definitions and Guidelines
  - b. Level Authorization Addition
  - c. Level Authorization Removal
  - d. Level Change to a Higher Level
  - e. Level Change to a Lower Level

10. Merger/Consolidation
11. Changing the established mission
12. Ownership, Means of Control, or Legal Status Change
13. Prison Education Program-Institutional-level approval

If any of the substantive changes are at the institutional level, the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs will consult with the institution's SACSCOC Liaison for guidance in seeking SACSCOC approval in addition to any curricular changes that might be required through the normal TAMIU curricular process. See Substantive Change Process below.

Program/Curricular changes include:

1. Clock-Credit Hour Conversion
2. Competency-based Education by Direct Assessment – Approval
3. Competency-based Education by Direct Assessment – Notification
4. Cooperative Academic Arrangements
  - a. Definitions and Guidelines
  - b. Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Title IV Entities
  - c. Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Non-Title IV Entities – Approval
  - d. Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Non-Title IV Entities – Notification
5. Correspondence Education
6. Dual Academic Award
7. Joint Academic Award with non-SACSCOC Institution(s) or Entity(ies)
8. Joint Academic Award with SACSCOC Institution(s)
9. Method of Delivery – Approval
10. Method of Delivery – Notification
11. New Program – Approval
12. New Program – Notification
13. Program Closure
14. Program Designed for Prior Learning – Approval
15. Program Designed for Prior Learning – Notification
16. Program Length Change

For new programs, if a change has 25% new content, it is a substantive change. There are two tiers of substantive changes under this rubric: 25-49% and 50%+. Any changes of 25% are a substantive change and require notification to SACSCOC. Substantive changes falling between 25-49% are lower-level substantive changes and any substantive changes 50% or greater new content are the more extensive substantive changes. The next section will outline how TAMIU deals with these percentages. For now, the important part about this distinction is how SACSCOC will be informed and their level of engagement with a substantive change at TAMIU. The SACSCOC liaison will be responsible for determining which kind of SACSCOC review is necessary during the program proposal development phase of the curricular process; faculty do

not make this determination but can discuss and present a case at the appropriate time in the process outlined below.

Based on the nature of the substantive change (25-49% or 50%+), SACSCOC requires either a full prospectus/proposal or a notification. Changes that require a full prospectus indicate significant changes from existing programs and coursework already in existence at TAMIU; in these instances, there are over 50% of changes to the underlying course content of a program that is comprised of new content. Existing programs that change content may rise to the level of a substantive change if either 25-49% or 50%+ of the content changes. This can occur in one curricular cycle or across academic years. TAMIU tracks both scenarios to ensure substantive changes are properly tracked and transmitted to SACSCOC. To be clear, this does not include a reorganization of current content in the program. Thus, new programs will often be substantive changes and will require a full prospectus delineating the nature of the changes. (See the discussion below for the requirements to the prospectus under the Substantive Changes at TAMIU section).

Another common program change is program closures, and these are always a substantive change. For substantive changes that include closing a program, site, program at a site, or changing the method of delivery, a Teach-Out plan must be developed as soon as the decision is made to close and stop admitting students (See the discussion below for the requirements of closing programs under Program Closures at TAMIU).

For a substantive change requiring notification only, such notification can be submitted any time before implementation. Once the institution has submitted a notification, it may implement the change before receiving a response from SACSCOC. If there are deficiencies or additional information required regarding the notification, the SACSCOC liaison will be contacted at the time of review for resolution and before action is taken. This applies to notifications only and not to approvals: changes requiring approval cannot be implemented until approved by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

For SACSCOC, non-substantive changes include but are not limited to repackaging of existing curricula into new programs, minors, or certificates. Repackaging includes taking existing courses and redistributing the content into courses with new course numbers and descriptions and minor changes to existing courses or degrees.

Off-campus Instructional Site/Additional location changes include:

1. Off-campus Instructional Site Definitions and Guidelines
2. Off-campus Instructional Site Notification
3. Off-campus Instructional Site Approval (including branch campus)
  - a. Extensive Review
  - b. Limited Review
  - c. Committee Visits

4. Off-campus Instructional Site Relocation
  - a. Definitions and Guidelines
  - b. Non-branch Campus
  - c. Branch Campus
5. Off-campus Instructional Site Name or Address Change
6. Off-campus Instructional Site Closure
7. Off-campus Instructional Site Re-open

Other Changes include:

1. Implementation Extension
2. Substantive Change Restriction
3. Committee Visits
4. International Off-campus Instructional Sites
5. Fees and other expenses

### **Substantive Changes at TAMIU**

Based on THECB and SACSCOC, Texas A&M International University defines substantive changes as:

Substantive change is a significant modification or expansion in the nature and scope of an accredited institution. Substantive changes include high-impact, high-risk changes and changes that can impact the quality of educational programs and services.

This is the verbatim definition provided by SACSCOC and guides TAMIU in its processing of substantive changes.

In general, program closures will always trigger a substantive change review. An institution is required to notify or secure SACSCOC approval prior to implementing a substantive change. New programs will mostly trigger substantive change reviews. All other potential substantial changes are identified using the 25-49% framework outlined by SACSCOC. In principle, this framework suggests if 25-49% of a program is using brand new content or more semester credit hours (SCH), then a substantive change is present; for SCH this percentage can be calculated based on new SCH within the overall major's total SCH. As will be illustrated further below, the arbiters of the percentage framework will be the SACSCOC Liaison in consultation with the Office of the Provost.

A few items are considered not substantive changes at TAMIU based on this policy. First, a program that goes from a thesis option to a non-thesis option in a master's program is not a substantive change. Second, if a program is not currently at the 120 SCH mark, but moves in that direction, it is not a substantive change. Finally, new certificates are not substantive changes, but both the THECB and SACSCOC will require notification.

Curriculum substantive changes are the most common types of changes at TAMIU. These include changes to programs that are more extensive and “significant departures” from previously approved programs. Program/Curricular changes include:

1. Offering courses or programs at a higher or lower degree level than currently authorized
2. Adding undergraduate programs at the bachelor level (including degrees, diplomas, certificates, and other for-credit credentials)
3. Adding graduate programs at the masters or doctoral levels (including degrees, diplomas, certificates, and other for-credit credentials)
4. Adding a program that is a significant departure from the existing programs, or method of delivery, from those offered when the institution was last evaluated.
5. Initiating programs by distance education (online)
6. Adding an additional method of delivery to a currently offered program
7. Entering into a cooperative academic arrangement
8. Substantially increasing or decreasing the number of clock hours or credit hours awarded or competencies demonstrated, or an increase in the level of credential awarded, for successful completion of one or more programs
9. Adding competency-based education programs
10. Adding each competency-based education program by direct assessment
11. Adding programs with completion pathways that recognize and accommodate a student’s prior or existing knowledge or competency
12. Awarding dual or joint academic awards

### **New Program Prospectus Requirements**

Required components of the prospectus include:

1. Cover letter signed by the SACSCOC Liaison
2. List of programs offered by the institution (excerpt from the catalog or a printout of a webpage is acceptable)
3. Abstract (one page maximum)
  - a. Briefly describe the proposed change to include the intended implementation date
  - b. Provide projected number of students, if applicable
  - c. Indicate the projected life of the change, as applicable: one-time/limited duration or ongoing)
  - d. Describe the primary target audience or market
  - e. Describe the strengths of the institution to undertake the change
4. Describe how the need for the change was determined and how the change was approved by the institution
5. Describe how the change is consistent with the mission and goals of the institution
6. Provide documentation of faculty involvement in the planning and approval of the

change

7. Provide evidence of legal authority for the change if approval is required by the governing board or the state
8. Provide the curriculum for the entire program
9. Provide program-specific goals (objectives) and specific student learning outcomes for the program
10. Describe how the student learning outcomes for the program will be assessed
11. Provide course descriptions for all courses in the proposed program. Do not provide syllabi or catalogs (though course description *excerpts* from a catalog are acceptable)
12. Describe admissions and graduation requirements for the program
13. Provide the planned method(s) of delivery, as defined in policy, of the program
14. Provide the planned location(s) at which the program will be delivered, i.e., on-campus and/or at specific off-campus instructional site(s). (Providing this information does not replace submitting a notification or prospectus for approval, if necessary, of an off-campus instructional site as required by policy)
15. Demonstrate compliance with Standard 10.7 (policies for awarding credit) of the *Principles of Accreditation*
16. Describe administrative oversight to ensure the quality of the program
17. For a program offered in compressed time frames, describe the methodology for determining that levels of knowledge and competencies comparable to those required in the traditional formats have been achieved
18. Provide Common Content B – Faculty Qualifications, relative to the proposed change (See Appendix A)
19. Provide Common Content C – Resources, relative to the proposed change (See Appendix A)
20. Provide Common Content D – Institutional Evaluation and Assessment Processes, relative to the proposed change (See Appendix A)

The prospectus is limited to 25 pages in length; appendices can be used if more space is needed. Changes requiring SACSCOC approval cannot be implemented until approved by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

### **Program Closures Requirements**

Any time a program is closed, it is a substantive change.

If an institution decides to close an educational program, THECB and SACSCOC must be notified in advance of the closure. If a program is being closed, a teach-out plan must be submitted and approved by SACSCOC prior to implementation. If the plan includes teach-out agreement(s) with other institutions, then the agreement(s) must also be approved prior to implementation. Programs are either closed or open. A closed program may re-open if it is within five years of the date that the program stopped admitting students into the program.

SACSCOC indicates:

When the decision is made to close an educational program, the institution must make a good faith effort to assist affected students, faculty, and administrative and support staff so that they experience a minimal amount of disruption in the pursuit of their course of study or professional careers. In all cases, individuals should be notified of the decision to close a program as soon as possible so that they can make appropriate plans. Students who have not completed their programs should be advised by faculty or professional counselors regarding suitable options, including transfer to comparable programs. Arrangements should be made to reassign faculty and staff or assist them in locating other employment.

See the [SACSCOC website](#) for more information on teach-out plans or substantive change Reporting.

*See also* the SACSCOC website for more information on [closing a program](#), site, branch, or institution in the Procedures section of the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy.

Off-campus program closures must also be addressed through the THECB and SACSCOC. An off-campus instructional site is a location geographically apart from the main campus at which 50% or more of the credit for at least one program is offered. Such sites must be approved in advance by SACSCOC. If an institution decides to close an off-campus site that provides 50% of at least one program, SACSCOC must be notified. In addition, if a program at an off-campus site is closed, SACSCOC must be notified in advance of the closure. All closure approvals require an acceptable teach-out plan to be submitted to ensure students have reasonable opportunities to complete their program of study with minimal disruption and additional costs. See section III below for more information.

When programs at TAMIU anticipate either temporarily stopping admissions or permanently closing a program, the Provost's Office must first be consulted. The program closure must be approved through the curriculum approval process, which requires that the chair, dean, and provost approve of the change as well as the faculty curriculum committees. The SACSCOC liaison reviews the program closure documentation in CIM, TAMIU management system. Once this has happened, the dean in consultation with the program chair and faculty, then prepares a "teach-out" plan. The plan must be reviewed by the SACSCOC liaison and approved by the Provost prior to submission to THECB and SACSCOC. The plan must follow SACSCOC guidelines found in the SACSCOC website for more information on closing a program, site, branch, or institution in the Procedures section of the [SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy](#).

The next section outlines the substantive change process at TAMIU.

## **Substantive Change Process at TAMIU**

The process of substantive changes is guided if the change is an Institutional Substantive Change or a Curricular Substantive Change. This section will provide the process for determining substantive changes.

### *Curricular Substantive Changes*

While the vast majority of program proposals will receive a full curricular review by the University Curriculum Committee, all new and proposed program changes that indicate a substantive change will get a full review. The workflow of curricular substantive changes is provided in Table 3 (See **Appendix for visual workflow**).

**Table 3. Curricular Substantive Change Workflow**

<b>Steps</b>	<b>Reviewer</b>
1	Department Review and Vote
2	Department Chair
3	University Core Curriculum (if necessary)
4	Registrar
5	College Curriculum Committee
6	College Dean
7	University Curriculum Committee
8	SACSCOC Liaison
9	Provost
10	President

Curriculum proposals of programs are initiated by faculty in departments/programs; these must be submitted through the originating department or program and require approval by the department head and/or program chair. The individual who submits the proposal will be guided through a series of prompts to assist in determining if the proposal is a substantive change. These prompts allow for determination of whether a change is substantive and provides the mechanism for ascertaining if cumulative changes across time trigger a substantive change. Following approval at the department level (department/unit and chair), the Office of the Registrar will evaluate the proposal for consistency and structural issues. After the Registrar's review, the curriculum proposal will be forwarded to the college's curriculum committee. Following review by the college curriculum committee, the proposal will be reviewed by the appropriate dean for review and approval. Curriculum proposals approved by the dean will be forwarded to the University Curriculum Committee (UCC) for review and consideration.

At the next level, the SACSCOC Liaison will review the proposal to determine if there is a

significant departure that requires a substantive change prospectus to be sent to either the THECB or SACSCOC. If the proposal is found to be a substantive change, the SACSCOC Liaison and the Office of the Provost will coordinate to determine if a substantive change proposal or notification is required for the THECB, SACSCOC, or both.

Curriculum proposals approved by the UCC and reviewed by the SACSCOC Liaison are submitted to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs (Provost) for review and approval. The Provost will review proposals for all the standards of quality and excellence prior to forwarding to the President for final institutional signature and submission.

### *Institutional Substantive Changes*

Institutional substantive changes are largely submitted by administrators at the level of Vice President or higher. These changes tend to be sweeping across the entire institution. As indicated above, these can include changes to the university mission, changes in governance, or university closures, as examples. Due to the larger impact of these types of change, the workflow is necessarily different. Table 4 provides the workflow for institutional substantive changes.

**Table 4. Institutional Substantive Change Workflow**

<b>Steps</b>	<b>Reviewer</b>
1	Administrative or Ad Hoc Committee Meetings
2	Executive Committee (Meeting minutes shared with faculty/staff)
3	University Curriculum Committee
4	SACSCOC Liaison
5	Provost
6	President

For institutional changes, there are fewer steps in the process due to the top-down approach of most institutional changes. The first step in the process is some combination of administrative meetings, mandates, and/or ad hoc committee reviewing an institutional change. For instance, if the mission statement is under review, any changes would be preceded by administrative discussions between the President and the Provost, the President and the Vice Presidents, the University Executive Committee, and, likely, an ad hoc committee. In such instances, there are presentations to faculty/staff/employees and solicitation of feedback. All of this goes into the final proposal.

Based on the feedback and consensus from all these, a final proposal would be put forth in either the University Executive Committee and/or the Vice President's Council. If it is decided the proposal should move forward, the individual who is advocating for the policy will submit the proposal through TAMIU's curricular process.

Since the President and Provost meet once a week, the SACSCOC Liaison will join one meeting each month. This will allow the Liaison to stay informed and discuss any institutional initiatives that may trigger a substantive change, ensuring that the Liaison is involved in the process. Unlike curricular substantive changes, the first official level of review is the University Curriculum Committee (UCC). Since there has been wide discussion about the proposal, this step is a combination of informational session and discussion of the proposal. A final vote from the UCC committee is symbolic. Once approved, the SACSCOC Liaison and the Associate Provost will review to determine if any substantive changes are included in the proposal. Once the SACSCOC Liaison's review is completed, the proposal will be transmitted to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. After approval by the Provost, the President will have the final determination of the proposal's approval.

### *Substantive Change Process after TAMIU Curricular Approval*

Once a substantive change has been identified, the SACSCOC Liaison and/or the Associate Provost is responsible for submitting paperwork (notification or proposal) to the appropriate regulating body. The Office of the Provost will coordinate submission of institutionally approved curriculum proposals to System, state, or regional entities, as required. Should SACSCOC, the THECB, or the Department of Education approvals be necessary, all will be pursued simultaneously upon final approval by the TAMIU curricular process. This ensures that all approvals are granted prior to the new or changed program initiation. The SACSCOC Liaison is responsible for submitting all changes via the website's Institutional Portal.

Notifications and approvals from external authorities, including the Texas A&M System Board of Regents TAMUS (BOR), THECB, and the U.S. Department of Education, will be the responsibility of the Provost. Notifications and approvals from SACSCOC will be the responsibility of the SACSCOC Liaison.

The Provost will be the primary record holder of all proposals, approvals, and rejections. Copies of requests and approvals to the TAMU BOR, the THECB, SACSCOC, and the Department of Education will be provided to appropriate administrative units for record-keeping.

### **Responsible Parties for Submission of Substantive Changes**

All faculty have some degree of impact on ensuring that substantive changes are completed when they initiate new program proposals or change of program proposals to the TAMIU curriculum approval process. At this stage, faculty need to do an initial assessment to verify if the proposed changes will rise to the level of substantive changes. Questions included in the CIM system (where curricular proposal are submitted; see the TAMIU UCC Handbook for more information) assist faculty in this determination.

In addition to the TAMIU curricular process, there are three (3) external bodies that will evaluate substantive changes: the Texas A&M System Board of Regents (TAMU BOR), the Texas Higher

Education Coordinating Board (THECB), and the Southern Association of College and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). At TAMU, the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and the SACSCOC liaison are responsible for determining if changes rise to the level of substantive changes. Specifically, The Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs is responsible for transmitting substantive changes to the TAMU BOR and the THECB; the SACSCOC liaison will submit substantive changes to SACSCOC.

### *SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison*

The SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison is responsible for ensuring that all substantive changes are reported to SACSCOC. The Accreditation Liaison serves as the gatekeeper and advisor for the substantive change process and will consult as needed with the university's Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs or designee. The Accreditation Liaison is an exofficio member of the University Curriculum Committee and must review all program change submissions prior to or during the curriculum/program approval process. As the liaison reviews the submissions, they will also submit via the CIM portal whether or not it prompts a substantive change, which will trigger engagement between the liaison and the initiator to discuss and address the change appropriately. All questions regarding possible substantive change actions should be directed to the institution's SACSCOC Liaison for guidance.

The SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will:

1. Attend all meetings of the University Curriculum Committee and review all program changes in CIM to ensure the Liaison engages with the initiator so that the change requiring either notification to or approval of SACSCOC as a substantive change is effectively communicated.
2. Once a review of the program change has been conducted, the Liaison will communicate with an initiator to ensure that all proper paperwork has been shared and appropriately completed. The liaison will work with an initiator as needed to address any deficits. Upon completion of this review, the liaison forwards the substantive change documents to the Office of the Provost for review and approval.
3. Work with initiators on approved requests to prepare any necessary documentation including a letter of notification and/or prospectus document and compile other documentation to ensure all relevant SACSCOC policies and standards are addressed and submitted in the necessary timeframe.
4. Track changes to the Principles of Accreditation and disseminate changes to the University community and coordinate the reporting and completion of required SACSCOC activities.
5. Update the university's substantive change policy and procedures as needed based on SACSCOC policy.
6. Annually present the substantive change policy and any other SACSCOC accreditation updates to Executive Council and other relevant groups to ensure the

policy and other accreditation information is widely disseminated.

The institutional Accreditation Liaison is responsible for timely reporting of a substantive change to the SACSCOC in accordance with the requirements of the policy. It is the responsibility of the Accreditation Liaison to keep the institution informed of any changes by SACSCOC in the substantive change policy or in the university's process for handling substantive changes.

#### *Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs*

The Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) is responsible for transmitting all substantive changes to the Texas A&M System Board of Regents and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Additionally, the SACSCOC Liaison reports directly to the Provost and VPAA. As such, the Provost's Office works closely with the SACSCOC Liaison to ensure substantive changes are transmitted to all required external agencies.

The Provost or designee will:

1. Review and approve the substantive change in CIM. The Provost may request additional information from the initiating unit before approval.
2. With assistance of the Accreditation Liaison, the initiating unit will prepare the SACSCOC substantive documents (prospectus or letter of notification) and supporting documentation.
3. The accreditation liaison will prepare the formal transmission to SACSCOC and send hard copy or upload electronic submissions into the Institution Portal as determined by SACSCOC.
4. All correspondence to SACSCOC is submitted through the SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison or the university President's Office.
5. The accreditation liaison will track SACSCOC actions related to substantive change requests submitted.
6. The SACSCOC Liaison will notify all appropriate parties of any updates and the final decision.

#### *University Units/Departments*

Each university unit is responsible for informing the Accreditation Liaison of any potential substantive changes in a manner that ensures the institution can meet the required notification, review, and approval processes for SACSCOC. For academic program activities, the SACSCOC substantive change report should be submitted after any required approvals from the Texas A&M University System Office. Once the A&M University System submits the program change to the THECB, the SACSCOC Liaison will submit to SACSCOC.

Academic program changes must follow the university's curriculum approval process. Course and program additions, deletions, and revisions must first be approved by a department's curriculum committee, a college's curriculum committee, and the university curriculum committee while along the way getting the approval of the department chair, the college dean, and, finally, the provost and president. From the beginning of a degree proposal or program change, the department chair or college dean must consult with both the Provost and VPAA as well as the Accreditation Liaison. The steps in the process follow below.

The academic or administrative officer or unit initiating the substantive change will:

1. Make contact with the Accreditation Liaison to determine if potential program changes could result in a substantive change report. The academic or administrative officer will submit the changes on CIM and will follow the workflow for approval.
2. If the Accreditation Liaison determines that the change requires a substantive change submission to SACSCOC, then the academic officer will collect the necessary documentation and submit to the Accreditation Liaison via the Substantive Change Request form for completeness. The documentation will be sent to the Provost for review and approval.
3. If the substantive change involves a major change to a degree program (including the closing of a program) or a proposal for a new degree program, then the department follows the university's curriculum approval process concurrently with assembling documentation needed for submission of the substantive change to SACSCOC.
4. Because SACSCOC substantive change approvals (as opposed to "notifications") may require significant time, curriculum changes and additions that require approvals both of the university curriculum process (and possibly from TAMUS and THECB) as well as SACSCOC -- because of this lengthy process, these changes and additions should be submitted as early in the fall semester as possible (e.g., early September) and should not be planned for implementation until the next academic year, at the earliest.
5. The academic unit administrator (program coordinator, chair, or dean) submitting the program change that requires a substantive change should work with the Accreditation Liaison to prepare and submit the required Letter of Notification and/or program change prospectus document for SACSCOC approval.

The college dean of the program requiring a substantive change is responsible for paying from either college or department accounts the SACSCOC invoice for processing the request, a cost that varies currently up to a maximum of \$500.

### **Key Timelines for Substantive Change Submissions**

As noted above, discussion on substantive changes must occur prior to any proposal being developed or submitted in the TAMIU curricular process. Once the substantive change has been determined, this will trigger the need for external reviews. Reviews can range from full deliberation of a proposal by an external approval body to a simple memorandum.

Meeting timelines for external submission of substantive change proposals is crucial if a program wishes to implement changes in a timely fashion. The three timelines revolve around the TAMIU curricular calendar, the Texas A&M System Board of Regents (TAMU BOR), the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), and the Southern Association of College and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

At TAMIU, curricular issues can be submitted through the CIM system any time throughout the year. However, curricular review at TAMIU only occurs during the fall semester. Unless approved by the President, required by the state, or for some other unforeseen emergency, all curricular proposals must be submitted by early November if the changes are to be initiated in the following academic year. External agency approvals can impact when substantive changes will actually take place. The UCC Handbook provides full details of the TAMIU curricular process and outlines important dates for curricular deadlines.

For the TAMU BOR, meetings occur quarterly (Meeting Dates - Office of The Board of Regents (tamus.edu)):

- February
- May
- August
- November

Generally, proposals must be submitted at least a month in advance of meetings (often it can be more than a month in advance based on TAMU BOR scheduling). Approval at the institutional level is required before submitting to the TAMU BOR.

For the THECB, meetings also occur on a quarterly basis (Quarterly Board Meetings - Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board).

- January
- April
- July
- October

Depending on the type of proposal submitted, consultation by additional subcommittees may be necessary. Examples of these include programs that utilize over 50% distance education (e-Learning) or graduate programs. If proposals need to be reviewed by subcommittees of the THECB, this will be determined in the initial discussion phases of the proposal.

The majority of substantive program changes the UCC will be dealing with will also require SACSCOC Executive Council approval. For a substantive change requiring approval by the Executive Council of the Board of Trustees (which meets year-round), the submission deadlines are

- January 1 for changes to be implemented July 1 through December 31 of the same calendar year
- July 1 for changes to be implemented January 1 through June 30 of the subsequent calendar year.

For a substantive change requiring approval by the full SACSCOC Board of Trustees (which meets biannually), to be implemented after the date of the Board meeting, the submission deadlines are:

- March 15 for review at the Board's biannual meeting in June of the same calendar year
- September 1 for review at the Board's biannual meeting in December of the same calendar year
- 

**TAMIU substantive change documents must have gone through the curricular process and completed and sent to the SACSCOC Liaison 60 days prior to the SACSCOC deadlines above. Exceptions to these deadlines must be approved by the Provost.**

### **Annual Review and Dissemination of the Policy**

The Provost (via the accreditation liaison) will distribute (electronic and/or paper) the *University Substantive Change Policy and Procedures* statement to all academic and administrative officers annually. Additionally, the “Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges Policy” will be posted on the university substantive change webpage.

The SACSCOC policy, procedures and related documents will be reviewed annually by the accreditation liaison and all members of the University Executive Council. The university's policy statement will be updated as needed to ensure current information is disseminated to maintain continuing compliance with the *Substantive Change Policy for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges*. The accreditation liaison will annually present the university's Substantive Change Policy Procedures statement to all appropriate university constituencies via a training/workshop. If more frequent updates are required, the liaison will inform each constituency group. Each unit head will be asked to verify receipt of the university's substantive change information.

## New Courses, Course Additions/Changes/Deactivations

One of the most common types of curricular proposal is in relation to new classes, changes in classes, or deactivation of classes in the academic catalog. This section evaluates these types of curricular proposals. To complete any of these changes, simply go to CIM Course Changes in Uconnect.

New course proposals shall include:

- Department
- College
- Course prefix
- Course number
- Course title
- Course description
- Number of credit hours
- Course learning objectives
- Course pre-requisites
- Course co-requisites
- Existing course equivalency (if applicable)
- Restrictions
- Content learner approach
- Grade type
- Modality
- Syllabus
- Course repeatability and the amount allowed
- WIN designation (i.e., is the course writing intensive (WIN)?)
- Core curriculum designation (i.e., is the course part of the Core Curriculum, which will trigger additional layers of review?)

New course proposals will always require full committee reviews.

Course additions/changes proposals deal with many of the issues associated with new course proposals. A class could have a writing intensive component added or a change of description or course learning objectives. Most changes here will be reviewed through the expedited process. The only real exception is if the class is added to the TAMIU Core; this will trigger a review by the University Core Curriculum Committee (see below).

Course deactivations are the easiest of the proposals outlined here. The deactivation of a course occurs when a faculty member with an expertise in the area is no longer at the university or the course is no longer consistent with the field. The nature of the review is predicated on if the course

was required for the degree program or if there is a change in semester credit hours (SCH). If not in a list of required classes, these types of reviews always utilize the expedited review process.

Courses will be automatically deactivated from the *University Catalog* if they have not been offered once over a five-year period. This deactivation will be jointly completed by the Office of the Provost and the Office of the Registrar. The review will occur annually. Faculty are welcome to reactivate courses deactivated under this clause, but faculty will need to provide a thoughtful explanation of how the course will be offered regularly going forward.

**NOTE:** *Should new courses impinge on other disciplines, programs, departments, or colleges, faculty must discuss the class and potentially get approval from the other group before submission. Not doing so could result in rejection of the proposal.*

## Core Curriculum

The Texas A&M International Core Curriculum, in compliance with the Texas Core Curriculum, is a set of common courses that are required of all undergraduate students in the state of Texas and are considered the necessary general education for students, no matter their choice in major. The Core Curriculum ensures that students will be provided with the essential knowledge and skills to succeed in college, their careers, their communities, and in life. Through the core curriculum, students will (1) gain a foundation of knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world, (2) develop principles of personal and social responsibility for living in a diverse world, and (3) advance intellectual and practical skills that are essential for lifelong learning.

TAMIU's Core Curriculum student learning outcomes are:

- Communication
  - TAMIU students will be able to develop ideas and express them clearly, considering the effect of the message, fostering knowledge, and building the skills needed to communicate persuasively by using their command of oral, aural, written, and visual literacy skills that enable them to exchange messages appropriate to the subject, occasion, and audience.
- Critical Thinking
  - TAMIU students will be able to think critically and creatively by utilizing skills such as innovation, inquiry, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information.
- Empirical & Quantitative
  - TAMIU students will be able to develop informed conclusions by engaging in manipulation and analysis of numerical data or observable facts.
- Personal Responsibility
  - TAMIU students will be able to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making.
- Social Responsibility
  - TAMIU students will be able to apply intercultural competence and knowledge of civic responsibility to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.
- Teamwork
  - TAMIU students will be able to consider different points of view to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal.

More on the TAMIU Core Curriculum can be found at: <https://www.tamiu.edu/adminis/iep/general-education-core.shtml>.

Core proposals will be the first level of review after submission (before the department chair's review). Core curriculum changes are necessarily substantive changes. These changes will require THECB approval/notification in addition to UCC approvals.

The TAMIU Core Curriculum Committee is selected by the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Student Affairs. This committee is comprised of:

- Provost designated chair (generally an Associate Provost)
- Registrar (or designate)
- SACSCOC Liaison
- Director of Assessment
- Associate Director of Advising
- One faculty member from every college (except Graduate School)

Members of this committee will review and discuss Core proposals. When deliberations have concluded, proposals are voted on. After a decision has been reached, the chair will process the proposal in CIM. The chair will then forward the proposal to the THECB for review; this can occur before or after the committee has reviewed the proposal. Before the course can be added to the Academic Catalog, the THECB must have made a decision regarding the proposal.

If new or old courses are to be placed in the Core, the process differs from other curricular proposals. In addition to the information required for new and change to course proposals, Core Curriculum proposals require more detail. Core proposals will include:

- If the course has been approved by the THECB (yes or no)
- Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for the course
- Core Curriculum Learning Objectives (all need to be addressed)
- Competency areas addressed by the course
- A sample syllabus

The list of courses in the TAMIU Core Curriculum can be found in Appendix A of the Academic Catalog (<https://catalog.tamtu.edu/appendix-a-core-curriculum-optional-course-information/>).

Inclusion of courses in the Core Curriculum is based on the THECB's *Lower-Division Academic Course Guide Manual* (ACGM). This official list of approved courses for general academic transfer to public universities offered for state funding. The ACGM serves as the academic course inventory for all community, state, and technical colleges in Texas. Individual institutions are not required to maintain separate general academic course inventories and may offer and report for funding ACGM courses without requesting approval from the Coordinating Board. All pre-approved courses listed in the ACGM correspond to course designations of the Texas Common Course Numbering System (TCCNS). Each entry begins with a common course prefix and number.

At an institution's request, Coordinating Board staff and the ACGM Advisory Committee may consider a new course for inclusion in the ACGM. Coordinating Board staff review request proposals for completeness and accuracy of information. The advisory committee considers

requests at their meetings. If a majority of the committee votes to recommend inclusion of the new course in the ACGM, the course description used by the institution initiating the request is subject to revision by the Committee. The Coordinating Board approves addition of courses to the ACGM. The “Request to Add a New Course” form is available online. Coordinating Board staff confers with the Texas Common Course Numbering System Database Coordinator for the assignment of appropriate course rubrics and numbers for a new course.

The primary factors considered by the University Core Curriculum Committee are guided by the ACGM and include:

1. Course inclusion in the ACGM
2. Course addresses competencies
3. Number of institutions in the A&M System that have the course in the core
4. If there are enough choices for students a core area (from different programs)
5. The course description aligns with the core area
6. Student demand/need
7. Transferability of the course (TCCNS)

If a community, state, or technical college wishes to offer a course not listed here, or offer an ACGM course for more credit or contact hours than listed, it must request approval for such a course on a “unique need” basis. A resulting inventory of unique need courses is the only academic inventory required of individual institutions. Colleges must report academic courses according to instructions in the most recent edition of the Reporting and Procedures Manual for Public Community and Technical Colleges published by the Educational Data Center of the 6 Coordinating Board. All edits of reports must be in accordance with the ACGM and the individual institutions’ unique need course inventories. The state will not fund academic courses at community, state, and technical colleges unless the courses are listed in the ACGM or included in the college’s academic unique need inventory

The timeline for processing core curriculum proposals is the same as other curricular proposals at TAMU. As denoted above, any changes approved by the University Curriculum Committee must also be approved by the THECB. The THECB (staff and the ACGM Advisory Committee) only processes core curricular changes in the spring for initiation in the subsequent fall semester.

## **Travel Abroad/Study Abroad**

There are three (3) types of study abroad program students at TAMIU can explore: Faculty led, exchange, and affiliate. Faculty led programs are organized with TAMIU faculty and take place during the winter or summer. Exchange programs feature universities that have established academic agreements. This allows students from both institutions to participate in an academic exchange. Affiliate programs are hosted by third party company providers. The TAMIU curricular process does not apply to exchange and affiliate programs.

This policy provides guiding principles for Study Abroad (SA) courses at Texas A&M International University (TAMIU) and the role of the International Studies Advisory Committee.

A SA course, while taught in a foreign country, is first and foremost an academic course that is fully embedded within the University's approved curriculum and carries academic credit. Faculty are required to design and deliver the course in strict alignment with the official course description and Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) as approved by the University Curriculum Committee and the Provost. These elements, as published in the official University Catalog, may not be altered by faculty teaching the course. Assignments, readings, and assessments must directly support the approved course description and SLOs, ensuring that student learning is evaluated through measurable outcomes such as research projects, papers, exams, reflections, or other appropriate academic work.

If the course is part of the Core Curriculum, it must also adhere to the SLOs approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). In such cases, assessment must be explicitly aligned with the THECB-approved SLOs to ensure compliance with state requirements. This safeguards the academic integrity of the course and ensures that students receive a learning experience consistent with both University and state standards, regardless of the international setting.

### **Contact Hours**

Faculty must meet contact hours per semester credit hour (SCH) of a course. For a 3-semester credit hour course, for instance, faculty must account for having 45 contact hours with students. Contact hours may include class time, guest lectures, academic visits, field trips/excursions, group learning activities, general or program-specific orientation meetings, research, service-learning activities, community projects, volunteer hours, academic assignments, other academic activities, and cultural activities before, during and/or after travel to a foreign country. Travel time and meals should NOT be included as part of contact hours. For a 6-semester credit hour course, contact hours should be 90.

### **Time Abroad**

For a Study Abroad (SA) course to meet the study abroad/foreign language requirement in degree programs, part of the course must take place abroad. For a 3-credit hour course, at least two weeks must be taught abroad. For a 6-credit hour course, at least four weeks must be taught abroad.

### **Course Proposal, Review, and Approval Process**

Faculty must discuss their intent to teach a SA course with unit/program faculty and the department chair. Should several faculty from the same unit/program intend to teach SA courses during the same term, unit/program faculty should decide, by majority vote, when courses should be taught so as to not schedule courses the same term or place. Whenever possible, SA courses should be taught in different terms to provide more opportunities for students.

Once the unit/program faculty give approval to proceed, faculty intending to teach a SA course must meet with the respective department chair. After the department chair gives approval to proceed, faculty should meet with the Office of International Experiences to begin the application process and program creation. Faculty must complete the faculty-led study abroad application, attach the required documents, and complete the course alignment document.

### **International Studies Advisory Committee**

An ad-hoc International Studies Advisory Committee, created by the Provost, will review all applications. The Committee will be composed of one representative from each academic college, the Office of International Experiences, the Library, and designated members appointed by the Provost. Members shall have experience with faculty-led international programs or relevant expertise in curriculum and assessment but cannot be members of the committee if they intend to submit a proposal in a given term. The Committee will report its recommendations directly to the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. Final approval of all study abroad and travel abroad courses reside with the Provost.

The Committee will be as follows:

- Director of International Experiences (Co-Chair)
- Associate Director of Advising (Co-Chair)
- Representative from the Office of the Registrar
- Member from ARSSB
- Member from COAS
- Member from COED
- Member from CNHS
- Member from the Killam Library
- Student representative (ex officio)
- Member from the Faculty Advisory Council

This Committee will serve an essential role in safeguarding the academic quality, affordability, and integrity of faculty-led international programs while enhancing the University's mission to prepare globally competent graduates.

The Committee is charged with the following responsibilities:

### 1. **Proposal Review and Evaluation**

- Review all submitted SA course proposals for completeness and adherence to submission requirements required by the Office of International Experiences and the Office of the Provost.
  - Review the Program Proposal Application.
  - Review the purpose or intent of the program.
  - Ensure course description matches the one published in the official University Catalog.
  - Review the course syllabus and compare it to a syllabus for the same course that is taught face-to-face at TAMIU.
  - Review contact hours and SLOs and assess alignment of SLOs to course assessments.
  - Be mindful that:
    - Any full-time faculty member is eligible to teach a SA course. This includes tenure-track/tenured faculty, fixed-term faculty (any rank), and visiting faculty. Administrators (directors, associate directors, chairs, deans, etc.) are also eligible but must submit a written memo from their supervisor allowing time away from their administrative role to teach a SA course. Priority will be given to full-time faculty as opposed to administrators.
    - A SA course should expand and enhance on-campus curricular and co-curricular offerings, not simply duplicate them in a novel location.
    - Courses offered abroad should have the same rigor and viability as on-campus courses, offering content that appeals to and motivates students to participate in these unique learning opportunities.
    - Faculty should ideally propose a course in a location in which they have a high level of familiarity/experience/expertise or provide a rationale for connection to course objectives.
    - Faculty should ideally be familiar with the language of the location. If faculty are not familiar with the language of the location, they must work with the Office of International Experiences to identify a university-approved provider for logistics and resources available in the selected country.
    - Faculty must be credentialed, as per the university's faculty credentialing process, to teach the SA course.
    - Priority will be given to new and innovative programs with service components to enhance the Quality Enhancement Plan on experiential learning.

### 2. **Avoiding Program Overlap and Competition**

- Ensure that courses proposed within the same term do not unnecessarily compete with one another, thereby avoiding confusion or undue pressure on students to choose between overlapping opportunities.

3. **Affordability and Accessibility**
  - Review program budgets to confirm that projected costs are reasonable, transparent, and not prohibitive for student participation.
4. **Academic Suitability**
  - Confirm that proposed courses are appropriate for delivery in a study abroad or travel abroad context, offering academic rigor and experiential value beyond what could be delivered in a traditional on-campus course.
5. **Curricular and Catalog Alignment**
  - Verify that the proposed course aligns with the official University catalog description and meets curricular standards.
  - Confirm faculty credentials for proposed courses, including cross-listed and special topics courses.
6. **Contact Hour Verification**
  - Ensure that the proposed course meets the required contact hours for credit awarded, including pre-departure, in-country, and post-program academic activities.
7. **Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Alignment**
  - Confirm that each proposal includes measurable Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs).
  - Ensure that SLOs are appropriately aligned with assessments, activities, and assignments through a course alignment matrix.
8. **Recommendations and Feedback**
  - Provide constructive feedback and recommendations to faculty regarding proposal strengths, weaknesses, and revisions, if needed.
9. **Decision-Making and Reporting**
  - Submit recommendations to the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, in coordination with the Office of International Experiences, for final approval.

### **Timeline of Program Review**

Proposal submission windows will be October 1–31 for Winter and Spring Break programs and March 1–31 for Summer/Maymester programs. Proposals are reviewed on a rolling cycle approximately 15-18 months in advance of the intended term of travel. For example, proposals submitted in October are considered for Winter and Spring Break programs taking place in the academic year after next, while proposals submitted in March are considered for Summer/Maymester programs in the academic year after next. The International Studies Committee will meet up to two times in the fall semester (November) and once in the spring semester (April). No proposals will be reviewed after October 31 or March 31 of the submission windows.

### **Minimum Enrollment Numbers**

SA programs must meet minimum student enrollment. A minimum of 12 students is required for all faculty-led study abroad courses/programs to proceed. Programs that fall below the required enrollment will be subject to pro-rated pay to the instructor of record but may move forward with the Provost's approval. Should the number of students fall below 10, the Office of the Provost reserves the right to cancel the class/program.

- Maximum: 30 students per class
- Program Assistants:
  - o 12-15 students = 0 program assistants
  - o 16-25 students = eligible for 1 program assistant
    - Expenses for the program assistant must be considered when developing a program budget.
  - o 26+ students: eligible for 2 program assistants
  - o Programs that have cross-listed courses and led by two faculty members should meet the minimum enrollment requirement for each course teaching

### **Program Cancellation**

The Office of the Provost reserves the right to cancel any faculty-led program anytime. Reasons for cancellation may include, but are not limited to, low enrollment numbers, inability to meet revenue expectations, high risk country (i.e., political instability in the host country, pandemics, and disasters—natural or other). Payments are typically requested from providers 90 days in advance of program departure; any cancellations after this time are subject to cancellation fees.

## Appeals

Generally, there is a consensus about curriculum outcomes in departments, colleges, and universities. Sometimes, however, one or two individuals, faculty or administrator, can hamper the processing of curriculum proposals. This curricular appeal procedure outlines the steps and parameters of the appellate process for curriculum decisions at TAMIU. Appeals for curricular decisions are available for all levels of curricular review (see the curricular process above); this includes appeals of the chair/director/coordinator, college dean, or college committee. There is only one appeal allowed for a given curricular proposal, program or course.

Faculty or administrators who wish to appeal curricular change decisions should appeal to the University Curriculum Committee (UCC) Co-Chairs. The chairs will consult with the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs on the nature of the appeal and indicate that the appeal process has been officially initiated. Once an appeal has been invoked, the proposal will proceed through the full curricular process to the UCC.

When the proposal advances to the UCC, the formal appeal will occur. The faculty member and the department chair, College Curriculum Committee Chair (CCC), and college dean will be required to submit explanations for the respective sides of the appeal; parties in the appeal are not required to respond, but can rest on the original material in the curricular review process. For curriculum committee decisions being appealed, regardless of the level, these reviews will largely be predicated on written arguments. During the next UCC meeting, the appeal will occur in the first 15 minutes of that meeting. The UCC members will have reviewed the documentation with the normal business before the committee. After both parties have presented their brief arguments (five minutes or less each), they will be asked to leave and the committee will hold a deliberation and vote on the proposal. This vote will be considered final. The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs will then make the final determination on the fate of the proposal at the CIM level of review.

Core aspects of a curricular proposal are not appealable.

Disagreements about the right path forward occur. There will be no retaliation against any faculty member who chooses to use the curricular appeals process.

## Conclusion

This Curriculum Policy Handbook has outlined the nature of the curricular process at TAMIU. It reviewed curriculum proposal creation, the process for submitting proposals, the manner in which proposals are reviewed, and the nature of substantive change proposals. As illustrated, the process can be easy, but it can also be difficult, primarily in relation to the length of time required for substantive changes. This manual allows faculty to know what to expect and who to contact if there are any questions/issues.

We conclude this document with a list of suggestions for when a department or individual decides to shepherd curricular change proposals through the process.

1. Start early. As the official timeline for curricular changes is brief, plan to begin the process as early as possible.
2. Discuss any changes with the program/department before proceeding. This step is critical to the proper functioning of the curriculum process at TAMIU.
3. Discuss with the department chair and college dean, especially regarding a program proposal (new or change). Department/college visions may be impacted and more funding may be required.
4. If the proposal involves making any changes to a program, or creating a new program, consult with both the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and the SACSCOC Liaison. Program changes could trigger reviews from the TAMU Board of Regents, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and/or SACSCOC. Have these discussions before submitting anything in CIM.
5. Attend College and University Curriculum Committee Meetings in case questions arise about your proposal.
6. Make changes to proposals if requested.
7. Curriculum changes should never be a spur of the moment endeavor. No matter how small the change is, it should be well thought out and discussed with a large cross-section of faculty, which is what the curricular process at TAMIU does.
8. Programs should be judicious in program and course changes as these directly impact student progress through programs. Changes should not be made every year unless by state law, accrediting body, or TAMIU President mandate. Determinations of these will be made by the University Curriculum Committee.
9. Program changes must be communicated to all affected programs and ensure all changes requested are done in all affected areas. Changes to classes must also be made in the degree plan and four-year plan if needed.

Good luck as you work through the curricular process.

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While this manual did not address the structure/operation of individual College Curriculum Committees, colleges must adopt their own curricular processes for their curricular operations.

Trainings on the curricular process will be provided to program/department submitters during the middle of August.

## Key Links

University Curriculum Committee Website:

[University Curriculum Committee \(tamiu.edu\)](#)

*Faculty Handbook:*

[Faculty Handbook \(tamiu.edu\)](#)

Uconnect/CIM:

[TAMIU Home](#) (Middle Right Top of Page)

Guidelines for CIM Courses:

[cim-courses.pdf \(tamiu.edu\)](#)

Guidelines for CIM Programs:

[cim-programs.pdf \(tamiu.edu\)](#)

SAP – Awarding Credit Hours:

[11.03.99.10.02awardingcredithours.pdf \(tamiu.edu\)](#)

Substantive Changes Website (TAMIU Forms and Policy):

[Substantive Changes \(tamiu.edu\)](#)

Substantive Changes SAP:

[11.10.99.10.01substantivechanges.pdf \(tamiu.edu\)](#)

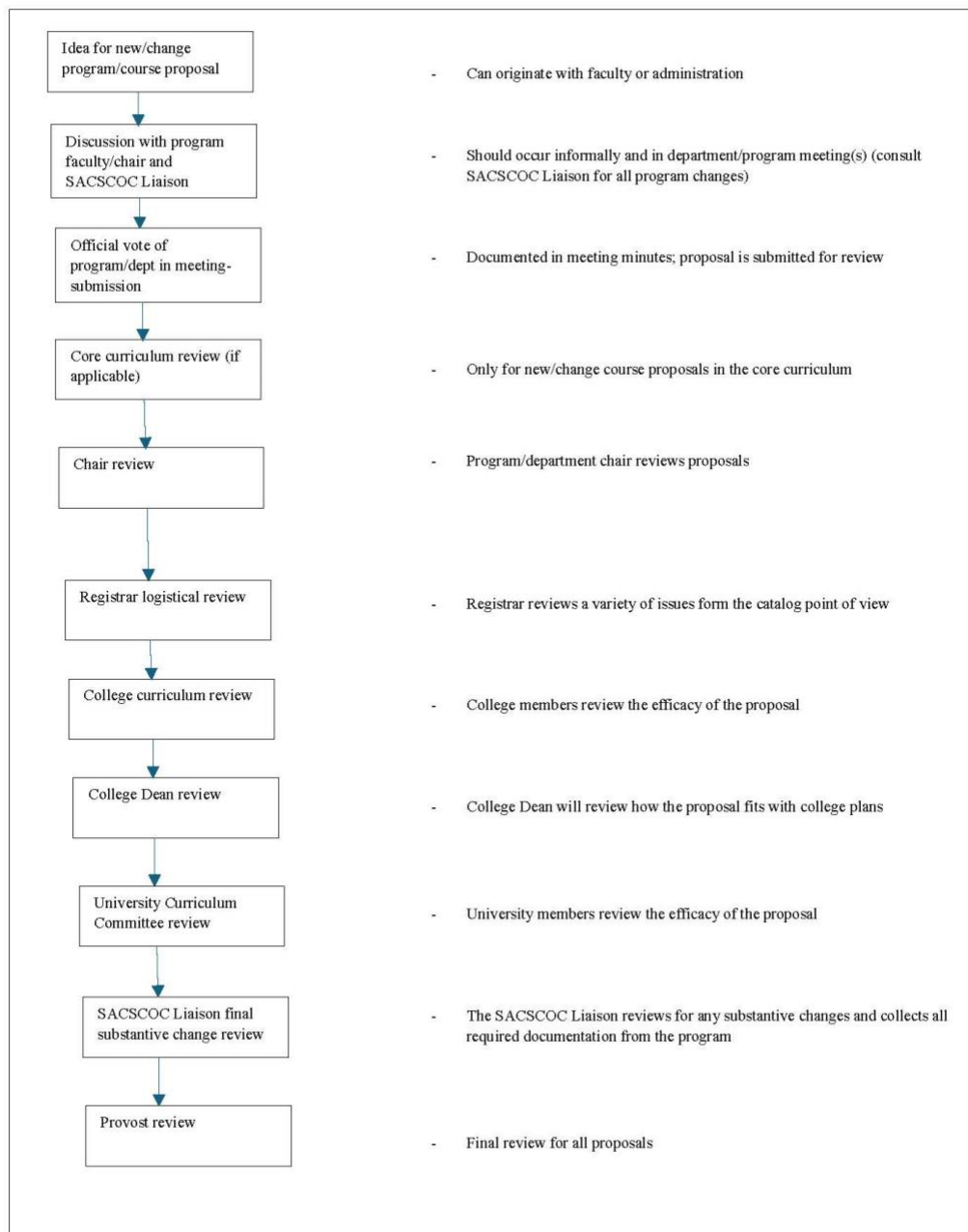
Substantive Changes SACSCOC:

[Substantive Changes \(tamiu.edu\)](#)

THECB Program Changes/New Degree Programs

[reportcenter.highered.texas.gov/agency-publication/miscellaneous/factors-to-consider-degree-program-change-or-new-degree-program/](http://reportcenter.highered.texas.gov/agency-publication/miscellaneous/factors-to-consider-degree-program-change-or-new-degree-program/)

## Process Workflow\*



\*Does not account for additional reviews by external reviewers (TAMU BOR, THECB, and SACSCOC) or appeals. If denied, the process ends.