VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY
Office *of the* Provost
Office of Academic Program Review, Assessment
and Accreditation

Proposals to Create or Change Academic Programs
Procedures

Contents

Rev: 12/4/2024
For all questions related to Accreditation, PCCAP, or substantive change, please contact oapraa@vanderbilt.edu.

Purpose

The Proposals to Create or Change Academic Programs (PCCAP) process continues Vanderbilt's tradition of supporting faculty-driven initiatives to continuously innovate program offerings and to be responsive to changes in student characteristics, disciplinary content, and instructional methods, while also ensuring coordination across university departments and offices.

The PCCAP process is for new degrees, new programs (including majors, concentrations, specializations, emphases, or certificates), significant changes to programs[1], programs closures, and other changes that may meet the U.S. Department of Education definition of a substantive change.

➢ In 2022, PCCAP replaced the Proposed Notice of Intent (PNOI) formerly used at Vanderbilt, while preserving the key aspects of the PNOI.
➢ This process does not affect program name changes or course-level changes (e.g., changes to course names, course descriptions, course numbers, etc.).

The process is designed to ensure timely and clear communications about innovations and changes across schools as well as with the Office of the Provost, the Office of the Chancellor and Board of Trustees when appropriate, and university offices engaged in federal program compliance[2]. The PCCAP process will additionally ensure efficient use of university resources, avoid duplicate or overlapping programs, and centrally document additions, changes, and closures of academic programs at Vanderbilt.

Additionally, Vanderbilt is required to notify or seek approval from Vanderbilt's institutional accreditor, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), and thus the U.S. Department of Education, for all changes considered to be a "significant departure" from Vanderbilt's approved programs, or for all changes considered "substantive." The PCCAP process will ensure that the institution can make timely filings to SACSCOC in compliance with Department of Education regulations.

Role of OAPRAA

Proposals will be routed through a series of approvals established by the provost in a process managed by the Office of Academic Program Review, Assessment, and Accreditation (OAPRAA). Different types of proposal will have different levels of approval as described below.

OAPRAA will provide training, advice, and support to faculty through the process of adding, changing, and closing programs and will be the repository of all program change proposals and approvals. An online webform and OAPRAA staff will move the proposal through the processes described below and will communicate with relevant parties about its progress.

➢ **Since it is often difficult to determine if a new or changed falls into the definition of a significant departure for approved university offerings or the definition of substantive change, any faculty member proposing a new program should meet with OAPRAA staff early in the planning process.**

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[1] A list of substantive changes is provided in Appendix C.
[2] Many offices at Vanderbilt must submit reports to federal and state entities, for example: the Office of Academic Program Review, Assessment, and Evaluation; the Office of Financial Aid; the University Registrar; International Student and Scholar Services; Office of the Vice Provost for Research, etc.

2

Rev: 12/4/2024
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If applicable, once a proposal is approved by all relevant university entities OAPRAA staff will engage with the university's institutional accreditor to submit a substantive change prospectus. Once the institutional accreditor has approved the proposal, OAPRAA staff will communicate its status to the offices involved in its implementation.

OAPRAA maintains the Kuali webform tool used for several proposal types and provides access to reviewers after an initial consult with a member of the team.

Important definitions

Program: a coherent set of **for-credit** courses that lead to an academic credential. Majors, Master's degrees, Doctoral degrees, and for-credit certificates are all programs.

➢ Programs must have a designated qualified faculty member responsible for the program's quality, integrity, and review. Programs must have identified student learning outcomes (SLOs) that are evaluated regularly by the program director and faculty in a process designed to provide information on which to base efforts at continuous improvement.

Sub-specialty: any designated set of courses within a program that is reflected on a student's transcript. Undergraduate minors, as well as any subset of courses in post-baccalaureate degrees, such as specializations, concentrations, emphases, areas of focus, etc. are all sub-specialties.

➢ Sub-specialties follow an expedited review process different than that required for programs (described below). If a sub-specialty is closed to new enrollments, OAPRAA should be notified.

Offering: any coherent set of **non-credit** courses, experiences, workshops, bootcamps, etc. that result in an earned credential such as a badge or certificate.

➢ Non-credit offerings are not subject to PCCAP approval. All new offerings should, however, complete an online adaptive form managed by OAPRAA which will serve as a catalog of all offerings at Vanderbilt.

PCCAP Committee

The PCCAP Committee reviews proposed new programs, sub-specialties, and offerings. PCCAP will also review significant changes to existing programs and must be informed when any program or offering ceases enrollment.

The PCCAP Committee is chaired by the OAPRAA Director and includes the following members to ensure coverage across key issues that likely recur, as well as alignment with the university's strategic planning: Vice Provost for Academic Affairs; Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs; Vice Provost for Graduate Affairs; Chief Data Officer; University Registrar; Financial Aid Director; Office of Digital Education Director; Executive Director of the Center for Teaching; and OAPRAA Assistant Director. The PCCAP Committee meets monthly.

A: Process for changes to existing programs

Changes to the **structure or delivery of a program** *may* be changes that will require either notification of or approval by SACSCOC, and thus require PCCAP approval. Changes to existing courses, to existing

course content, or to where courses appear in different requirements for a degree (e.g., core, electives, etc.) do not require PCCAP approval.

The following are examples of changes that require PCCAP approval, but is not an exhaustive list:

- modification to the number of credit hours required for completion
- changing the teaching modality (e.g., from on campus to online)
- starting a joint academic award with another institution
- starting a for-credit certificate with an institution that is not accredited by SACSCOC

Please consult with OAPRAA staff when considering changes to the structure or delivery of a program.

Significant changes will be approved by one of the provost's delegates as follows, depending on the program level and type:

- Significant undergraduate program changes will require approval by the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education.
- Significant graduate program changes will require approval by the Vice Provost for Graduate Education.
- Significant professional program changes will require approval by the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs.

➢ **For all proposed changes not described below, please contact OAPRAA staff.**

Program length

A change in program length requires SACSCOC **approval** prior to implementation if both:

- program credit hours increase or decrease by 25% or more
— AND —
- students' expected time to completion increases or decreases by more than one term or its equivalent or comparable measure.

This requirement equally applies to degree, diploma, certificate, or other for-credit credentials.

Approval by the SACSCOC Board of Trust must be secured **prior to** implementation through a substantive change filing followed by review and approval by SACSCOC. This required external approval will add months to the timeline for implementation of this change.

Method of delivery

SACSCOC is concerned with three main methods of program delivery:

1. Competency-based[3] education
2. Distance education (online or otherwise)
3. Face-to-face instruction

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[3] Vanderbilt does not currently use competency-based education delivery methods.

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY
Office *of* the Provost
Office of Academic Program Review, Assessment and Accreditation

The current "method of delivery" is that which characterizes how 50% or more of a program is delivered. Adding a method of delivery to a program different than its current method of delivery requires notification to SACSCOC through a substantive change filing.

Adding a method of delivery means a permanent change to the program; offering a course online occasionally during a summer term is not considered a permanent change to the method of delivery.

B: Process for initiating new programs

Please note that it is important to note that it is highly recommended that new programs approved in concept by PCCAP *prior* to school curriculum committee action and full faculty votes.

A faculty member or school administrator interested in adding a new program must schedule an initial consultation with an OAPRAA staff member.

Following the initial consultation, the proposal initiator will be given access to an online adaptive form for submissions. OAPRAA will store all information required for the approval of the program and will manage workflow and communications throughout the process.

A flowchart of the approval process required for new programs including a rough timeline, as well as documents showing all information required in Proposal Concepts and Full Proposals, are available on the [PCCAP webpage](#) on the OAPRAA website.

There are two stages in the PCCAP process prior to implementation of new degree types or programs, each of which includes several steps of review by appropriate university entities. The first is the submission of a *Proposal Concept*, which is followed by the development and review of the *Full Proposal*.

As discussed below, a program's Proposal Concept must be approved **before** a full proposal for a new program is reviewed by school curriculum committees.

Some new programs may require approval of the university's institutional accreditor:

- Programs offered at a new level require approval and may not be announced, advertised, or marketed until notification has been filed.
- New programs that require approval may not be announced, advertised, or marketed until we have confirmation from SACSCOC that it has been approved.
  - There are different submission deadlines depending on the type of change requiring approval. Consult with OAPRAA staff to ensure timely submission.
  - Missed deadlines may mean a one-year delay in implementation.

Stage I: Proposal Concept (initial overview of intent) and preliminary review

The *Proposal Concept* is a preliminary description of the type of change being proposed. A *Proposal Concept* is generated by a program director (or faculty member who will become program director if new program is being proposed), is reviewed by the school's CBO, and must be approved by the dean of the host school before the Proposal Concept can be reviewed by OAPRAA, PCCAP, and school deans.

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY
Office *of* the Provost
Office of Academic Program Review, Assessment and Accreditation

> ➤ **Faculty proposing new programs or significant changes to existing programs should submit the** *Proposal Concept* <u>before</u> **submitting a proposal to the school's curriculum committee for faculty vote**.

Good academic practice assumes that all members of a department or other programmatic unit considering such a change have been engaged in preliminary discussions about a proposed new program. However, it is recommended that *formal* review by the school's faculty-led curriculum approval processes take place after the Proposal Concept is approved.

The Proposal Concept goes through three review steps:

A. OAPRAA reviews the Proposal Concept for any changes that will require notification or approval by the university's institutional accreditor. If there are any, the proposal initiator will be notified of any impact on the timeline for approval. OAPRAA staff then forwards the Proposal Concept to the PCCAP Committee.

B. The PCCAP Committee reviews the Proposal Concept for alignment with the university's strategic plan and any institutional-level issues related to financial aid, other federal reporting obligations (e.g., international students, veterans), faculty policies, digital learning, etc.

C. Each Vanderbilt University school dean reviews the Proposal Concept for issues related to potential redundancies, or conflicts related to course requirements, academic space, or faculty loads.

Questions or concerns raised by PCCAP or academic deans will be maintained by OAPRAA staff, who will also organize and document any meetings or discussions that follow. Once any issues are reconciled, the proposal initiator will be notified that they can begin the development of the *Full Proposal* as detailed below.

> ➤ **NOTE**: All proposals will ultimately need to be filed in Kuali's Full Proposal form, so faculty proposing new programs may want to use that form to generate the document to be reviewed by school committees.

Stage II: Full proposal

The *Full Proposal* contains more detailed information about the proposed change. A PCCAP Proposal Form Guide, a resource detailing the information required in the Full Proposal, is available on the PCCAP webpage.

OAPRAA staff will act as the central point of contact after each step in this stage ensuring communication with relevant parties and monitoring and communicating progress to all relevant parties. Those submitting proposals may want to use the Full Proposal Form to submissions to school curriculum committees; if a different format is preferred by school curriculum committees, the proposal initiator will need to complete the Full Proposal form with all required content for final approval of the new program.

Step 1: Curriculum committees

The Full Proposal is moved through the appropriate committee in each school as determined by each school's policies and procedures. Once vetted by the school curriculum change process, the Full Proposal is returned by the proposal initiator to the dean for approval at which point it is returned to

6

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY
Office *of* the Provost
Office of Academic Program Review, Assessment and Accreditation

OAPRAA. If it is not for a new degree type the proposal moves to Step 4: Provostial Approval. New degree types must additionally follow Steps 2, 3, and 5.

Step 2: New degree types only

The following levels of approval under Step 2 only apply to proposals for new degree types. A new degree type (e.g., B.A., B.Eng., M.S., M.Div., J.D., etc.) is one not currently offered at the university. New degree types are reviewed by the Faculty Senate's Academic Policies and Services committee (APS) and, if applicable, the Graduate School.

Step 2: Senate/Graduate School review for advice and input

If applicable (see below) OAPRAA then notifies the Faculty Senate's Academic Policies and Services committee (APS) and the Graduate School that a proposal has been approved by a school's curriculum committee(s) and is ready for review.

Step 2A: If a new degree type is proposed: The Full Proposal is forwarded to the APS.

Step 2B: After review by the APS, the Full Proposal is presented the next meeting of the full faculty senate by its initiator. An OAPRAA representative will attend and keep minutes of comments and discussion for each brief on the agenda at each meeting.

Step 2C (if necessary): If the program being proposed is a M.S. M.A., M.FA., or a Ph.D., the Full Proposal is forwarded to the Graduate School for review. An OAPRAA representative will attend and keep minutes of comments and discussion for each proposal on the agenda at each meeting.

Step 3: Secondary review (if necessary)

After review by Faculty Senate and or Graduate School, the proposal initiator and the host school's Dean for review of any suggestions made. The CBO may be involved in this review.

> ➤ In the unlikely event that a Full Proposal is significantly different from the Proposal Concept, OAPRAA staff may ask PCCAP to review it again before it goes to the provost.

Deans are responsible for each academic program offered by their school and therefore every proposal must be finally approved by the dean before he or she submits its final draft to the Office of the Provost for approval.

> ➤ Note: final proposals for new minors, specializations, concentrations, emphases, or tracks rests with a delegate of the provost, depending on whether the host program is at the undergraduate, graduate, or professional level.

Step 4: Provostial approval

The University Provost has ultimate oversight of program offerings and has final authority for approval or denial of program proposals.

OAPRAA prepares and forwards Full Proposal packet to Chief of Staff of the Office of the Provost. Provost notifies OAPRAA of her or his decision. OAPRAA notifies proposal initiator and dean.

Proposals for new certificates, minors, specializations, tracks, emphases, and concentrations will be approved by one of the provost's delegates as follows, depending on the program level and type:

- At the undergraduate level by the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education.
- At the graduate program level by the Vice Provost for Graduate Education.
- At the professional program level by the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs.

Step 5 (if applicable): Board of Trust Approval

For all new degree types, the Office of the Provost forwards to Office of the Chancellor; if approved, Office of the Chancellor forwards to Chief of Staff for the Board of Trust for calendaring at next Executive Council or Board of Trust meeting.

Chief of Staff for the Board of Trust notifies Provost and OAPRAA of decision. OAPRAA notifies proposal initiator and dean.

Stage III: Implementation

OAPRAA distributes approved proposal to relevant university offices for implementation, e.g. URO, Financial Aid office, admissions, etc.

C: Process for new or closed sub-specialties (minors, concentrations, etc.)

1. Faculty creating new sub-specialties at any degree level contact OAPRAA for an initial consult with a staff member. After the consultation, faculty submit a Sub-specialty Proposal via Kuali using a link provided by OAPRAA staff. Evidence of school-level committee approval of the proposal is required.

2. Once the Sub-specialty Proposal has been reviewed by OAPRAA staff, it is forwarded to the home school dean for endorsement.

3. Upon home school dean endorsement, OAPRAA sends to PCCAP for review. Unlike new program proposals, all school deans do not review as a matter of process; however, if OAPRAA staff determine that there is significant overlap of content or coursework between schools, or anything else about the proposal indicates that other deans should be aware of the proposed change, specific other deans will be asked to review a Sub-specialty Proposal.

4. If PCCAP approves, the Sub-specialty Proposal follows one of two routes depending on circumstances:

    a. If the relevant school curriculum committee(s) has already approved the new minor or concentration, the proposal is sent to the appropriate provost delegate for approval. Submitter must upload committee minutes reflecting vote.

    b. If the relevant school curriculum committee(s) has not already approved the new minor or concentration, the OAPRAA will hold the proposal until the vote has occurred. Submitter must upload committee minutes reflecting vote.

5. Once evidence of the relevant school curriculum committee(s) approval is uploaded, the proposal is routed to the appropriate provost delegate for approval:

    <u>Undergraduate</u> Sub-specialty delegate: Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education
    <u>Graduate</u> Sub-specialty delegate: Vice Provost for Graduate Education
    <u>Professional</u> Sub-specialty delegate: Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs and Professional Education

8

D: Process for closing or inactivating an academic program

"Closure" is defined as the point at which a decision is made that <u>no new students be admitted</u>.

Closure is **not** when the last student in the program completes it. The federal Department of Education requires that it be notified (through institutional accreditors such as SACSCOC) of all program closures.

A proposal to terminate or close a program requires the identification of current enrollment with a detailed teach-out plan to ensure students are able to complete their degree as detailed in the academic catalog for the year in which they enrolled. Provide details about the impact, if any, on faculty and staff. The proposal in its entirety is reviewed by the PCCAP committee. Programs and schools are expected to ensure that program closure does not disaffect currently enrolled students ability to complete the program if students elect to do so.

Program closures must be approved by the SACSCOC Board of Trust, but implementation may begin before approval is received.

> ➢ Neither notification nor approval is required to close a sub-specialty (e.g., a minor or concentration) or non-credit offering.

Sunset Procedure

Programs may be inactivated (not listed) in Vanderbilt's academic catalog and reactivated within five years. OAPRAA and URO staff query for programs with no enrollment each October. After three years of inactivation with no student enrollment, program directors are contacted and requested to submit a plan to reactivate the program within the next year. If no plan is submitted within the academic year, or if the program director indicates that the program should be formally closed, SACSCOC will be notified of its closure the following summer (program directors will need to provide a short narrative)[4]. The plan to reactivate a program requires an expedited PCCAP review.

Reopening a closed program

Faculty interested in reopening a program that has been formally closed for five years or more must submit a New Program proposal as described above, and work with OAPRAA to file a notification of "Program Re-open" to SACSCOC. Please contact the OAPRAA office for details.

Stage I: School-level approval and plan

An administrator from the host school dean's office must approve a program closure. The dean (or representative) submits to OAPRAA a memorandum of program closure, which includes all information required by at that time by the accrediting agencies' program closure substantive change prospectus, to include a teach-out plan detailed enough to demonstrate that each student in the program will be guaranteed an opportunity to complete the program at Vanderbilt or elsewhere (without providing student-level data or information).

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[4] There is an additional year built into the sunset process to accommodate a scenario in which a program decides late in the academic year to reactivate, since the approvals process may carry over in the fourth year.

Stage II: Administrative notification and approval

Both inactivation and closure are reported through the PCCAP webform.

OAPRAA staff will notify all Vanderbilt academic school deans of some, but not all proposed closures. If the program closures are due to reasons that are not applicable to all schools (e.g., changes in state licensure requirements) other school deans will <u>not</u> be notified.

OAPRAA staff will forward the proposal to one of the following Vice Provosts, depending on the program level and type:

- Undergraduate program closures will require approval by the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs.
- Graduate School program closures will require approval by the Vice Provost for Graduate Education.
- Graduate Professional program closures will require approval by the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs.

After approval by the appropriate vice provost, OAPRAA staff will submit the substantive change forms and teach out plan to SACSCOC.

Stage III: Implementation

Once the university's official accreditation liaison is notified that the substantive change has been submitted to SACSCOC, OAPRAA staff will notify the host school dean, the Admissions Office, and University Registrar that teach-out plan can begin, and enrollment may be suspended. At this point the closure and teach out plan may be publicly announced through official university channels.

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY
Office *of* the Provost
Office of Academic Program Review, Assessment and Accreditation

Appendix A: Definitions

Degree type: The name of the academic credential – as opposed to the name of the academic program of study (major). Examples of degree types include Bachelor of Arts (B.A.), Master of Imaging Science (M.I.S.), Doctor of Nursing Practice (D.N.P.).

The Vanderbilt Board of Trust must approve new degree types but does not approve new programs of study. For example, the Board of Trust would need to approve a new Bachelor of Criminal Justice (B.C.J.) program but would not need to approve a new Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in Criminal Justice since the Bachelor of Arts is already offered at Vanderbilt.

Inactivate a Program: to remove a program study from the catalog. Students may not declare an intent to complete a major, certificate, concentration, etc., if it is not listed in the catalog that academic year (see also Program Closure).

> ➢ Reactivating a program places the program back into the catalog, at which point students may declare their intent to complete.

Offering: a coherent set of *non-credit* courses that leads to a distinct award such as a badge or certificate. Offerings are distinct from "programs" which are for-credit.

Program: any offering of a coherent set of for-credit coursework that leads to a distinct academic award. Certificate programs that earn Vanderbilt credit hours reflected on a transcript are considered programs. To be considered a program, students must apply to and be admitted by the university with the intent to complete the program of study specified in the catalog.

Program Closure: Closing a program removes it permanently from the catalog. "Closure" occurs once a decision is made to stop admitting students to the program (not once the last student completes the program). For example, if a department decides to stop admitting students to a program in Fall 2022 it is "closed" and permanently removed from the catalog. However, students who had declared their intent to complete the program in prior years are still the responsibility of the university until all have completed the program and must be provided with coursework and all other academic supports to do so, unless specific other provisions are made.

Substantive Change: is defined by the United States Department of Education as any "significant departure" from the university's current methods of delivery or program offerings, and which require either notification or approval by the university's institutional accrediting body. Examples of substantive changes are listed in Appendix C and fully defined [here](#)).

> ➢ Not all new programs will meet the federal definition of a substantive change, but the process described below for new degrees and new programs is applicable to *all new program proposals*, regardless of substantive change status.

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY
Office *of* the Provost
Office of Academic Program Review, Assessment and Accreditation

Appendix B: Review (R), Notification (N), and Approval (A) required by select change type

Change:	OAPRAA	All school deans	PCCAP Committee	School curric. committees	APS	Faculty Senate	Provost delegate	Provost	Chancellor & Board	Institutional Accreditor (SACSCOC)
New Degree Type	(R)	(R)	(A)	(A)	(R)	(R)		(A)	(A)	‡
New degree program	(R)	(R)	(A)	(A)	(R)	(R)		(A)		‡
New Sub-specialty	(R)		(A)	(A)			(R)			
New certificates	(R)	(R)	(A)	(A)			(A)			‡
New non-credit offerings	(R)			(A)			(R)			
Change in modality	(R)	(R)	(A)	(A)				(A)		(A)
Program Re-open (after 5 yrs no enrollment or deactivation)										
Program closure	(R)	(R)	(A)	(A)			(R)			(A)
Change (+/-) in progr. credit hours > 25% and change in completion time +/- one semester	(R)	(R)	(A)	(A)			(A)			(A)
Joint academic program (with other SACSCOC accredited institution)	(R)	(R)	(A)	(A)				(A)		(N)
Joint academic program (with non-SACSCOC accredited institution)	(R)	(R)	(A)	(A)				(A)		(A)

‡ = These types of change *may* require either notification or approval by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges prior to implementation, depending on the nature of change.

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY
Office *of* the Provost
Office of Academic Program Review, Assessment and Accreditation

Appendix C: Types of substantive change requiring notification or approval by SACSCOC

If you're into this type of thing, please read more at https://sacscoc.org/accrediting-standards/substantive-changes/

Institutional changes:

- Acquisition
- Addition of off-campus instructional sites
- Change in Measure of Student Progress to Completion
- Competency-based Education by Course/Credit-based Approach – Institutional-level Approval
- Governance Change
- Institution Closure

- Institution Relocation
- Institutional Contingency Teach-out Plan
- Level Change
- Merger / Consolidation
- Mission Change
- Ownership, Means of Control, or Legal Status Change

Program changes:

- New Program
- Program Closure
- Program Length Change
- Program Re-open
- Clock-Credit Hour Conversion
- Cooperative Academic Arrangements Definitions and Guidelines
- Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Title IV Entities
- Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Non-Title IV Entities

- Competency-based Education by Direct Assessment
- Correspondence Education
- Dual Academic Award
- Joint Academic Award with non-SACSCOC Institution(s) or Entity(ies)
- Joint Academic Award with SACSCOC Institution(s)
- Change in Method of Delivery
- Program Designed for Prior Learning