

Proposals to Create or Change Academic Programs

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Terms are defined in [Appendix A](#).

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.

- PCCAP replaced the Proposed Notice of Intent (PNOI) formerly used at Vanderbilt, while preserving the key aspects of the PNOI.

PCCAP provides an institution-level review of proposals to avoid duplication and overlap of proposed programs with existing programs and ensures timely and accurate filing of notifications and approvals to Vanderbilt's institutional accreditor.

As an institution-level review, PCCAP does not apply to course-level changes (e.g., changes to course names, course descriptions, course numbers, etc.).

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. A Quali-based online webform and OAPRAA staff will move the proposal through the processes described below and will communicate with relevant parties about its progress. OAPRAA will store all information required for the approval of the program and will manage workflow and communications throughout the process.

- **Since it is often difficult to determine if a new or changed falls into the definition of a substantive change, any faculty member considering creating, substantively changing, or closing a degree type or program should meet with OAPRAA staff early in the planning process.**

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, if required, OAPRAA staff will communicate its status to the offices involved in its implementation.

- **Note:** OAPRAA maintains the Quali webform tool used for several proposal types and provides access to reviewers after an initial consultation with a member of the team.

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 composed of: Deputy Provost; Director, Office of Student Financial Aid and Undergraduate Scholarships; Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs; Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School; Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education; Senior Director, OAPRAA; and the Assistant Provost and University Registrar. The PCCAP Committee meets monthly on the 3rd Tuesday except for April, August, and December.

PCCAP Processes

There are two types of proposal concept, one for **degree types** and **academic programs**, and one for **subspecialties**. The Proposal Concept for degree types and programs is required when:

1. creating new degree types or academic programs,
2. making **substantive changes**¹ to programs that may meet the U.S. Department of Education definition of a substantive change, and
3. discontinuing a degree type or academic program.

The Proposal Concept for Subspecialties process is required when creating or discontinuing concentrations, specializations, emphases, focus areas, minors, etc.

Each 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 or state compliance². The PCCAP process ensures 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), for all "substantive changes," i.e., those considered to be a "significant departure" from Vanderbilt's approved programs. The PCCAP process ensures that the institution can make timely filings to SACSCOC.

I. The Proposal

Proposals are 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.

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. In the interest of efficiency, proposals can be considered in parallel by school curriculum committees and PCCAP. However, evidence that the appropriate faculty governance structures at the school level have been followed is required for provost-level approval, as is the home-school dean's approval. Deans are responsible for each academic program offered by their school and therefore every

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.

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 approval 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.

There are two proposal forms, one for academic programs and one for subspecialties. Each form is used for creating, changing, or closing the academic offering.

All Proposals go through four steps beyond the school level; some require more:

OAPRAA Review

OAPRAA staff review the Proposal 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.

PCCAP Approval

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. PCCAP approves proposals for Provost review or sends them back to the submitter to revise and resubmit.

Deans' Review

Effectuated Vanderbilt University school deans review the Proposal 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 process of implementation.

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 Proposal packets to the Chief of Staff of the Office of the Provost. Provost notifies OAPRAA of her or his decision. OAPRAA notifies proposal initiator and dean. The provost approves all new programs and new degree types.

Delegate approval

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.

Their vote in favor of the proposal, if also supported by the majority of other PCCAP members serves as the provost's approval of the proposal.

II. Process For Changes To Existing Programs

- ⇒ **Note:** Updates to course titles, descriptions or content, or degree requirements (e.g., core, electives, etc.) do **not** require PCCAP approval.

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

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

Substantive changes will be approved by a provost delegate depending on the program level and type; i.e.: undergraduate, graduate, or professional.

III. Process For Initiating New Programs

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.

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, are available on the [PCCAP webpage](#) on the OAPRAA website.

Some new programs may require approval by the university's institutional accreditor. If that is the case:

- 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.

New degree types

The following levels of approval 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 must be approved by the University Board of Trust.

Senate review for advice and input

The Senior Director of OAPRAA is an ex-officio member of the Faculty Senate's Academic Policies and Services committee (APS) and thus attends both APS and Faculty Senate meetings.

OAPRAA notifies the APS that a proposal for a new degree types is ready for review. The proposal initiator presents the proposal for a new degree type to the APS. After review by the APS, the proposal is presented the next meeting of the full faculty senate by its initiator.

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.

Process for sub-specialties (minors, concentrations, etc.)

1. Faculty creating new sub-specialties at any degree level contact OAPRAA for an initial consultation with a staff member. After the consultation, faculty submit a Sub-specialty Proposal via Quali 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. If OAPRAA staff determine that there is a 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.

The following members of the PCCAP committee may act as the Provost's delegate for final approval:

Undergraduate Sub-specialty delegate: Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education

Graduate Sub-specialty delegate: Vice Provost for Graduate Education

Professional Sub-specialty delegate: Deputy Provost

Their vote in favor of a proposal on a meeting agenda, if also supported by the majority of other PCCAP members at that meeting, serves as the provost's approval of the proposal.

IV. Process For Closing An Academic Program

A program or degree **closure** occurs at the point at which a decision is made that no new students will be admitted. This is also referred to as inactivation or discontinuation. 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.

When a decision is made to close a program, Vanderbilt is obligated to notify its institutional accreditor and submit a teach-out plan for approval by its Board of Trust; implementation may begin before approval is received.

Please contact OAPRAA as soon as possible once a decision made to discontinue admissions to a program. A staff member will describe the information needed for a teach-out plan. Vanderbilt's **Institutional Accreditation Liaison (IAL)** must submit the teach-out plan.

- Teach-out plans are NOT required when discontinuing a **sub-specialty** or **non-credit offering**.
- *Even if no students are enrolled, Vanderbilt must submit a teach-out plan to SACSCOC describing the situation.*

Step 1: School-level approval and plan

An administrator from the host school's department or dean's office must initiate a program closure. A department or dean's representative contacts OAPRAA to discuss the closure and is given access to the Program Proposal Concept form.

Step 2: Administrative notification and approval

Both **inactivation** and **closure** are reported through the PCCAP webform.

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.

At the director's discretion, OAPRAA 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 not be notified.

Step 3: Closure Implementation

After approval by the provost or delegate, the IAL will file the teach-out plan with SACSCOC. Once it has been submitted, 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 as per the communications plan described in the teach-out plan.

Sunset Procedure

For any number of reasons, 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, OAPRAA will contact program directors and request 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 (program directors will need to provide a short narrative)³. 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.

V. Implementation

³ 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.



VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

Office *of* the Provost

Office of Academic Program Review, Assessment
and Accreditation

Appendix A: Definitions

Certificate: Certificates may be earned in passing or stand-alone. Certificates may be composed of for-credit courses, or non-credit offerings, but not both. At Vanderbilt, Graduate Certificates are available to currently enrolled degree-seeking students only (in-passing). Stand-alone certificates may be earned by non-degree seeking students.

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. The exception is Ph.D. programs, which must be approved by the Board of Trust.

Inactivate a Program: to remove a program study from the catalog and applications. Inactivated programs are not deleted from institutional data repositories. 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). Also referred to as discontinuation.

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

Institutional Accreditation Liaison (IAL): Every accredited institution must designate one person other than the Chancellor who is authorized to communicate with the accreditor (SACSCOC). SACSCOC will not accept any communication from anyone other than the Chancellor and the IAL.

Method of delivery: The current “method of delivery” is that which characterizes how 50% or more of a program is delivered (face-to-face/residential, or online). Adding a method of delivery to a program different than its current method of delivery requires notification to SACSCOC through a substantive change filing.

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

Program: a coherent set of for-credit coursework that leads to a distinct academic award. 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. Certificates composed of Vanderbilt credit hours reflected on a transcript are considered programs.

Program Inactivation: A program may suspend enrollment for a term or several terms for any number of reasons without the intention of permanently ceasing enrollment. Program Directors, Department Chairs, or a Dean’s Office representative is asked to notify OAPRAA of the inactivation, provide a rationale, and provide an anticipated restart date.

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.

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

Change:	School curric. committees	OAPRAA	Other school deans*	APS	Faculty Senate	PCCAP Committee	Provost	Chancellor & Board	Institutional Accreditor (SACSCOC)
New Degree Type	(A)	(R)	(R)	(R)	(R)	(A)	(A)	(A)	‡
New academic program	(A)	(R)	(R)			(A)	(A)	(N)	‡
New Sub-specialty	(A)	(R)	(N)			(A)		(N)	
New certificate	(A)	(R)	(R)			(A)		(N)	‡
Change in modality	(A)	(R)	(N)			(A)		(N)	(A)
Program Re-open (after 5 yrs no enrollment or deactivation)								(N)	(A)
Program inactivation & teach-out plan	(A)	(R)	(N)			(R)		(N)	(A)

Non-credit offerings do not require approval. Schools are asked to log non-credit offerings with PCCAP. Please see the [PCCAP website](#) for more information.

Please note that most types of substantive change (see Appendix C) are not presented here. Please consult with OAPRAA if you are considering significant changes to an academic program or degree type.

* = Where the potential for conflicts of overlap exist, OAPRAA will circulate proposals to other College or School Deans for their review. Any actual conflicts must be resolved between parties prior to provost approval. Other school deans may not

‡ = 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.

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