



Policy Number: I.37
Policy Level: Operating Policy
Originally Issued: October 10, 2023
Revised: October 7, 2024
Policy Owner: President
Policy Implementation: Provost/VP for Academic Affairs

New Program Development

I. Policy Statement and Purpose

Athens State University strongly supports its faculty in developing and implementing curricular change and innovation and also encourages the development of new academic programs when student, employer, or community demand can be demonstrated. New academic program development can occur at the undergraduate or graduate level and may include degrees or certificates at the bachelor's and master's level as well as undergraduate minors.

New academic program development not only involves multiple stages of review and approval at the University level but also requires approval from the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE), and in some cases, from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools-Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE). All new programs are approved by the University's Board of Trustees prior to submission to ACHE.

The intent of this policy is to outline the new program development and approval process and provide an approximate timetable that enables the development process to unfold and ensures that the necessary resources (human, capital, fiscal) are in place when the program is launched.

II. Definitions

Program Array Committee (PAC) – The PAC is appointed by the President and membership includes the following:

President	COAS Faculty Member
Provost/VP for Academic Affairs and Student Services (CHAIR)	Library Director
Assistant Provost for Planning, Budgeting and Assessment	Director of ATLAS
Assistant Vice President for Finance/Business Manager	Chief Marketing Officer
COE Faculty Member	Director of Admissions
COB Faculty Member	Registrar
Dean, College of Business	Dean, College of Education
Dean, College of Arts and Sciences	

The PAC will typically meet in August and February of each year to review new proposals, review the viability of existing programs and monitor post-implementation requirements.

Degree Program – award conferred on a student upon successful completion of a prescribed set of requirements including a course of study. Examples: Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Bachelor



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of Fine Arts, Master of Fine Arts, Master of Science, Master of Education. All baccalaureate-level degree programs must contain a minimum of 120 semester credit hours and all graduate-level degree programs must contain a minimum of 30 semester hours beyond the bachelor's degree. New degree programs must be reviewed and approved by the PAC.

Certificate – award conferred to a student upon successful completion of a prescribed set of requirements with a course of study. All certificates require a minimum of 9 and a maximum of 60 credit hours. Only those certificates requiring new/additional resources are reviewed and approved by the PAC.

Minor – per ACHE, a minor is a part of a degree program that consists of a specified group of courses in a particular discipline or field usually constituting a minimum of 18 semester hours.

Badge – badges and micro-credentials are non-degree programs that prepare students with skills and competencies valued by industry and promote gainful employment. Badges and micro-credentials must consist of at least six credit hours.

III. New Program Development

The *Degree Program Approval Workflow* form or the *Certificate Program Approval Workflow* form must be completed for each new program proposal to ensure that all necessary information is included in the proposal and that all required approvals are obtained.

IV. New Program Proposal Review/Process

New program proposals should be submitted to the PAC at least 24 months prior to the desired launch semester. The PAC will review the proposal based on mission alignment, market demand, and financial viability. Following the review and approval of the PAC, the proposal will follow the approval levels in the order listed below:

- Department Approval
- Dean Approval
- Provost Approval (Including CRR Review)
- Curriculum Committee Approval
- Board of Trustees Approval
- ACHE Approval
- SACSCOC Approval (if necessary)



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V. Approximate Development/Implementation Timeline

- 24 months prior to desired launch semester – submit new program proposal to PAC.
- 18 months prior to desired launch semester – curriculum committee will review. Typically, the curriculum committee does not meet during the summer semester.
- 12 months prior to desired launch semester – Board of Trustees approval. Typically, Board meetings occur in January, May, July and October.
- Following Board of Trustees approval, the proposal is forwarded to ACHE for review at the next meeting. Following the submission, but prior to final ACHE approval, the proposal is forwarded to the Marketing Department to begin development of an advertising plan.

VI. Responsibility for this Operating Policy

Policy Owner

As part of the initial approval of this policy the President will serve as the policy owner for the ongoing evaluation, review, and approval of this policy. Subsequent reviews and revisions to this policy must be in accordance with approved operating policy procedures and processes.

This policy will be reviewed every two years or more frequently as needed by the Policy Owner. Revisions will be reviewed/affirmed by the Cabinet and approved by the University President. This policy will be updated/published in the University's Policy Library.

Responsibility for Policy Implementation

The President has assigned the responsibility of implementing this policy to the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Services.