**Process for the Approval of New Degree-Level Programs**

Each university has campus-level policies and procedures for reviewing and approving new degree programs. Therefore, it is always advised to communicate with your respective department-, college- and university-level academic leaders prior to initiating this process, as they may have additional requirements. For instance, some universities require proposal documents to be routed through a specific program/course management system. **The below information is specific to the system-level review process** **that occurs after initial campus-level approvals have been obtained.**

Estimates on the timeline for receiving final approval for a proposed academic program can be found on our website (<https://www.umsystem.edu/ums/aa/academic-programs-and-guidelines>). The Office of Academic Affairs will provide information on the estimated approval timeline for a given proposal as it progresses through the process.

**Approval Steps**

* **Preliminary Proposal.** The first step is to complete a preliminary proposal, which provides a high-level overview of the proposal to identify initial questions and important areas to address in the full proposal. During this phase, the Office of Academic Affairs provides advice, feedback, and questions to aid in the development of the full proposal.
  + **Required Documentation:** Completion of the preliminary proposal template, available on our webpage (<https://www.umsystem.edu/ums/aa/academic-programs-and-guidelines>).
  + **Timeline:** Academic Affairs aims to provide feedback on preliminary proposals within 1-2 weeks following receipt.

* **Full Proposal.** This is a more in-depth proposal and the main stage of the review process. The full proposal requests more detailed information regarding the program curriculum, workforce demand, the program budget, and internal/external support, among other items. The full proposal also includes various items included for compliance purposes (e.g., for submission to the Higher Learning Commission and the Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development).
  + **Required Documentation:** Completion of the full proposal template, internal/external letters of support, and Appendices B & C templates available on our webpage (<https://www.umsystem.edu/ums/aa/academic-programs-and-guidelines>).
  + **Timeline:** Academic Affairs aims to provide feedback on full proposals within 2-3 weeks following receipt.
* **System-wide Review.** Once a full proposal has been finalized, the Office of Academic Affairs distributes a copy of the proposal and all appendices to the provosts and chancellors of the other three UM System universities for comment, with directions to forward the proposal to relevant academic units on their respective campuses. System-wide reviews may lead to the identification of opportunities for collaboration and concerns about duplication and sometimes require additional revisions and discussion.
  + **Timeline:** System-wide Review lasts for 20 working days but may entail additional time if discussion/revisions are needed because of comments received.
* **External Review (Doctoral/Professional Programs only).** Initiated at the same time as the System-wide Review, proposals for new doctoral and professional programs are distributed to experts at 3-4 selected institutions to provide additional input on the proposal. Reviewers are asked to evaluate the overall quality of the proposal, the likelihood of the program and program graduates to be successful and provide suggested opportunities for improvement.
  + **Timeline:** External reviewers are given 4-6 weeks to complete their reviews but may entail additional time if discussion/revisions are needed because of comments received.
* **Board of Curators Approval.** All proposals for new degree-level programs must be reviewed and approved by the Board of Curators’ Academic, Student Affairs, Research and Economic Development (ASARED) Committee, as well as by the full Board. Proposals must be finalized well in advance of board meetings to comply with requirements for how and when materials are submitted to the Board for its review prior to a scheduled meeting. Typically, the relevant dean and an additional faculty member knowledgeable about the proposal are invited to attend the Board meeting to provide a brief presentation to the Board.
  + **Timeline:** The Office of Academic Affairs will proactively communicate with the universities regarding the Board meeting at which a given proposal will be reviewed. The Board’s most up-to-date meeting schedule can be found on the Board of Curators website (<https://www.umsystem.edu/curators/meetings/>).
* **Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development / Coordinating Board for Higher Education Approval.** Following Board approval, the Office of Academic Affairs will submit the proposal to MDHEWD. All of Missouri’s institutions of higher education will have the opportunity to review and respond to the proposal. A proposal submitted in Month A (e.g., January) will be reviewed and put out for public comment in Month B (e.g., February), with provisional approval typically granted on or around the first business day of Month C (e.g., March).

Provisional approval is granted for a period of 5 years, after which it is reviewed for full approval to assess whether it meets completion benchmarks, below, calculated as 3-year rolling average:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Degree Level** | **# Completions** |
| Bachelor’s | 10/year |
| Master’s | 5/year |
| Doctoral/Professional | 3/year |

A program that meets the above benchmark for its degree level during the 5-year review will receive full approval from the state.

*Note: In addition to the steps above, each university manages its own processes and procedures for receiving approval from the Higher Learning Commission.*