

Public University and Community College Program Review: A Primer



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AUTHORITY

Why does the Commission Review Community College and University Programs?

Oregon's governance structure gives community college and university boards substantial control over academic programs, while preserving HECC's statewide approval role.

Institution submission & review

ORS 352.089 - Public universities must submit to the Commission for approval new academic degree programs and significant changes to academic degree programs.

ORS 341.465 - Establishes legal authority for community college boards to award certificates and associate degrees.

ORS 341.005–341.009 - Establishes legal authority for community colleges to offer BAS and BSN degrees.

Commission approval

ORS 350.075 - HECC approves significant changes to public university and community college academic programs, ensuring consistency with mission, avoidance of unnecessary duplication and geographic hardship, allocation to meet statewide needs.

ORS 341.465 – HECC approves community college certificates and associate degrees before the community colleges may make awards.

Definition & procedure

OAR 715-013-0020 – further defines “significant change” for public university academic programs, assigns approval responsibility to HECC, requires published standards and procedures, and requires governing-board submission before program commencement.

OAR 589-006 – further defines community college course and program approval requirements and processes.

PROCESS

What Happens Before a Proposal Reaches the Commission?

The process is layered and iterative. Some institutional and statewide steps overlap, but each adds a distinct review function.

1

Institution development and submission

Faculty and academic units work with boards to develop and submit to the HECC academic program proposals.

2

Statewide Coordination

Public university degrees: Statewide Provost Council (SPC) consultation review for feedback on duplication, regional impacts, and collaboration opportunities.

Community College BAASs: Declaration of Intent notifying all other institutions of proposed program.

3

HECC staff review

Staff assess the proposal against statute, rule, HECC forms, and statewide process requirements.

4

Commission decision

Commissioners receive the submission and staff recommendation and act to approve or deny in a public meeting.

SCOPE

What Requires Commission Review and Approval?

The rule draws a practical boundary around the program changes that require Commission approval.



COMMISSION APPROVAL REQUIRED

- New public university undergraduate and graduate degree programs
- Existing public university degree programs offered more than 40 miles from its current approved site
- New community college Associates of Applied Science, Bachelors of Applied Science, and most Certificates of Completion.
- Significant changes to Associates of Applied Science, Bachelors of Applied Science, and most Certificates of Completion.



COMMISSION APPROVAL NOT GENERALLY REQUIRED

- New public university undergraduate and graduate certificates
- New names for existing public university degree programs
- New public university minors
- New or substantive changes to community college Associates of Applied Science Option, Career Pathway Certificates of Completion, Certificates of Completion related to an Associate of Applied Science, Noncredit Training Certificates, Employment Skills Training Certificates, and Occupational Skills Training Certificates

STAFF REVIEW

What Are the Elements of the HECC Staff Review for Public University Programs?

The program proposal is organized around the same questions the Commission should consider.

Mission alignment

Does the program fit the university's approved mission and strategic direction?

Typical evidence: Mission, strategic plan, institutional rationale

Unnecessary duplication

Does the proposal add value without inefficient or unsupported duplication?

Typical evidence: Related programs, demand, SPC support, collaboration

Geographic hardship

Could the location or delivery model create undue hardship for another institution?

Typical evidence: Location, modality, service area, regional effects

Statewide needs

Does the program advance access, workforce, educational, or other statewide needs?

Typical evidence: Labor market, student demand, access, public benefit

review also addresses outcomes, accreditation, faculty and resources, external review, and long-term sustainability.

Sources: ORS 352.089, ORS 350.085, OAR 715-013-0020, and HECC university proposal requirements.

STAFF REVIEW

What Are the Elements of the HECC Staff Review for Community College Associate and Certificate Programs?

The program proposal is organized around the five program approval standards. Colleges must address all program elements of each standard.

Alignment

Is the program aligned with appropriate education, workforce, and economic development clusters?

Typical evidence: PK-20 alignment, workforce/EcDev priorities, pathway, career learning area, and cluster

Collaboration

Did the community college meaningfully engage partners in program development or modification?

Typical evidence: Advisory committees, business/industry, educational partners, support for special pops.

Capacity

Does the community college have the resources to develop, implement, and sustain the program?

Typical evidence: Facilities and equipment, financial resources, personnel, CWE, and internship sites

Need

Has the community college demonstrated clear labor market need for the program?

Typical evidence: Labor market research, unmet employment demand, wages and wage progression

Design

Does the program lead to achievement of academic/technical knowledge, skills, and related proficiencies?

Typical evidence: Curriculum/sequence, learner outcomes, performance indicators, accessible design, scheduling

STAFF REVIEW

What Are the Elements of the HECC Staff Review for Community College Bachelor's Programs?

The program proposal is organized around the nine program approval standards. Colleges must address all program elements of each standard.

Rigor

Does the program demonstrate baccalaureate level rigor and credits?

Typical evidence: Learning outcomes, curriculum, fulfillment of credit requirements

Collaboration

Has the community college collaborated with other higher education providers, industry, etc.?

Typical evidence: Collaboration partners, status of discussions, issues raised and resolved

Teaching Capacity and Sustainability

Does the community college have qualified faculty, teaching resources, and financial resources to develop, implement, and sustain the program?

Typical evidence: Faculty profiles, additional teaching resources, financial plan

Labor Market Need

Has the community college demonstrated clear labor market need for the program?

Typical evidence: Labor market research, industry advisors

Access and Student Services

How does the program ensure access and equity, and provide services for baccalaureate-level students?

Typical evidence: Student selection/admission process, financial aid services, academic advising services

Expert and Accreditor Review

Have external experts, including faculty and industry, reviewed and affirmed the program?

Typical evidence: External expert reviews, program-specific accreditation

GOVERNANCE

Individual Program Decision or Broader Policy Question?

The Commission must distinguish between the individual program decisions on its docket and broader policy questions.

INDIVIDUAL PROGRAM DECISION

Does this proposal satisfy the standards currently established in statute, rule, and Commission policies?

- Apply the existing approval criteria
- Consider the full record and staff recommendation
- Approve, disapprove, or seek clarification based on the current standards

BROADER POLICY QUESTION

Should HECC change the standards, evidence, or process that will govern future proposals?

- Amend administrative rules
- Revise procedures or required evidence when the review process should change
- Apply changes prospectively and consistently across institutions

Individual decisions apply current standards. Systemic concerns should be addressed by changing rules or procedures.

Questions?