

PROCEDURES FOR THE EVALUATION OF ALL
ASSOCIATE DEGREE PROGRAMS IN PUBLIC COLLEGES
AND UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH CAROLINA

Introduction

The South Carolina Master Plan for Higher Education states that, "beginning in 1979-80, the Commission will annually review all programs leading to the associate degree, following policy and procedures adopted for this purpose by the State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education. The Commission's review will encompass all such programs offered by any public institution." The Commission on Higher Education's decision to adapt the "TEC" procedures for all institutions was based on the recommendation of the Task Force on Academic Programs. Therefore, the following procedures, which have been modified for use by all public institutions in the State, and which clarify the final role of the Commission on Higher Education in the program review process, are now in effect for annual review of associate degree programs.

Annual Institutional Program Evaluation Reports

The Executive Director of the State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education, the President of the University of South Carolina, and the president of each senior institution which offers associate degree programs will submit annually by July 1 to the Executive Director of the Commission on Higher Education an evaluation report on all associate degree programs in those institutions under their jurisdiction. The evaluations will be carried out during the first months of the calendar year, and will indicate intent to continue, continue on probation, suspend, or cancel each program.

Associate degree programs from which there have been graduated at least three classes will be evaluated. New programs which have not graduated three classes will be listed in the report with as much evaluative data as exists, but will not be evaluated. Institutions will list each program on the report by the classification code and title assigned to the program by the Commission on Higher Education in its most recent Inventory of Academic Programs in South Carolina.

Associate degree programs will be evaluated using the following specific minimal standards:

1) Degrees Conferred - At least six (6) students in the previous year or an average of six (6) students over the preceding three years will have graduated from each degree program. The number of graduates completing a program will be taken from the three most recent Commission on Higher Education survey forms for completion of HEGIS Report 2300-2.1 (Degrees and other Formal Awards Conferred).

2) Enrollments - Each two-year degree program, in the preceding fall quarter or semester, will have enrolled a minimum of 16 students (headcount) and generated a minimum of 12 full-time equivalents (F.T.E.). The number of students (headcount and full-time equivalent) enrolled in a program will be taken from the most recent HEGIS Report 2300-2.3 (Opening Fall Enrollment),

or the most recent Fall Quarter TEC/AIDS Report.

3) Appropriate Employment or Continuation of Education - Follow-up of the most recent annual graduating class from each program will demonstrate that fifty percent (50%) of the graduates who are available for placement have found employment directly related to their educational program or are pursuing additional education full-time in a postsecondary institution. Placement or transfer data on the previous year's graduates will be obtained by a documented follow-up survey. In preparing placement or transfer data for the report, graduates who have died, become disabled, or chosen not to seek employment or transfer should be counted as "exclusions" and subtracted from the graduates before application of the fifty percent criterion.

4) With prior justification to and approval by the Commission on Higher Education, a college may set standards which are different from those in (1), (2), and (3) above for individual programs. However, all new associate degree programs will be subject to the standards specified unless the institution, at the time the program is proposed, recommends different standards which are approved by both its board and the Commission on Higher Education.⁴ Programs which do not meet one or more of the standards in (1), (2), and (3) above, or which do not fulfill the standards agreed to under (4) above will require special evaluation as described in the section below called Supplementary Institutional Program Evaluation Reports.

Supplementary Institutional Program Evaluation Reports

If a program does not meet the minimum productivity standards of the annual evaluation, and if the institution desires to continue operation of the program, the institution must submit a "Supplementary Institutional Program Evaluation Report" which demonstrates continued need and support for the program on the basis of the following factors:

1) Specific Manpower Requirements - The institution must demonstrate through surveys of appropriate employers that the program is needed to meet specific manpower requirements in the service area, region, or State as appropriate, and that these manpower requirements can not be met through another, more efficient approach. The institution should re-evaluate the original need statement for the program as approved by the Commission on Higher Education. It should specify strategies and a timetable which require implementation to improve productivity of the program.

2) Funding - The institution must demonstrate that it has sufficient funds to adequately maintain the program.

3) Faculty - The institution must demonstrate that at least one full-time faculty member is available in the program, that an adequate balance is maintained between full-time and part-time faculty, and that all currently employed faculty are well qualified and have received satisfactory evaluations. If the present faculty is inadequate, the institution must indicate its specific plans to hire and retain qualified faculty to support the program.

4) Employment of "Stop-outs" - The institution must demonstrate that fifty percent (50%) of the students who exited the program prior to graduation

and sought employment obtained jobs related to their training. If the number of "stop-outs" exceeds the number of graduates, explain why the program should not be shortened and made a non-degree program.

Program Action

The institution or system will indicate on its report the action it intends to take as a result of the evaluation. Possible actions are as follows:

1) Continuation - the institution may indicate its intent to continue any program which meets the minimum annual standards or which currently meets all of the standards required by the "Supplementary Institutional Program Evaluation Report."

2) Continuation on Probation - the institution may indicate its intent to continue a program on probation when the program does not meet the minimal annual standards and does not meet one or more of the standards required by the "Supplementary Institutional Program Evaluation Report." However, the Supplementary Report must include a plan to meet at a minimum all of the supplementary or annual standards within three years. Any program which is not removed from probationary status within three years must be suspended or cancelled.

3) Suspension - the institution may suspend operation of a program when there is evidence that it should be interrupted, but there is reason to believe that the program might be resumed within three years. The decision to suspend offering the program carries the implication that there are still unanswered questions concerning the long range future of the program. Therefore, at the end of the first year of suspension, the institution or system will submit a report to the Commission on Higher Education that will include a detailed analysis of program history, a resurvey of present and forecast area job needs, an examination of the pool of potential students, etc. In cases where evidence shows that the job market is temporarily satisfied, the record should so indicate and, based on employment forecasts, a decision should be made that the program can be resumed within the three year period or that it should be cancelled. Any suspended program which cannot be resumed within three years must be cancelled, and a new program proposal must be submitted to rejustify the program for start-up at a later date. When a program is suspended, the institution continues to be authorized to offer the program, and may do so by notifying the Executive Director of the Commission on Higher Education when it wishes to resume that program.

Suspension of a program requires the following actions by the institution:

- a) Immediate discontinuation of acceptance of students into the program.
- b) Phased-out discontinuation of courses which are unique to the program, so as to allow currently enrolled students to complete their requirements.
- c) Immediate notification of all necessary individuals and organizational units including admissions and public information officers.

4) Cancellation - the institution should permanently discontinue any program when its continuation cannot be justified and there is no reason to believe that it will be offered again at that institution.

Cancellation of a program requires the following actions by the institution:

- a) Immediate discontinuation of acceptance of students into the program.
- b) Phased-out discontinuation of courses which are unique to the program, so as to allow currently enrolled students to complete their requirements.
- c) Immediate notification of all necessary individuals and organizational units including admissions and public information officers.
- d) Development of specific provisions for the release or transfer to another institution of all faculty members who will be affected by the cancellation of the program.
- e) Arrangement for the transfer or disposition of any State-owned equipment which is no longer needed.

The program will be removed from the institution's approved inventory of programs and the institution will no longer be authorized to award the degree. References to the program will be purged from all documents such as the catalog, program listings, and brochures.

The institution or system will notify the Executive Director of the Commission on Higher Education of the action taken. If the institution should desire to offer the program again at a later date, it will be necessary to provide the same proposal and receive the same approvals as for any other new program.

Action by the Commission on Higher Education

Following receipt of the institutional program evaluation reports, the staff of the Commission on Higher Education will prepare a written analysis of the results of the associate degree program evaluations for that year. This analysis, along with any recommendations, will be submitted to the Committee on Academic Affairs, with a copy to the chief academic officers of the institutions involved.

The chairman of the Committee on Academic Affairs, or his designee, shall submit Committee findings and recommendations to the Commission. Notwithstanding the decisions of the institutions or their boards as described previously, the Commission on Higher Education, in keeping with its statutory authority, may recommend that any associate degree program be continued on probation, suspended, or terminated.

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