

MEMORANDUM

TO: Committee on Academic Programs

FROM: Steering Committee

RE: Review of the Course Approval Policy

DATE: February 21, 2018

Background:

In a memo to Steering dated February 10, 2017, the Faculty Senate Executive Board requested consideration of the appropriate process for course approval for courses which are to be offered in alternate formats. Accordingly, Steering charged TLPC (now TLC) to review the pilot approval process for blended and online format courses, which had not been considered through the governance process, and to develop a recommendation regarding this process. TLC has forwarded its recommendation, and Steering has charged CAP with gathering testimony and preparing a final recommendation in this matter.

Separately, Steering, the Provost, and the President have approved our new governance document, and the new governance structure necessitated changes to the process of approval of liberal learning courses. In September, with advice from LLC, Steering changed the Course Approval Process policy to provide a process for LLC designations until CAP could review the policy.

Finally, Steering notes that neither the policy last approved by CAP in 2014 nor the edits made by Steering in 2017 address the approval process for CEL designations.

Charge:

Steering asks CAP to review the Course Approval Policy in light of all issues raised above to determine whether changes to the policy are needed. In considering this question, CAP should consider the following questions, as well as any additional questions it finds appropriate:

1. Should the approval process for blended and online courses recommended by TLC, if accepted, be added to the course approval process?
2. Should departments have a role in determining whether a particular modality (blended or online, truncated Winter and Summer sessions, off-campus, etc.) is suitable for a particular course? If so, is the initial course approval the proper time for this to occur? Or should the modality be reviewed only after it has been tried several times?
3. Should the changes to the policy made by Steering in September be retained? If not, what should the approval process for Liberal Learning designations be?
4. Should materials for course approval be adapted to allow curriculum committees the opportunity to make recommendations on liberal learning designations at Step 2?

5. Should the policy include any reference to the approval process for the CEL designation?
6. Is the role of the School Curriculum Committee in Step 3 sufficiently clear?

At Step 2, as it reviews the Course Approval Policy, in addition to consideration of the recommendation from TLC CAP should consult with LLC and GEC regarding the LL designation approval process. CAP should seek testimony from the current chairs of the school curriculum committees, Academic Leaders, and the Council of Deans. CAP should then prepare a preliminary recommendation regarding changes to the course approval process.

After preparing its preliminary recommendation, testimony on the preliminary recommendation should be solicited from the full faculty following Tier II guidelines.

Testimony Tier: Tier III (faculty), Tier I (staff and students).

Timeline:

CAP should develop a preliminary recommendation regarding the Course Approval Policy by the end of the Spring 2018 semester. A final recommendation regarding the Course Approval Policy should be completed by early in the Fall, 2018 semester.

TCNJ Governance Processes

Step 1 – Steering issues a charge

Step 2 - Governance prepares a Preliminary Recommendation

Once the appropriate standing committee or council has received the charge, it should start by collecting data needed to make a preliminary recommendation. It should receive input from affected individuals and all relevant stakeholder groups prior to making a preliminary recommendation. For issues that have broad implications or that affect a large number of individuals, initial testimony should be solicited from the campus community at large. For some issues, sufficient initial testimony may come from input through committee membership or solicitation from targeted constituent groups.

When, in the best judgment of the committee, adequate clarity of the principles contributing to the problem are known, a preliminary recommendation should be drafted and disseminated to the campus community.

Step 3 – The Relevant Stakeholders provide Testimony

Once a preliminary recommendation has been completed, the standing committee or council should seek testimony from the campus community. The testimony should be gathered in accordance with the Testimony Tier (see page 24) assigned to the issue by Steering.

For issues that require public testimony from the campus community, the chair of the standing committee or council should approach the president of the appropriate representative bodies to schedule the next available time slot at a meeting of that body.

Testimony should be gathered in a way that allows stakeholders to weigh in fully on the issue. Members of the standing committee or council that wrote the preliminary recommendation should be present to hear and record the testimony.

Step 4 – Governance prepares a Final Recommendation

Once the standing committee or council has received appropriate testimony, it should revise the preliminary recommendation into a final recommendation. Once the final recommendation is complete, the standing committee or council should use sound judgment to determine whether or not more public testimony is required. If, in its feedback to the original preliminary recommendation, a stakeholder representative body requests to review an issue again, the committee or council is bound to bring it back to that body. If a full calendar year has passed since the formal announcement of the preliminary recommendation, the committee must resubmit a preliminary recommendation to the campus community.

When the committee or council has completed the final recommendation, it should forward it to the Steering Committee. The final recommendation should be accompanied by a cover memo that summarizes the initial charge, how testimony was gathered and the nature of that testimony, and how the committee responded to that testimony, including a description of how the preliminary recommendation evolved as a result of testimony.

Step 5 – Steering considers the Final Recommendation

Step 6 – The Provost and/or President and Board consider the Final Recommendation

Step 7 – Steering notifies the Campus Community

Testimony Tier I – The issue requires minimal testimony from the campus community. The assigned council or committee should consult with relevant stakeholders before preparing the final recommendation, but there is no need for surveys or open fora.

Testimony Tier III - The issue requires a high degree of testimony from the campus community. The assigned council or committee should consult with relevant individuals and groups in developing a preliminary recommendation. The completed preliminary recommendation should then be made available to the relevant stakeholder groups. Testimony should be solicited in the form of both written and oral feedback, as well as approval by the appropriate representative bodies.

Written feedback should take the form of a survey and/or email feedback. Oral feedback should take the form of public testimony at a meeting of the appropriate representative body or bodies (as identified by Steering). These meetings should be open to the general public, and publicized so that individuals not represented by that group but interested in the issue may attend. Following that meeting, the representative body may, at its discretion, issue a formal response to the preliminary recommendation, which should be sent to the relevant council or committee as well as Steering. On the completion of a final recommendation, this response should accompany the final recommendation to Steering, and it should be considered as part of Steering's final review.

For a complete description of all steps and of the other testimony tiers, see Governance Structures and Processes, 2017 Revision, pages 21 – 24.