MEMORANDUM

TO: Steering Committee
FROM: Committee on Academic Programs (CAP)
RE: Final recommendation on Course Approval Policy
DATE: January 9, 2019

Background and Charge:
In 2017, TLC forwarded to Steering recommendations on a process for approving courses to be offered in alternate formats, specifically blended and online offerings. Also, in 2017, Steering changed the Course Approval Process policy so as to align with changes in the newly approved Governance document, specifically with respect to the manner by which liberal learning course attributes are approved for a course. Steering also noted that neither the policy as last approved by CAP in 2014 nor the edits made by Steering in 2017 address the approval process for CEL designations. Steering charged CAP to review the Course Approval Policy in light of the above issues.

Methods:
In addition to the specific charge, Steering provided a series of questions that CAP should consider. The first two of these pertain to blended and online designations. First, whether the process for approving blended and online courses recommended by TLC should be accepted, and if so, be added to the course approval process. Second, should departments have a role in determining whether a particular delivery modality is suitable for a particular course and if so, when should that determination occur. During our initial analysis, CAP determined that a specific policy for blended and online courses was needed. The rationale for this recommendation is that blended and online designations represent course delivery modes, whereas course approval was viewed as dependent on content, learning outcomes, and fit within the curriculum, and therefore independent of delivery mode. Furthermore, the delivery mode for an approved course may be changed without going back through course approval and the School curriculum committee, thereby representing a distinct and different event from course approval. Second, CAP determined that departments should maintain existing course approval discussions, prescribed in the current Course Approval Policy. The effectiveness for a given delivery mode cannot be determined prior to offering the class, so a discussion might organically occur after course evaluations are collected and the instructor's perspective and expertise on the experience is considered. However, in conjunction with the Office of Instructional Design and the Dean's oversight of broader institutional mission, it may be determined that some delivery modes are not appropriate for certain types of classes (e.g. lab and hands-on experiences). As such, CAP developed the Development and Approval of Online or Blended Courses Policy, delivered to Steering on May 14, 2018, which was subsequently made effective.

In September 2018, CAP begin considering the second part of this charge; the Course Approval policy. We consulted school curriculum committees to identify issues with the review and approval process as well as solicited feedback on their role in approving liberal leaning (LL) designations under the new Governance document and the aligned process approved through Steering in 2017. Additionally, we consulted with the Dr. Murphy to understand the variety of LL designations available to courses and how they are reviewed and approved. Through this feedback, we noted that the content and level of detail required by curriculum committees varied from school to school. Further, the committees reported that they did not always feel qualified to

review a particular class for a specific designation, that some classes were assigned a designation by virtue of having a specific departmental prefix but that the designation did not seem appropriate, and occasionally LL review load was and issue is some committees. Finally, CAP noted that the Course Approval Form, distributed and maintained by Records and Registration has not been updated and does not adequately document the LL review and approval process in its new decentralized configuration. Based on these data points, we answered the remaining questions posed by Steering in the original charge.

1. 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?

CAP feels that reference to gaining designations should be retained but that the specific process steps should not be codified within the course approval policy. This aligns with guidance on policy writing. Further, it is not for CAP to define the process whereby LL designations are authorized. The revised policy provides guidance on how to gain designations by referring to the appropriate governing bodies. The revised policy also defines responsibility of the governing bodies to have, maintain, and publish the application and review methods. In this way, future changes to governance, body organizations, or the specific application and review methods do not affect the contents of the Course Approval policy and are allowed so long as they conform to the defined required responsibilities within the Course Approval policy.

2. Should materials for course approval be adapted to allow curriculum committees the opportunity to make recommendations on liberal learning designations at Step 2?

CAP views course approval and LL designations as two distinct events overseen by potentially different bodies. This is consistent with how the LL website considers designation approval. As such, we have not incorporated specific requirements about materials for and approval of LL attributes within the Course Approval policy. Rather, we have referred faculty seeking such designations to the appropriate oversight body, as described above. The revised policy provides for School Curriculum Committees to simultaneously approve courses and any designations as authorized by the appropriate oversight body. However, we have significant concerns about the current interim process proposed by LLPC. These concerns are outlined with our final recommendation.

3. Should the policy include any reference to the approval process for the CEL designation?

The revised policy specifically identifies CEL as a component of LL designations, which is consistent with the Liberal Learning website. Since no specific process steps are within the Course Approval policy, the policy points faculty to the appropriate governing body website (LL in this case) where they will find the process methods for getting all designations and that the CEL council is the reviewing body.

4. Is the role of the School Curriculum Committee in Step 3 sufficiently clear?

The role of the School Curriculum Committee has been clarified. Additionally, CAP reviewed current School Curriculum Committee requirements and practices for Course Approval and found varying levels of required documentation and perceived purview. CAP has incorporated guidance in the revised Course Approval policy to bring these practices into parity across Schools.

A revised Course Approval policy was drafted and approved for testimony (Tier III for faculty and Tier I for Students and Staff) on Oct 10, 2018. The policy was sent for distribution and comment to student senate and staff senate. No significant comments were received. A faculty-wide survey was distributed. 11 of 16 responses made no comment. The remaining comments identified minor issues with the online/blended definitions and terminology with respect to the sample syllabus required for course approval. Open Forum testimony at Faculty Senate occurred on Oct 17, 2018. Similar comments to those made through the online survey were captured along with a strong desire to more explicitly define faculty's leading role and participation in the review and approval process. The draft policy was revised based on this feedback and approved by CAP on November 28, 2018. We took the additional step of returning the Faculty Senate on Dec 5, 2018 to review those changes as well as soliciting final input from the Liberal Learning Program.

Final Recommendation:
During its meeting on November 28, 2018 the Committee on Academic Programs voted unanimously to recommend the attached revised version of the Course Approval policy. This policy provides explicit definition of a number of terms, including course delivery descriptions that align with current TCNJ and national standards for course timing. The policy clearly differentiates between course approval and LL designation approval as two distinct, but possibly simultaneous events. Finally, it is consistent with the current interim methods for approving LL designation and should not need to be updated should those methods change (see recommendations, below).

Along with the final policy version, CAP makes the following recommendations:

1) Course Approval form should be updated. Specifically, it should be a two-part form, one part for course approval and a second part for LL designation request and approval. This form should be made as a fillable PDF form to allow faculty to type the form, print, and then sign. The LL designation approval should be a second part and require a signature indicating approval, which is needed by Records and Registration so that a course is not entered into PAWS with a LL designation it did not actual get. All signatures should also require printed names. The current form can and has led to confusion on this part. This revision should be addressed by Records and Registration.

2) The current interim review and approval methods should be revisited by LLPC – with special attention to the way LL designations have been automatically assigned to specific departmental prefixes. As noted above, curriculum committees noted several points of concern regarding the process. Specifically, they did not always feel qualified to review a particular class for a specific designation as assigned and that some classes were assigned a designation by virtue of having a specific departmental prefix, but that the designation did not seem appropriate or other prefixes have now become appropriate and should be considered. This method seems to expect a qualification level that may not be present and overlooks qualified reviewers in other departments or schools.

Section:	II.3.10
Title:	Course Approval Policy
Effective Date:	
Approved By:	Provost
Responsible Unit:	Academic Affairs (609-771-3080, academic@tcnj.edu)
Related Documents:	Course Approval Form (Records and Registration) Development and Approval of Online or Blended Courses Cross-listed courses Syllabus Template MOA 104 - OL/BL courses MOA 62
History:	

Version	Date	Notes
4.0		Revised by CAP to approve governance changes and update for new course delivery modes
3.0	9/20/2017	Revised per changes to Governance Document
2.0	11/21/2014	Revised by Provost
1.0	2/2010	New policy; Initial Release

I.   INTRODUCTION

This policy defines the roles, responsibilities, and required procedural components for developing and approving new courses, approving significant course changes, requesting course designations and/or alternate online/blended delivery mode, and resolving disputes. This policy must be followed for all credit-earning courses that appear on an enrolled student's transcript.

Generally, faculty will propose a course, submit a course approval packet to the appropriate curriculum committee for review and recommendation to the Dean. Once approved by the Dean, faculty may request additional course designations for the course through the appropriate governance body. Online and blended course delivery modes also require additional review by the Office of Instructional Design.

II.   DEFINITIONS

Course Prefix - Affiliation label for courses offered at TCNJ (e.g. Department/Program, IDS, HON, FSP, WRI)

Course Attributes - designations are additional characteristics of a course that are independent of, but contribute to, the course learning outcomes. Herein, designations include Civic Responsibilities (including Community Engaged Learning), Liberal Learning Breadth Domains, and Writing Intensive, approved by the Liberal Learning Council or its designee, and Advanced Community Engaged Learning, approved by the Community Engaged Learning Council.

Course Delivery - the way in which the course is delivered. Online/Blended course modes are overseen by the Office of Instructional Design.

Traditional course - a course wherein the dominant instructional mode is face-to-face instruction. Traditional courses typically follow a traditional class meeting schedule based on the Academic Calendar. Traditional courses may feature some web-based learning at the discretion of the instructor.

Blended course – a course wherein web-based online learning is used to replace 20% or more, but not all, of typically scheduled face-to-face instruction.

Online course - a course wherein the instructional mode is web-based, online learning rather than face-to-face instruction

Off-Campus course - Courses delivered off-campus include those wherein the majority of course meetings occur off campus. Such courses include those requiring travel (local and international) to sites of interest specific to the course topic and learning outcomes.

Standard Semester Schedule - Courses delivered on this schedule follow a standard semester as defined by the Academic Calendar.

Accelerated Schedule - Courses delivered on an Accelerated schedule follow a shorter than Standard Schedule, but have the same contact time and learning outcomes as if taught on a Standard Schedule. Such classes are commonly taught as a Winter or Summer course.

Sample Syllabus - a document submitted as part of the course approval packet that contains the course description, required materials, course requirements, course learning outcomes, general topics covered, and a general breakdown of assignment types, their weighting for final grades, and how they assess specific learning outcomes. The Syllabus Template is used, but the sample syllabus is not as detailed as the course syllabus distributed to students when taking the course.

Course Approval Packet - a group of documents that contains: 1) the course approval form,

2) sample syllabus, and 3) a cover sheet.

III. POLICY

1. Responsibilities

a. <u>Records and Registration (R&R)</u> - Maintain a course approval website and course approval form that comply with MOA 62, MOA 104, and this policy.

b. <u>Course faculty</u> - An individual faculty member (or a group of faculty) proposes a course and prepares the proposal. The proposal consists of the Course Approval Packet, defined above.

c. <u>Department Curriculum Committee</u> - The department or program reviews and approves the course. The proposing faculty member works with the department or program to review the course content and write a cover letter outlining how the course connects to the program goals, learning activities, and assessment of learning. If a proposed course will be cross-listed, it is the responsibility of the department/proposing faculty member to make sure that the department in which the course is cross-listed also follows the course approval process. A course approval packet is assembled and submitted to the appropriate School Curriculum Committee(s).

d. <u>School Curriculum Committee</u> - The School (or other appropriate) curriculum committee conducts a review of the course approval packet to confirm that the course reflects essential elements and that the course and program are integrally related. The school curriculum committee is responsible for assessing how the course fits into the program offerings across the entire school. If a School Curriculum Committee is responsible for reviewing any course designations, then they should also assess that designation as a separate decision (the course can be approved in general without the designation).

e. <u>Bodies that oversee course designations, course delivery options, and Non-Departmental/Program Prefixes (e.g. FSP, HON, IDS)</u> - Each body will define and publish a process to request and review one or more of the following:

   ● to obtain an additional designation,
   ● to be delivered in an online or blended alternative to traditional courses,
   ● to be listed with a non-departmental/program prefix.

Each body shall define the requirements and process for developing, assessing, and approving requests consistent with the following:

   i. The process must utilize a committee or council defined under the approved shared Governance Structure. If an alternative body is needed,

it must consist of at least three institutional members, be comprised of 50% or greater full-time faculty, and be approved by the Committee on Academic Programs.

ii. Maintain a website whereon the process for requesting approval is published and make accessible any required forms

iii. Establish and publish a timeline for review and response to the requestor

iv. If the request is declined, written feedback specifically identifying deficiencies in the request must be provided to the requestor

v. The process must define an appeal process that allows rebuttal from the requestor

2. Essential Requirements and Process Steps

The following points detail the specific requirements for course approval. After the course is approved, requests for designations and/or online/blended delivery mode may be made.

a. The faculty proposes a course and submits a course approval form and sample syllabus to the department curriculum committee or body governing a non-departmental/program prefix. This step must be done for all proposed courses to support future faculty loading considerations.

b. Proposed courses that will receive a non-departmental prefix should be submitted to the appropriate overseeing body by the process published by that body in accordance with section III.1.e, above. The remainder of the steps in this section are not applicable. Additional designations may be sought, as defined in section III.3, below.

c. All proposed courses not covered by step III.2.b must be reviewed by the department or program for:
   i. inclusion and quality of all necessary elements of the course proposal including course content,
   ii. alignment with department/program learning outcomes and needs, and
   iii. any applicable certification requirements.

d. Following review and recommendation for approval of the course proposal, the department/program must add a cover sheet that outlines broader connections in terms of program/course goals, learning activities, and assessment of learning. If a proposed course is to be cross-listed, it is the responsibility of the program/department/course faculty to make sure that the department in which the course is cross-listed also reviews the course (see cross-listing policy).

e. Course approval packets are then reviewed by the school (or other

appropriate) curriculum committee to ensure that:

    i.   the sample syllabus reflects essential elements,
    ii.   the course is aligned with school level requirements, and
    iii.   when appropriate, course(s) are reviewed for their position in the school wide curriculum offered across departments or programs.

f. Following review, the school curriculum committee prepares a recommendation for approval that is sent to the appropriate dean.

g. Course approval packets are then reviewed by the school dean to ensure that at a minimum:

- the process has been followed and that the essential elements are present
- where appropriate, the course has been reviewed by other units outside the program that are impacted by the course, and
- necessary resources or facilities are available.

h. If agreement exists between the dean, school, and department/program faculty recommendations (and others, if applicable), the course is considered approved and the dean signs off and forwards the complete course proposal to Records and Registration to be entered into the system.

    i.   Course Attributes may be requested after the course is approved. See section III.3, below.

i. If disagreement exists, the school curriculum committee conducts a further review of the course approval packet and makes its recommendation. If the dean concurs with the recommendation for approval, the course is considered approved and is forwarded for entry into the system.

j. If disagreement persists, the complete course proposal package is submitted to the Provost's Office for adjudication. If agreement is reached, the course is considered approved and is entered into the system as above.

3. **Seeking Course Attribute or Approval for Online/Blended Course Delivery**

a. Any approved course may seek Course Attributes and/or for special clearance related to how the course is delivered.

    i.   Requests for Course Attributes are submitted to the appropriate evaluating body, as defined in section II, and in accordance with the process published by that body, in accordance with section III.1.e, above.

    ii.   Requests for special clearance for blended or online delivery are

submitted to the appropriate body in accordance with section III.1.e, above.

b. Best practice for such requests is to seek guidance from the appropriate body prior to submitting a course approval packet to a School Curriculum Committee to avoid changes to a course that would require re-approval by the School Curriculum Committee.