

University Policy: Curriculum Review and Approval

Policy Category: Academic

Subject: Curriculum Development, Review and Approval

Responsible Executive: Provost

Office Responsible for Review of this Policy: Office of the Provost

Procedures: As Stated Below

Related University Policies: Undergraduate Academic Regulations; Graduate Academic Regulations.

I. SCOPE

American University is committed to providing high-quality courses and programs to its undergraduate and graduate students based on a rigorous and coherent curriculum. The university also adheres to the standards of accreditation and requirements for affiliation of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education related to curriculum quality, coordination, requirements and evaluation. Through established processes for curricular review and approval that include the teaching unit, academic unit and university levels, faculty are responsible for the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum of the university. Curriculum review processes include: curriculum development and approval, the articulation and scheduled review of curriculum requirements, as well as the scheduled review of curriculum effectiveness, coherence and alignment. The Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies and the Dean of Graduate Studies, under the overall direction of the Provost, are responsible for the implementation, management and oversight of the curriculum review and approval processes. This policy establishes a comprehensive university-wide process of curriculum review and approval at American University.

II. DEFINITIONS

Minor Curricular Changes: These are proposed actions that do not significantly affect programs or course offerings in other teaching units or academic units. Minor curricular changes include altering or updating existing courses; altering or updating the course requirements of majors, minors, and for-credit certificate programs; or creating, altering, or eliminating non-credit certificate programs.

Significant Curricular Changes: These are proposed actions for changes that affect the overall curriculum of existing programs or for changes that substantially affect the requirements of existing

programs within the teaching unit or in other teaching units. Significant curricular changes include, but are not limited to: New for-credit certificate programs, bachelors' degree programs, majors within existing degree programs, master's, or doctoral programs; substantial revisions of any of the aforementioned programs; the creation of dual degree programs involving any of the aforementioned programs; the elimination of for-credit certificate programs, bachelors' degree programs, majors within degree programs, master's, or doctoral programs.

A new course is also a significant change to the university curriculum. A new course proposal is not required for a new offering or topic under a Selected Topics: Nonrecurring (X96) course; however, a nonrecurring offering or topic may be made only two semesters before a new course proposal is required.

III. POLICY STATEMENT

In accordance with the University Bylaws, the Provost, as Chief Academic Officer, has primary responsibility for, among other things, instruction, academic standards, curriculum and course review processes. Subject to this provision, members of the Faculty Senate of American University have primary responsibility for making recommendations to the Provost for a number of academic review processes which include academic standards, quality of instruction and the review and evaluation of the university curriculum.

Specific to this policy, the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee and the Graduate Curriculum Committee of the Faculty Senate review and make recommendations regarding: the existing undergraduate and graduate curricula and course offerings; new programs and significant curricular changes, new courses for their academic quality, redundancy of material across teaching units/academic units, and assessment of learning outcomes; all changes and terminations in courses or programs that affect more than one teaching unit; and, general curricular policies affecting undergraduate and graduate academic programs.

The Office of the University Registrar (OUR) works in collaboration with academic units, standing committees, and the Faculty Senate in the curriculum review process to ensure adherence to university regulations and best practices. The OUR provides administrative oversight of the curriculum management system, serves as the administrative repository of approved curriculum, and is responsible for annually compiling the approved curriculum in the University Catalog and the university's student information system.

IV. PROCEDURES:

A. Minor Curricular Changes

Minor curricular changes must be approved by the academic unit following appropriate academic unit by-laws and/or procedures. The academic unit sends the approved minor changes to the OUR. If an academic unit proposes a minor change to a course that is a required or elective course in another teaching unit's programs, then the home teaching unit must alert all other teaching units of the proposal.

B. Significant Curricular Changes

Roles and responsibilities in the review process for proposals for significant changes in the undergraduate or graduate curriculum are outlined below.

1. An academic unit dean is required to discuss with the Provost a proposal for a significant change to the curriculum of the academic unit. If there is the potential to affect other academic units, those units must be consulted prior to the development of the proposal.
2. All proposals for significant changes to the university curriculum are required to have a home teaching unit or academic unit that is the primary sponsor of the proposed significant changes to the curriculum.
3. The faculty members of the home teaching or academic unit are required to review each proposal for a significant change to the university curriculum following their academic unit by-laws.
4. The Provost, with input from either the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies or the Dean of Graduate Studies will conduct a preliminary review of each proposal for a significant change to the university curriculum.
5. Each proposal for a significant change to the university curriculum must be circulated electronically by the home unit to the academic community for review. Comments gathered during the comment period must be integrated into, or used to revise, the final version of the proposal.
6. The Undergraduate Curriculum Committee of the Faculty Senate will review and make recommendations regarding all final proposals for significant changes to the undergraduate curriculum of the university. The Graduate Curriculum Committee of the Faculty Senate will review and make recommendations regarding final proposals for significant changes to the graduate curriculum of the university. Proposals for significant changes that affect both the undergraduate and graduate curricula of the university will be reviewed by both the Undergraduate and Graduate Curriculum Committees of the Faculty Senate.
7. The Faculty Senate will make a recommendation to the Provost for each proposal for a significant change to the university curriculum that is reviewed by one of its constituent curriculum committees and signed off on by either the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies or the Dean of Graduate Studies.
8. The Provost will make a final decision on each proposal for a significant change to the undergraduate curriculum or the graduate curriculum of the university except in the case of a proposal for the elimination of an existing degree program or a proposal for the creation of a new degree program.
9. The President and the Board of Trustees, in consultation with the Provost, will make the final decision on each proposal to eliminate existing bachelors', master's or doctoral degree programs or to create new bachelors', master's, or doctoral degree programs.

V. EFFECTIVE DATE AND REVISIONS:

This Policy is effective as of August 1, 2015