

## **Academic Program Approval Guidelines**

### **Introduction**

To maintain academic vitality and respond to new needs, opportunities and changes the University occasionally initiates, modifies or eliminates academic programs. This document presents the guidelines for the development, review, and approval of such changes.

#### **Academic Programs**

An academic program is a combination of courses and related activities organized for the achievement of specific learning outcomes as defined by the University. This includes programming at both the undergraduate, graduate and professional levels and consists of degrees, majors, minors, certificates, concentrations, and specializations.

- **Degree Program:** An academic program of study leading to a bachelor's, master's, Ph.D. or professional degree. All degree programs require that a minimum number of semester credit hours be earned, as referenced in the official bulletins of the University that are produced each academic year.
- **Major:** A comprehensive course of study in a given discipline at the undergraduate level. A minimum of 30 semester credit hours must be earned in the major.
- **Minor:** A course of study in a discipline or interdisciplinary cluster at the undergraduate level that is other than the student's major area of study. A minimum of 18 semester credit hours must be earned in the minor.
- **Certificate:** A post-baccalaureate or post-master program of study offered at the graduate level, in which a specific skill set is demonstrated at the end of the program, usually culminating in a capstone course. In order to earn a certificate, the program of study must be offered apart from a degree; however, the courses in a certificate program may be applied toward a graduate degree program. A minimum of 12 semester credit hours must be earned in a certificate program.
- **Specialization:** An integrated, coherent set of courses that define a limited topic or field of study at the graduate level that is taken within the degree program. A minimum of 12 semester credit hours must be earned in the specialization.
- **Concentration:** A cluster of courses taken within a focused content area. Courses can be within or outside of the undergraduate major area of study. A minimum of 9 semester credit hours must be earned in the concentration.
- **Accelerated Bachelor's/Master's Degree Program:** Designed to provide a more efficient means to obtain a master's degree. Allows students to begin accumulating credits towards completion of a master's degree while still enrolled as an undergraduate.
- **Dual degree:** a formal agreement where two degrees are conferred simultaneously from two institutions (or colleges/schools within a university), some courses/credits taken at both institutions/colleges/schools apply to both degrees and two diplomas are produced, one for each degree.
- **Joint degree:** a formal agreement where one degree is conferred from two institutions (or colleges/schools within a university), some courses/credits taken at both institutions/colleges/schools apply to the degree and both institutions/college/school are listed on a single diploma.

#### **Resources**

Reallocation of resources is critical to the start of any new program. Although new resources may occasionally be required every effort should be pursued in maximizing reallocation of college or department resources to fund a new program.

## **Timeline**

Annually the Office of the Provost promulgates the [memorandum](#) that identifies the due dates for: concept papers, proposals for new and terminated programs, program modifications and course changes.

## **New Program Ideas**

### **1. Idea Generation**

Ideas for new academic programs come from many sources. They might be the outcome of student or community requests, college strategic goals, advances in a discipline or success of a similar idea at other institutions. Colleges and Schools are encouraged to hold periodic sessions for consideration of potential new programs by faculty, student, alumni or community groups.

### **2. Idea Screening**

The number of new programs that could be developed generally far exceeds the resources of the University. Indeed, even good programming ideas often surpass the resources available or the strategic directions of the college or university. Thus, various ideas for new programs must be screened at the department and college level (or in the case of proposed interdisciplinary programs with a representative committee). The general criteria that should be applied in screening a new program idea are the following:

- Is the proposed program consistent with the mission and strategic plan of the University?
- Can it be delivered with high academic quality?
- Is it likely to be profitable, at minimum on a direct cost basis?
- Is it consistent with the strength and core competencies of the department?
- Is the program free from duplication or competition with a current or planned program within the university?
- Is the program sustainable on a long-term basis?
- Does it have characteristics that are distinctive from similar programs offered by the competition?
- How will this program enhance the reputation of Marquette?

### **3. Deans discuss the idea of the program with the Provost or Vice Provost for Academic Affairs or Vice Provost for Graduate and Professional Studies and Dean of the Graduate School (as appropriate).**

### **4. If the idea addresses all of the criteria and has support of the Dean, Provost or Vice Provost for Academic Affairs or Vice Provost for Graduate and Professional Studies and Dean of the Graduate School (as appropriate) a concept paper may be developed.**

## **Concept Paper Development**

A concept paper should be developed for all new degree, major and certificate programs. Concept papers are not required for new minors, concentration, specializations or accelerated degree programs.

### **1. Concept Paper Content**

The concept paper should not exceed three pages and should include the following:

- A description of the academic program.
- Identify how new program is consistent with University mission and promotes strategic initiatives of the college and University.
- How the new program is consistent with the strength and core competencies of the department and/or college/school.
- Capability of college/department to deliver the new program with high quality.
- Program is not similar to or does not compete with a current or planned program within the university.
- Sustainability of program on a long-term basis.

- Are the characteristics of the new program distinctive from similar programs offered by the competition?
  - General statement on student outcomes, market outlook and preliminary enrollment goals.
  - Overview of all resource requirements both operating and capital.
  - Potential to enhance the reputation of Marquette.
  - Identify where the program be administratively housed.
2. Concept Paper Review
- a. The concept paper should be approved by the Dean and submitted to the Office of the Provost (attn: Chief of Staff to the Provost) for review.
    - The concept paper will be reviewed by the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs or Vice Provost for Graduate and Professional Studies and Dean of the Graduate School (as appropriate). Review will ensure the concept paper adequately addresses the required content areas, review of overall resource implications and impact on other programs on campus.
    - Selected concept papers as determined by the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs or Vice Provost for Graduate and Professional Studies and Dean of the Graduate School will be submitted periodically to the Academic Deans Council for review, discussion and recommendation.
  - b. Concept papers that meet the criteria will be invited in writing by the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs or Vice Provost for Graduate and Professional Studies and Dean of the Graduate School to develop and submit a proposal. Included in the invite will be detailed explanation on areas that need to be better defined or explained in the proposal.
  - c. The Office of Finance and Office of Marketing and Communication will be informed of the concept approval. The Office of Marketing and Communication once informed of concept paper approval will assist the department or college in developing the market demand analysis.

### **Proposal/Review/Evaluation Guidelines**

The sections listed below provide the proposal guidelines for the noted program and the process for proposal review/approval, and program evaluation. Program proposal should be submitted online via [CourseLeaf](#).

[Section 1:](#) New degree or major

[Section 2:](#) New minor

[Section 3:](#) New certificate

[Section 4:](#) New specialization

[Section 5:](#) New concentration

[Section 6:](#) Accelerated degree programs

[Section 7:](#) Expanding enrollment of existing program

[Section 8:](#) Modifying an existing program

[Section 9:](#) Terminating an existing program

[Section 10:](#) Proposal approval/review process

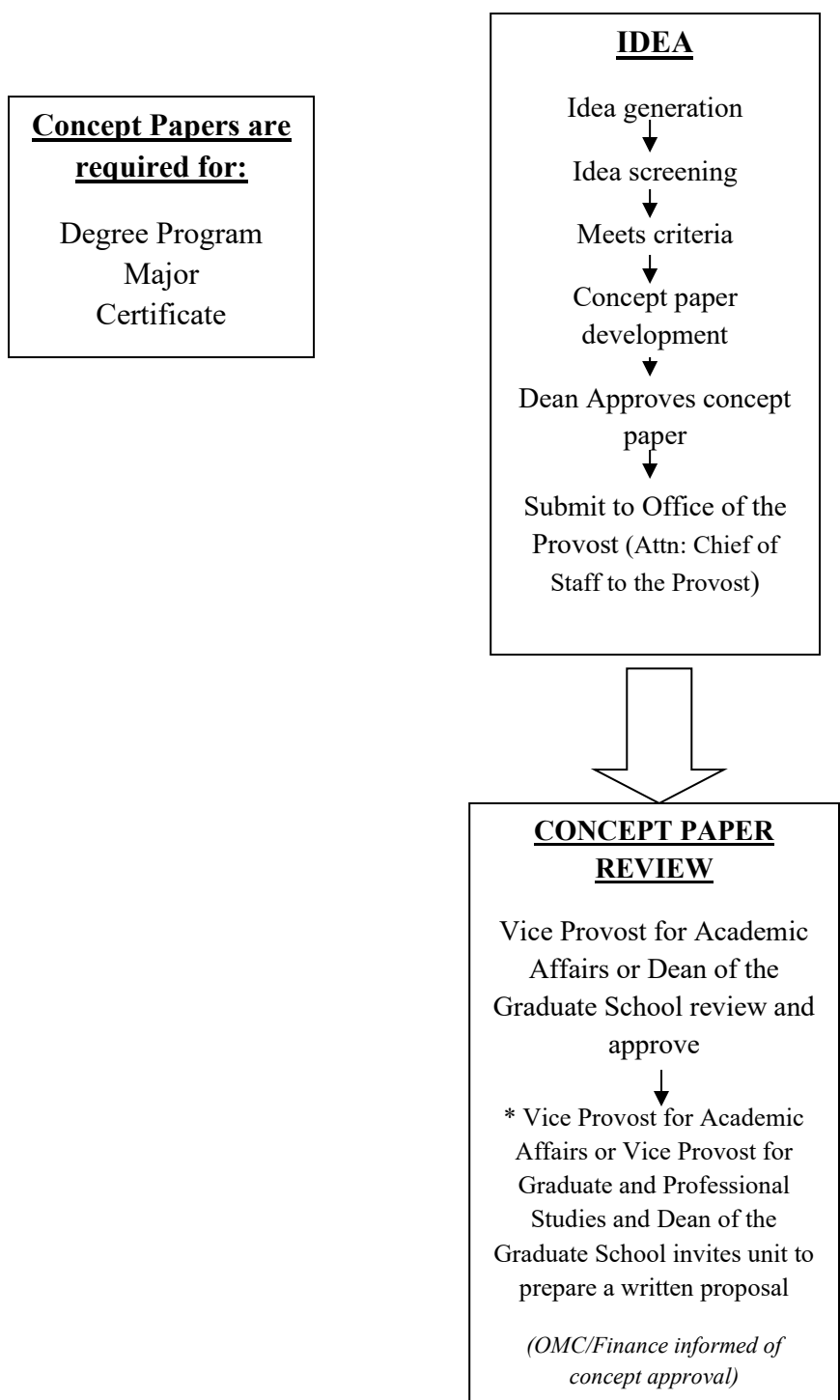
[Section 11:](#) Periodic program review

### **Higher Learning Commission Approval for Academic Programs**

The linked [Higher Learning Commission](#) (HLC) document details those programs which either require HLC notification or prior HLC approval before the program can begin. Please review the document as part of the proposal development process. Contact the [Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs](#) if you have

questions or to provide notification that you are developing a program that requires HLC notification or approval.

**Flow Chart for  
Academic Program  
Idea and Concept Development**



\*For Undergraduate programs:

Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

\*For Graduate or Professional Program:

Vice Provost for Graduate and Professional Studies  
and Dean of the Graduate School

**Proposal Flow Charts**

See new degree/major and certificate sections for review/approval process for proposal