

Ensuring Effective and Efficient Curriculum Processes  
An Academic National Report





confident that the proposals align with the college mission, comply with the requirements of Title 5 and the Program and Course Approval Handbook (PCAH), and fulfill validated college needs and that there are sufficient resources to suursc



- Limit the technical review committee to the most critical individuals, such as the curriculum chair, articulation officer, librarian, SLO coordinator, distance education expert, curriculum specialist, and the CIO or designee, and allow them to conduct their review simultaneously rather than sequentially.
- Create criteria, submission schedules, and approval processes that allow minor changes to courses and programs to undergo an expedited or streamlined technical review rather than a full technical review.

*Make sure curriculum committees are run efficiently.*

Once the technical review of new curriculum is completed, proposals move to the curriculum committee for review and approval. Curriculum committee members must be well prepared and curriculum committee meetings should be run as effectively as possible. Curriculum committees should focus on the content of the curriculum rather than on technical minutiae during meetings. Focusing too much on minutiae can render a curriculum committee ineffective and result in delays to the approval and offering of new curriculum. Some effective practices that can be employed to ensure curriculum

submission to the Chancellor's Office (Title 5 §55130). At the same time, any expedited approval must not come at the expense of the quality or rigor of the curriculum.

Examples of methods for expediting approval of new curriculum include the following:

- Give curriculum committees full authority to make recommendations on new courses and programs directly to the governing board and remove any intermediate approval steps.
- Give curriculum committees full authority to approval non-substantial changes—as defined locally—to courses and programs without any additional approvals, including from the governing board.
- Limit the requirements for curriculum submissions to the governing board to approval of new courses and programs.
- Submit new CTE program proposals to the regional consortium simultaneously with submission to the curriculum committee for local program approval and prior to submission to the governing board.<sup>1</sup>
- Expedite technical review for course revisions that only involve changes to course attributes such as content and objectives or for changes to courses and programs that are required as a result of changes to statutory or external accreditation requirements;
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- Schedule biweekly, or even weekly, standing meetings of the curriculum committee, particularly in the fall when curriculum approval workload is often the heaviest.
- Change local policies and procedures so that the governing board can approve curriculum at every meeting.

*Considerations* Multi-college districts present additional challenges. For example, some districts have aligned or partially aligned curriculum that requires district-wide review before new courses and programs are approved or even before approval of substantial changes to existing courses and programs. No legal requirement exists for colleges in multi-college districts to have identical or aligned curriculum. While alignment of curriculum in multi-college districts can certainly be of benefit to students, curriculum alignment requirements can also make curricular improvement at colleges much more difficult. Furthermore, accreditors hold colleges, not districts, responsible for the quality of their curriculum and the effectiveness of their curriculum approval processes, and if a district-wide process is identified as not meeting the accreditation standards, then all of the colleges in the district will be sanctioned for not meeting the standard. If district-wide processes are identified as reasons that curriculum is not approved in a timely manner, then local senates should strongly consider changing their district-wide processes.

Considerations include the following:

- Eliminating district-wide approvals or requirements for achieving consensus among the colleges in the district.
- Give each college in the district full autonomy over its curriculum, including attributes such as units and contact hours.
- If alignment is a concern, use C-ID or articulation agreements as means to ensure alignment of curriculum rather than using rigid district-wide alignment requirements.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

Local academic senates and curriculum committees should work together to review, evaluate, and revise the college's and/or district's curriculum approval policies and procedures. The release of the *Report of the Task Force on Workforce Jobs and the Economy*, along with the need for some pilot colleges to approve new baccalaureate degrees by spring 2016, has created a new sense of urgency for local senates and curriculum committees to ensure that their curriculum approval processes are effective and efficient so that new courses and programs as well as course and program revisions can be approved in a timely manner to meet community and industry needs.

Recommendations for local senates and curriculum committees include the following:

- Review and evaluate the effectiveness of local curriculum processes.
- Make certain the process for the initiation of new curriculum and revisions to existing curriculum is clear.
- Make certain the technical review process is streamlined and effective.
- Make certain curriculum committee meetings are run efficiently.



- Streamline the curriculum approval process, including increasing the frequency of curriculum approval by the curriculum committee and the governing board.
- Consider establishing an expedited approval process for time-sensitive proposals.
- Consider giving colleges in multi-college districts autonomy over their curriculum.

In addition to providing the recommended effective practices provided in this white paper, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges is also available to work with colleges and districts that may need additional assistance in revising their curriculum processes. Assistance from the Academic Senate may be requested at

<http://asccc.org/contact/>

