

**Policy on Granting an Exemption from  
Program Requirements  
February 14, 2017**



**Overview**

In an era where exploration of new curricular structures is essential, existing policy practices lead to unacceptable alternatives: avoid curricular experimentation that violates policy until policy is revised to accommodate new structures or go forward in violation of policy. The former creates a significant hurdle and substantial time delays that will often lead to curricular stasis, and the latter undermines the integrity of policy and effective risk and resource management of innovative and experimental curricular initiatives. A better alternative is to create, in policy, a formal exemption process. Such a process will enable innovative faculty to pursue experimental programs in a way that respects collective faculty responsibility for curricular decisions by allowing such programs to go forward in violation of existing policy as appropriately controlled experiments that may, in the long run, inform changes to policy.

This policy exemption process applies to credentialed programs requiring University Curriculum Council (UCC) approval such as certificates, minors, associate, baccalaureate, and graduate degree programs. This process will take effect once approved by UCC and will not be required for any programs that have already gained UCC approval.

The exemption process is not a mechanism for circumventing review, but a way to review, approve, and pilot programs that violate current policy. Thus, Programs Committee (PC) and UCC, as well as college level curricular review processes and responsibilities, remain in place.

**Exemption Process**

Program proposers interested in offering an innovative program that violates existing policy may request an exemption with their program proposal but will be required to articulate why the University should support such an exemption. Program proposers, departments, and colleges will be required to understand and address risks at the local, State, and Federal level, and where appropriate, the International level. They will need to be sensitive to the challenges placed on administrative units that arise in extending limited resources this way. Programs granted an exemption to policy will be given a date upon which the program will expire unless further action is taken, as outlined below. To formalize these considerations, we propose the following exemption process:

Proposals requesting an exemption from current policy will be considered by UCC when the following is documented by the program proposer:

1. Provost's office confirms the process articulated in this document has been followed and accepts institutional risks associated with offering a program that violates current policy
2. The Dean, or equivalent, including the Dean of the Graduate College for graduate-level programs, accepts the risks associated with violation of current policy and confirms that any risks associated with the program will be monitored and that the resources are available to do that.
3. The department chair, or equivalent, will identify all risks associated with the program owing to the exemptions requested. They will identify all units they have approached in regard to these potential risks and provide the responses of those units. Those responses should include a description of the potential outcome at risk and, if possible, the likelihood of its occurrence.
4. PC and UCC confirm the program uniqueness and integrity through standard curricular review with the exception that the proposed program does not align to existing university policy and that the approval is not indefinite (i.e., the approval will expire unless a formal review extends it prior to its expiration or policy is altered).

A number of crucial issues arise in initiating such programs, and these involve resources and risk management that spans faculty and administrative offices. A working group convened by the chair of the UCC, will be responsible for annual review of the exemption process to ensure the process is working (e.g., risks are being well managed, the process isn't being used to bypass curricular review, etc.) and to identify trends that may indicate a need for revision of institutional policies. This working group should be comprised of representatives from UCC, PC, Individual Course Committee, faculty senate, university registrar, graduate college, financial aid and scholarships, institutional research, admissions, and the dean of students, the vice provost for undergraduate education, the associate provost for faculty and academic planning, the executive dean of regional higher education, and the senior vice provost for instructional innovation.

When an exemption is approved by UCC, the Chair of UCC Programs Review Committee will calendar a review of the program based on the agreed upon expiration date. The Programs Review Committee will report on these reviews in the usual manner to UCC. Note that because these programs have an approved end date, the review will need to take place in such time that allows for appropriate review and action prior to that end date in order to maintain a seamless program (i.e., if a program is approved with an end date of June 30, 2018, the review will need to be completed well before that date; otherwise, the program would be stopped on June 30 while the review continues).

In addition to the standard details required for program proposals as determined by colleges and PC, requests for policy exemptions should include the following:

- Identified risks and mitigation strategies (especially, but not solely, as related to student risk and accreditation concerns)
- Financial/resource impact on university (e.g., reporting, staff effort to work around administrative system limitations) and anticipated revenue
- Requested duration of pilot necessary to deliver informative results (with an upper limit of 3 years), with a suggested expiration date to be agreed upon by PC and UCC
- A plan for students enrolled in the pilot to reasonably complete the program without loss of academic progress or increases in costs in the event that the program expires