

DEVELOPMENT, REVISION AND APPROVAL POLICY FOR CREDIT PROGRAMS

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A. PURPOSE

Within the public post-secondary sector of the province of British Columbia (BC), the ***College and Institute Act*** confers authority for program and credential approval on an institution’s Education Council and its Board. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all Credit Programs approved for delivery at Douglas College (the College), whether new or revised, will further the College’s goals, produce student outcomes of appropriate standards, and meet relevant educational objectives and current guidelines of the Ministry responsible for advanced education.

B. SCOPE

This policy applies to the development, approval and revision of all Credit Programs and credentials at Douglas College; it does not apply to continuing education or non-credit programs, to the development or approval of individual courses (i.e., Curriculum Guidelines) or to the cancellation of Credit Programs.

Participants in the processes outlined in and governed by this policy include the following:

- **DEANS/ASSOCIATE DEANS/DIRECTORS**
- **DEPARTMENTS/DISCIPLINES/PROGRAMS**
- **EDUCATION COUNCIL**
- **ENROLMENT SERVICES**

- **FACULTY EDUCATION COMMITTEES (FECs)**
- **SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM (SMT)**
- **VICE PRESIDENT, ACADEMIC AND PROVOST (VPA)**
- **VICE PRESIDENT'S ACADEMIC COUNCIL (VPAC)**

C. DEFINITIONS

Associated Studies: Courses supplied by one area in the College at the request of another area. Associated Studies may be of three types:

- a. **Open courses:** existing courses whose curriculum meets the educational needs of the requesting area.
- b. **Adapted courses:** sections of existing courses (where the course number remains unchanged) modified to make readings and assignments relevant to the requesting area's curriculum and learning outcomes.
- c. **Exclusive courses:** courses designed specifically for a requesting area to meet an identified need for new curriculum.

Concept Paper: A brief outline of a proposed new program, approval of which typically precedes and launches detailed program development.

Course Equivalents: Two or more credit courses recognized in their respective Curriculum Guidelines as equivalent due to having equivalent or near-equivalent learning outcomes and very similar content, offered at a similar level; students cannot receive credit for taking more than one among any group of Course Equivalents.

Course Substitution: Program credit awarded on an exceptional basis to a student for completion of a credit course not recognized as either a Program Requirement Equivalent or a Course Equivalent in lieu of a required course identified in the Curriculum Framework as approved by Education Council.

Credit Program: A defined framework of study comprising credit courses approved by Education Council and leading to a credential type recognized under the **Credentials Awarded at Douglas College Policy**.

Curriculum Framework: A table showing all courses to be included in a program, including a brief description of the content to be covered in each required course or within a laddering program, and a statement of how the overall program content meets any relevant accreditation or regulatory requirements. In addition, the Curriculum Framework will stipulate course sequencing, where prescribed. Required courses should be distinguished from electives, and descriptors may be attached to electives to ensure they meet program objectives for rigour (e.g., upper-levels elective) or breadth (e.g., elective outside the Faculty/department).

For a bachelor degree program, the table will distinguish the program requirements to be included in the first two years of the program (specific courses and/or a laddering program) from those in the final two years of the program, and it will note acceptable **Program Requirement Equivalents** where applicable.

Curriculum Guideline (CG): A document presenting a detailed description of course content and objectives, pre-requisites, learning outcomes, methods of instruction and methods of evaluation. CGs must be developed and approved through the governance process as outlined in the **Curriculum Development and Approval Policy** and conform in substance to other Educational policies (including but not limited to the **Evaluation Policy** and the **Grading Policy**).

Full Program Proposal (FPP): A written submission outlining details of a proposed new Credit Program that includes a detailed Curriculum Framework and provides any information required by the Ministry responsible for advanced education and other Ministries where applicable.

Program Requirement Equivalents: Recognition in a Curriculum Framework of a credit course that is acceptable as an alternative to a required credit course also identified in the Curriculum Framework as approved by Education Council; or, recognition of an alternative means of satisfying a program requirement other than a credit course where both the requirement and the alternative means of satisfying that requirement are identified in the Curriculum Framework as approved by Education Council.

D. POLICY STATEMENTS

1. Under the mandate provided by BC's **College and Institute Act**, Douglas College provides credit courses of study and programs ranging from adult basic education up to and including applied baccalaureate (bachelor) degree programs. The College is committed to ensuring that the development, revision and approval of its programs follows a rational, consistent and consultative process, and that its programs are both educationally viable and administratively sustainable.
2. Program developers are expected to consult all affected departments, programs and service areas early and throughout the program development/revision process. At a minimum, consultations should include the following:
 - a. Deans and departments that would offer/already offer curriculum included in the program;
 - b. Deans and departments where there may be jurisdictional overlap or the potential for program laddering;
 - c. Other areas that may contribute relevant expertise (e.g., advice regarding admissions, course pre-/co-requisites, program naming, online learning, accessibility and inclusion); and
 - d. Director, Indigenous Academic Initiatives or designate.

(Note: for detailed consultation checklists, see section F, below.)

3. Consultations should occur before a Full Program Proposal (FPP)/program revision is referred to the relevant Faculty Education Committees (FECs) for review. Program developers, in consultation with the relevant Dean, may choose to amend curriculum or the FPP/program revision after receiving input from affected FECs but are not required to do so.
4. Proposals for new/revised Credit Programs must clearly outline available pathways for students to ladder into or out from the program.

5. Proposals for program revision must include a clear transition plan for students who entered the program prior to the revision, indicating how these students will be both advised about program changes and supported to complete their credential without being disadvantaged by the changes.
6. This policy governs internal College approval processes. It is understood that program developers will also consider external (e.g., accrediting or governmental) requirements and processes as appropriate.

E. PROCEDURES

Note: The procedures outlined below, complete with typical timelines associated with each stage of the governance workflow process, are available on the College intranet (for internal users only), in the following [Standard Operating Procedures \(SOPs\)](#):

- Program Approval Process for Credit Programs – Concept Paper for New Degree Programs
- Program Approval Process for Credit Programs – Concept Paper for New Non-Degree Programs
- Program Approval Process for Credit Programs – Full Program Proposal for New Degree Programs
- Program Approval Process for Credit Programs – Full Program Proposal for New Non-Degree Programs
- Program Revision Process for Credit Programs (Degree and Non-Degree)

I. DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL OF NEW CREDIT PROGRAMS

1. Concept Paper

A proposal for a new Credit Program normally begins with a Concept Paper, which may be developed by an individual or a group, either of whom may be appointed by the Dean.

Note: In circumstances where the Vice President, Academic and Provost (VPA) waives the need for a Concept Paper, the program developer(s) will be advised by their Dean to proceed directly to a Full Program Proposal (FPP) (*see Procedure E.1.2, below*).

- a. A Concept Paper should be presented using the College template. A Concept Paper for a degree program should also comply with the Ministry's Stage 1 Review Template for BC Public Institutions. (*See section F, below, for direction to templates.*)
- b. The Concept Paper will contain the following:
 - i. A rationale for the program, including evidence of labour market and student demand (unless the assessment of demand is waived by the VPA);
 - ii. The proposed program's relationship to the strategic directions of the College;
 - iii. A tentative list of courses and admissions requirements; and
 - iv. For proposed bachelor degree programs only, a brief summary of how the proposed curriculum meets degree-level standards.

- c. Assessments of labour market and student demand are typically required as part of the Concept Paper to demonstrate that a proposed program could provide benefit to, and compete in, the post-secondary environment.
- i. Where such evidence is required, program developer(s) will work with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to determine labour market and student demand.
 - ii. Evidence of demand should include the following:
 - quantitative data from potential employers and both current and prospective students; and
 - comparisons with existing programs in the province, to demonstrate that the College could sustain the proposed program within a competitive post-secondary environment.

Note: Letters of support from community partners, prospective employers and students should **not** be solicited at this stage, in order to avoid raising expectations prematurely.

- d. The developer(s) of the Concept Paper will present it at the following levels:
- i. To the department/discipline/program (DDP);
 - ii. With the approval of the DDP, to the appropriate Faculty Education Committee (FEC) for review; and
 - iii. With the support of the FEC, to the appropriate Dean for review and determination of fit with Faculty/department strategic directions.

Note: The appropriate FEC is the one that would offer the greatest number of courses in the program. A Concept Paper for an interdisciplinary program must be reviewed by all relevant FECs and Deans.

- e. Where the Dean supports the Concept Paper, the Dean will discuss the Concept Paper with the VPA. With the support of the VPA, the Concept Paper, along with evidence of labour market and student demand, where required, will be added to the Vice President's Academic Council (VPAC) agenda, for feedback and approval.
- f. VPAC will determine the following:
- i. Whether further evidence of labour market and student demand is required before program development should proceed, in which case the program developer(s) will be asked to re-submit the Concept Paper to VPAC with the additional information; or
 - ii. Whether the proposed program can be supported administratively and operationally as submitted, in which case VPAC will
 - assign responsibility for further program development and a consultation process, which may include the creation of a Program Advisory Committee; and
 - refer the Concept Paper to both Senior Management Team (SMT) and Education Council.
- g. Following VPAC approval, the VPA will forward the Concept Paper to Education Council and its subcommittees to make recommendations to program developer(s) about educational

issues. Each subcommittee submission should be made in the same month, so that the subcommittees' recommendations come to Education Council for approval at the same meeting.

- h. Education Council subcommittees will focus on the following elements of the Concept Paper:
 - i. The Programs Committee will review the Concept Paper for compliance with the College's educational standards, practices and policies.
 - Where a Concept Paper is not supported by the Programs Committee, it may be revised by the program developer(s) in consultation with the Dean.
 - Once a Concept Paper is supported, the Programs Committee will advance it to Education Council with a request that it be placed on an Education Council meeting agenda as a Notice of Motion.
 - ii. The Admissions Advisory Committee will review proposed program admissions requirements where these differ from standard College admissions requirements.
 - Where an admission requirement is not supported by the Admissions Advisory Committee, it may be revised by the program developer(s) in consultation with the Dean.
- i. Changes made to the Concept Paper in response to input from an Education Council subcommittee must be re-submitted to that subcommittee for reconsideration. At the discretion of the VPA, the Concept Paper may also be relegated to VPAC for reconsideration prior to being placed on an Education Council agenda.
- j. Senior Management Team (SMT) will evaluate the Concept Paper in terms of its fit with the College's strategic plan and priorities and review the evidence (where provided) of labour market and student demand, to determine whether further program development is warranted. If it is not supported by SMT, the Concept Paper may be revised and re-submitted, held to be re-submitted at a later date, or dropped.
- k. The Concept Paper developer(s), in consultation with the responsible Dean(s), will decide which action is to be taken after considering feedback from SMT. Any revisions made to the proposal will be re-submitted to VPAC and SMT for approval.

2. Full Program Proposal (FPP)

Where the Concept Paper is supported (or is waived by the VPA), the Dean will appoint an individual or group to serve as the developer(s) of the FPP. Program developer(s) may be faculty members or external experts, as appropriate.

- a. As appropriate, the Dean will strike or expand a Program Advisory Committee to provide advice on the implementation and ongoing operation of the program as specified in the **Program Advisory Committee(s) Policy**.
- b. The program developer(s) will do the following:

- i. Prepare a detailed Curriculum Framework listing all required courses and electives, where appropriate;
 - ii. Provide a brief description of all new courses developed for the program;
 - iii. Identify any academic requirements that differ from those in College-wide educational policies, such as a higher passing grade;
 - iv. Develop the FPP;
 - v. Complete all required cross-College consultations (*see checklists identified in section F, below*); and
 - vi. Present the FPP to the appropriate FEC(s) for review and the appropriate Dean(s) for approval.
- c. Where the Dean supports the FPP, the Dean will discuss the FPP with the Vice President, Academic and Provost (VPA). With the support of the VPA, the FPP will be added to a Vice President's Academic Council (VPAC) agenda for feedback and approval.
- d. The Dean(s) and the program developer(s) will present the FPP and a budget summary to VPAC. VPAC may request revisions to the FPP or approve it to advance to SMT and Education Council. Approval by VPAC indicates that the program meets the educational standards and strategic goals of the College and can be supported administratively and operationally.
- e. Following VPAC approval, the VPA will forward the FPP to Education Council and its subcommittees. Each subcommittee submission should be made in the same month, so that the subcommittees' recommendations come to Education Council for approval at the same meeting.
- f. Education Council subcommittees will focus on the following elements of the FPP:
- i. The Programs Committee will review the FPP for compliance with the College's educational standards, practices and policies and advise on any relevant external considerations.
 - Where the FPP is not supported by the Programs Committee, it may be revised by the program developer(s) in consultation with the Dean.
 - Once the FPP is supported, the Programs Committee will advance it to Education Council with a request that it be placed on an Education Council meeting agenda as a Notice of Motion.
 - ii. The Admissions Advisory Committee will review proposed program admissions requirements where these differ from standard College admissions requirements.
 - Where an admission requirement is not supported by the Admissions Advisory Committee, it may be revised by the program developer(s) in consultation with the Dean.
 - iii. The Curriculum Committee will review any Curriculum Guidelines (CGs) developed or revised for the program and, where warranted, recommend approval by Education Council.

Note: CGs for any new Associated Studies courses may be submitted after the FPP is approved at Education Council.

- g. Changes made to the FPP in response to input from an Education Council subcommittee must be re-submitted to that subcommittee for reconsideration. At the discretion of the VPA, the FPP may also be relegated to VPAC for reconsideration prior to being placed on an Education Council agenda.
- h. Where the FPP is not approved by Education Council, the program developer(s) may revise and resubmit it, subject to reconsideration at the appropriate prior levels of the governance approval workflow as outlined in the procedures above.
- i. The VPA will refer an FPP that has been approved by both Education Council and VPAC to Senior Management Team (SMT) for review and approval. Approval by SMT indicates that the program is sustainable and is consistent with College strategic directions and planning priorities.
- j. When an Education Council-approved FPP requires a new credential, Education Council and the VPA will recommend the new credential to the College Board for approval.
- k. When a program requires approval by the Ministry and the Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB), the VPA will inform Education Council when such approval is granted or denied, and report on the reasons for any denial. If DQAB approval is subject to any further change(s), a revised FPP may be submitted directly to Education Council for approval.

II. REVISION OF CREDIT PROGRAMS

NOTES:

- Revisions to Curriculum Guidelines (CGs) for individual courses must follow the process outlined in the **Curriculum Development and Approval Policy**.
 - Revisions to bachelor degree programs may require Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB) approval.
1. The Dean will strike an *ad hoc* faculty committee or assign a faculty member to develop a proposal for program revision, which will include the following:
 - a. The current and proposed (revised) Curriculum Frameworks;
 - b. A detailed rationale for changes, with specific reference to the program's most recent comprehensive program review (*see College policy A38 Program Review*), where possible;
 - c. A student transition plan for students who entered the program prior to the revision, indicating how these students will be both advised about program changes and supported to complete their credential without being disadvantaged by the changes; and
 - d. The effective date of the revision.
 2. The program developer(s) will complete all required cross-College consultations, including but not limited to departments offering any Associated Studies course(s) affected by the revision (*see*

checklists identified in section F, below), as well as appropriate external groups (e.g., employers, practicum placement sites, Program Advisory Committees, provincial articulation committees).

3. The proposed program changes will be reviewed by the Faculty Education Committee (FEC) and approved by the Dean of the Faculty delivering the program. Where a program is jointly offered by more than one Faculty, all involved FECs must review and all involved Deans must approve the changes.
4. The Dean will consult with the Vice President, Academic and Provost (VPA) to determine whether a program revision must be approved by the Vice President's Academic Council (VPAC) prior to being submitted to Education Council.
 - a. Where proposed changes are major (e.g., significant changes to program outcomes or a credential name, or changes with resource implications), the Dean will present details of the proposed program revision to VPAC for approval and recommendation to Education Council and Senior Management Team (SMT). (Note: changes to a credential name also require Board approval – see *Procedure II.10, below*.)
 - b. Where proposed changes are minor (e.g., re-sequencing of required courses), the VPA may expedite approval, advancing the program revision to Education Council directly and advising VPAC of the submission at the next VPAC meeting, as information.
 - c. Where there is urgent educational need, the VPA, with the agreement of the Dean, may recommend simultaneous submission to Education Council and VPAC.
5. Subject to the process agreed upon by the Dean and VPA (*per Procedure II.4, above*), and following VPAC approval, the VPA will forward the proposed program revision to Education Council and its subcommittees. Each subcommittee submission should be made in the same month, so that the subcommittees' recommendations come to Education Council for approval at the same meeting.
6. Education Council subcommittees will focus on the following elements of the program revision:
 - a. The Programs Committee will review the program and proposed revisions for compliance with the College's educational standards, practices and policies.
 - i. Where a program revision is not supported by the Programs Committee, it may be revised by the program developer(s) in consultation with the Dean.
 - ii. Once a program revision is supported, the Programs Committee will advance it to Education Council with a request that it be placed on an Education Council meeting agenda as a Notice of Motion.
 - b. The Admissions Advisory Committee will review program admission requirements and any proposed changes to these requirements that differ from standard College admissions requirements.
 - i. Where an admission requirement is not supported by the Admissions Advisory Committee, it may be revised by the program developer(s) in consultation with the Dean.
 - c. The Curriculum Committee will review any new and/or revised Curriculum Guidelines (CGs) included in the program revision and, where warranted, recommend approval by Education Council.

- i. Depending on the intended effective date for implementing changes, revised CGs, including those for Associated Studies courses, may be submitted after or at the same time the proposal for program change is submitted to Education Council.
7. Changes made to the program revision in response to input from an Education Council subcommittee must be re-submitted to that subcommittee for reconsideration. At the discretion of the Vice President, Academic and Provost (VPA), the revisions may also be relegated to VPAC for reconsideration prior to being placed on an Education Council agenda.
8. Where the program revision is not approved by Education Council, the program developer(s) may revise and resubmit it, subject to reconsideration at the appropriate prior levels of the governance approval workflow as outlined in the procedures above.
9. In the case of a major program revision, the VPA will recommend approval to the Senior Management Team (SMT) following VPAC and Education Council approval.
10. When revisions include a change in a credential name, Education Council and the VPA will recommend the establishment of the new credential and withdrawal of the existing credential to the College Board for approval.
11. Where a program revision requires the approval of the Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB), the VPA will inform the appropriate Dean(s), Education Council and SMT when that approval is granted or denied, and report on the reasons for any denial. If DQAB approval is subject to any further change(s), a revised program revision may be submitted directly to Education Council for approval

III. ESTABLISHING PROGRAM REQUIREMENT EQUIVALENTS, COURSE EQUIVALENTS AND COURSE SUBSTITUTIONS

1. Where the desired learning outcomes associated with one or more program requirement(s) are sufficiently broad such that students could achieve those outcomes through a range of courses, program developer(s) should provide students with Program Requirement Equivalents detailed in the curriculum framework, such as in the following examples:
 - a. Students must take either ENGL 1130 or CMNS 1115; or
 - b. Students must take one 3-credit course from among the following *[list to follow]*; or
 - c. Students must take one 3-credit upper-level course in Business or Business Law; or
 - d. Students must take one 1000-level course that transfers to a research university as a laboratory science.
2. Program Requirement Equivalents may or may not be reciprocated between two programs.
3. For the purpose of fulfilling program requirements, a student does not need program permission for a formally recognized Course Equivalent to count in lieu of a specified required course.
4. Course Substitutions may be granted on an exceptional basis by the program's department Chair/Co-ordinator on an individual student basis, in consultation with the Dean/Associate Dean, and governed by the following principles:

- a. Course Substitutions should not be unreasonably withheld and should be granted consistently.
- b. The practice of approving Course Substitutions must not jeopardize a student's ability to meet program learning outcomes.
- c. The Chair/Co-ordinator approving the Course Substitution will consult with the Dean/Associate Dean and notify Enrolment Services (the Registrar).
- d. The Chair/Co-ordinator should consider the impact of a Course Substitution on a student's progress in the program (e.g., the need for pre-requisite waivers).
- e. Enrolment Services will track Course Substitutions to monitor consistency, frequency and fairness, and the Registrar may request that a Dean and Chair/Co-ordinator reconsider a decision about a Course Substitution.
- f. If a department/program determines that a particular Course Substitution should apply to all students, it will
 - i. Where both courses are Douglas College courses, establish a formal Program Requirement Equivalence and/or pursue formal Course Equivalency through the Curriculum Development and Approval process, as appropriate; or,
 - ii. Where the course to be substituted for a program requirement is from outside Douglas College, grant appropriate transfer credit.

F. SUPPORTING FORMS, DOCUMENTS, WEBSITES, RELATED POLICIES

The following related Douglas College policies are publicly available on the College website:

- *Admissions*
- *Associated Studies*
- *Credentials Awarded at Douglas College*
- *Curriculum Development and Approval*
- *Evaluation*
- *Grading*
- *Program Advisory Committee(s)*
- *Program Cancellation*
- *Program Review*

The following governance process guidelines are available to internal users on the College intranet:

- Governance workflow checklists
- Programs Committee Guide

G. RELATED ACTS AND REGULATIONS

- *College and Institute Act [RSBC 1996], c.52*

H. RELATED COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS

N/A

This policy was last revised March 2026