



Academic Program Policy

No. 6050

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Policy Owner:

Julie Ross

Policy Author:

(Contact Person)

Rick Sparks

Affected Parties:

Undergraduate

Graduate

Faculty

Staff

Other

1.0 Purpose

This policy establishes the principles and authority framework governing the creation, modification, and discontinuation of academic curricula at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. It is intended to ensure that curricular decision-making reflects shared governance values, supports the university's mission and strategic plan, and meets applicable accreditation, state, and federal requirements.

2.0 Policy

The creation, modification, or discontinuation of a program must undergo Academic Curriculum Governance review process before the program can be implemented and marketed publicly. The specific Academic Curriculum Governance procedure can be found on the Office of the University Registrar's website.

2.1 Guiding Principles

Academic curriculum governance at Virginia Tech is grounded in the principle of shared governance. Faculty hold primary responsibility for the design, development, and quality of the academic curriculum. At the same time, academic program decisions — particularly those involving resource implications and alignment with the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) and The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) — require administrative judgment and institutional accountability. This policy is designed to ensure that both faculty expertise and administrative responsibility are meaningfully exercised within a clear and consistent framework.

2.2 Authority and Oversight

Curricular authority at Virginia Tech is shared between the faculty and the administration. Faculty hold primary responsibility for the content and quality of the curriculum. The Provost, as the university's chief academic officer, bears institutional responsibility for ensuring that academic programs align with the university's mission, strategic priorities, accreditation obligations, and resource commitments.

The Provost works in partnership with university shared governance bodies and with the Office of the University Registrar to support a transparent and well-functioning curricular approval process.

For decisions involving the creation of a new degree or major program or the discontinuation of existing degree or major, the Provost retains final institutional authority, consistent with the resource and accreditation responsibilities of that office. Nothing in this policy abridges the authority of the Board of Visitors with respect to final approval of new, modified, or discontinued degree programs as required by Virginia law and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) policy.

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2.3 Categories of Curricular Action

For purposes of this policy, curricular actions are classified as follows:

Routine Curricular Actions include the creation, modification, or discontinuation of individual courses; modifications to existing academic program requirements; creation or discontinuation of a minor. These actions follow the review and approval process outlined on the Office of the University Registrar's website.

Significant Curricular Actions include substantial modification of existing program requirements; creation or discontinuation of a graduate Certificate; changes to program degree type or title; and any action requiring external approval by SCHEV, the Board of Visitors, or SACSCOC. These actions follow the review and approval process outlined on the Office of the Registrar's website and could require justification documentation as required by the entities listed above.

Degree and Major Creation and Discontinuation can have a significant impact on the university community. Therefore, these actions require consultation with faculty, academic units, college dean(s), and the relevant curricular governance bodies prior to a final decision by the Provost. Faculty input is an essential part of the deliberative process and shall be solicited, documented, and given meaningful consideration prior to a final decision by the Provost. Degree and Major creation and discontinuation follow the review and approval process outlined on the Office of the University Registrar's website.

In cases where a discontinuation proposal does not advance through standard committee review, the Dean of the program's academic home college may certify that faculty consultation has occurred and forward the proposal for Provost consideration.

2.4 Faculty Role in Curricular Governance

Faculty are the primary authors of the curriculum. Through departmental curriculum committees, college curriculum committees, and university-wide comment periods, faculty propose, develop, and evaluate curricular changes. Their collective expertise and academic judgment are essential to the integrity and quality of Virginia Tech's academic programs.

2.5 Role of the University Registrar

The Office of the University Registrar supports curricular governance through the administration of curriculum management systems, maintenance of the official academic record, coordination of catalog publication, and advisement on the operational implications of proposed curricular changes. The University Registrar serves as the steward of the Curricular Governance Procedures, publishing and maintaining those procedures on the Registrar's website. Those procedures are developed collaboratively with university shared governance bodies and the Provost and may be revised only through that same consultative process. No course or program shall be recorded in the official academic record or published in the university catalog without having been duly approved through the processes established under this policy.



3.0 Procedures

The specific procedures, timelines, forms, routing steps, and approval thresholds applicable to each category of curricular action are set forth in the Curricular Governance Procedures, published and maintained by the Office of the University Registrar on the Registrar's website (registrar.vt.edu) under the authority of the Provost. The Curricular Governance Procedures are developed in consultation with university shared governance bodies and the Provost, and revisions follow the same consultative process, with notice to affected academic units prior to implementation. Significant Curricular Actions that require SCHEV, Board of Visitors, and/or SACSCOC notification/approval are available on the Office of the University Registrar's website.

4.0 Definitions

Academic Program – A university recognized minor, major, degree, or graduate certificate.

Curricular Action – Any proposal to create, modify, suspend, or discontinue a course, program, certificate, concentration, major, minor, or degree offered by Virginia Tech.

Shared Governance – The principle that faculty, administration, and other stakeholders each have meaningful and defined roles in institutional decision-making, with authority allocated according to the nature of the decision.

Significant Curricular Action – A curricular change that creates a new academic program or substantially alters or eliminates an existing one, as defined in Section 2.3.

Program Discontinuation – A decision to permanently close an academic program to new students or to eliminate it entirely, including the associated administrative and student teach-out obligations.

5.0 References

6.0 Approval and Revisions

New policy approved June 30, 2026, by Julie Ross, Executive Vice President and Provost.