

1. The institution demonstrates that each educational program for which academic credit is awarded is (a) is approved by the faculty and the administration, and (b) establishes and evaluates program and learning outcomes.

- Compliance
- Partial Compliance
- Non-compliance

At Virginia Commonwealth University, faculty members dominate all curriculum committees that review proposals for curricular change, including new degree and certificate programs. The [University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee](#) (UUCC) reviews proposals from the College of Humanities and Sciences and all schools that offer undergraduate courses, whereas the [University Graduate Council](#) (UGC) is charged with review of curricular proposals at the graduate level. Both of these committees have been in operation for many years. During 2002-2003, the university established a third curricular review committee, the Committee on Professional Degree Programs (CPDP), which was formed to review curricular proposals involving advanced practitioner programs—currently defined as the first-professional programs (M.D., D.D.S., and Pharm.D.) and the Doctor of Physical Therapy program.

Two members from each school with undergraduate courses or programs have voting privileges on the [UUCC](#), and ex-officio members representing the VCU Libraries, VCU bulletins, and the degree-audit office join these members. The Vice Provost for Academic Affairs chairs the UUCC, which acts on course-related curricular changes, as well as on new, modified, or deleted curricula. [UUCC minutes](#) are posted on the UUCC web site.

[Representatives](#) elected by the Graduate Faculty in each school and college constitute the University Graduate Council (UGC), which is chaired by the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies. UGC is charged with the review and oversight of all new course and program proposals and changes to existing courses and programs to ensure the academic integrity and scholastic rigor of the curricula as well as the adherence to all policies and standards approved by the University Graduate Council. Approval of curricular and programmatic changes is predicated upon the initial review and approval of the proposal at both the program/department and school levels.

The graduate faculty in the individual departments and schools have responsibility for such fundamental areas as curriculum, methods of instruction, assessment of student achievement and research, as well as for those aspects of student life that relate to the graduate educational process. The graduate faculty in the individual departments and schools recognize university standards, formulate the requirements for the graduate degrees offered, determine when the requirements for a graduate degree have been met, and recommend on whom

degrees should be conferred. The School of Graduate Studies works with program directors and the Office of Records and Registration to implement and ensure adherence to all official graduate policies and procedures, including graduation requirements approved by the University Graduate Council.

The University Graduate Council acts on proposals related to new, modified, and deleted courses and curricula. The [Graduate Programs and Courses Committee](#), which is a subcommittee of the University Graduate Council, is responsible for reviewing and recommending new and revised graduate courses and degree programs. The Graduate Programs and Courses Committee makes recommendations to the University Graduate Council, which acts on the proposals. Minutes of the University Graduate Council are on its web site. All actions taken by the University Graduate Council are recorded in the Council's [minutes](#).

UGC's Committee on Internal Review, in conjunction with the Office of [Institutional Research and Evaluation](#), and the Graduate Admissions Office, in conjunction with Administrative Information Technology, work to develop online reports to support informed decision making at the program, department, school, and institutional levels. These reports, among them the [University Profiles](#), provide valuable data for tracking, advising, and evaluating learning outcomes, productivity, and overall effectiveness of the graduate programs at VCU.

The Committee on Professional Degree Programs (CPDP) was established in 2002-2003, in response to requests from the University Graduate Council to have a curriculum committee that would review proposals related to the clinically oriented doctoral programs. At its [meeting on April 11, 2002](#), the University Council approved the proposal for establishment of this committee. The following month, the Board of Visitors approved the committee's establishment. The committee met during 2002-2003 to develop a set of bylaws to govern its actions and to approve a form for submitting curricular proposals. At its inception, four clinically oriented doctoral programs – M.D., D.D.S., Pharm.D., and D.P.T (Doctor of Physical Therapy) – are under the auspices of the CPDP. The Vice Provost for Academic Affairs chairs CPDP.

All of the curriculum committees review proposals for organizational change (e.g., creating a new academic department) but consider these proposals for information rather than for action.

On behalf of the curriculum committees, the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs transmits to the Provost proposals for new or deleted majors, certificates, and degree programs; changes in degree designations (e.g., deleting the B.F.A. from a B.A. – B.F.A. degree program); and changes in degree-program title (e.g., from B.S. in Urban Studies to B.S. in Urban Studies and Geography). The Provost discusses these proposals with the Vice Presidents at one of their meetings, and if approved at that level, the proposals go to the President's Council, a group

comprised of the President, the Vice Presidents, the Vice Provosts, the president of the Faculty Senate, the University legal counsel, and the Director of Athletics. The Vice Presidents meet weekly with the President and the President's Council meets monthly. Once the President's Council approves proposals, the Provost takes them to the [Academic Affairs Committee](#) of the University Council, a group comprised primarily of faculty, with lesser representation of administrators and students. If this committee approves a proposal, it then goes to the faculty-dominated [University Council](#), which must give its approval before any curricular proposal goes to the [Board of Visitors](#) for its action.

The Provost transmits these proposals (except for certificate programs) to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV), which serves as the final approval authority for these curricular changes. On its web site, SCHEV lists the [degree programs that VCU is authorized to award](#). The SCHEV web site often differs from the VCU list of degree programs, primarily because that web site is updated less often than VCU updates its web site. For instance, in 2002-2003, SCHEV approved the initiation of a B.A. in African American Studies, and the change of name of the B.S. in Urban Studies to the B.S. in Urban Studies and Geography, yet these programmatic changes do not yet appear on the SCHEV list of VCU's degree programs.

Once VCU's Board of Visitors approves proposals for new certificate programs, the certificate name is sent to SCHEV, and SCHEV lists the certificates along with degree programs offered by VCU, but does so without review or action on a proposal. Since certificate programs do not require SCHEV approval, the informal practice at VCU has been to end the review cycle with approval by the University Graduate Council. Following a discovery that this practice did not allow for review or approval by the university's administrators, staff summarized all certificate programs that had begun in the last decade and moved them through the review processes, ending with the [May 7, 2003, approval](#) by the University Council. As part of his report to the Board of Visitors Academic and Health Affairs Policy Committee, the Provost reported the approval and initiation of these certificate programs.

Via the *WEAVEonline™* system (described in detail in Comprehensive Standard 16—Institutional Mission, Governance, and Effectiveness) the University tracks the establishment and evaluation of program and learning outcomes for each educational program for which academic credit is awarded. This approach allows for centralized capturing of ongoing assessments and quality improvements carried out at the program level.

Each academic program creates a *WEAVEonline™* "unit" assessment plan, entering its mission, objectives/outcomes, and measures. The mission and student learning outcomes in this plan are typically stable from one assessment cycle to the next, although the academic program can easily modify these

statements at any time. Measures may remain stable or change over time as the focus of the program and/or faculty approaches to assessment change.

For each measure used, a program has the responsibility of setting a target level for academic achievement and of reporting findings in relation to that target level. If the target level is not met, the program commits to any corrective actions it plans.

At the end of each quality improvement cycle, the program reflects on strengths confirmed through assessment and on any assessed areas that need attention. It also reports on recent program improvements, citing key reasons for change. (The next version of *WEAVEonline™* will include a separate action-tracking feature.)

At the time of this writing, there are 218 academic programs in *WEAVEonline™*. These include all bachelor's, master's, doctoral, and certificate programs. (Access to detailed assessment reports for these programs is available in *WEAVEonline™*, instructions for which are given in an accompanying letter to the reviewers.)