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Committee of the Curricular Deans

Curricular Deans FY20
Streamlined Curricular Approval Processes

The streamlining of the curricular approval process for routine items will decrease the timeline for catalog revisions, eliminate unnecessary personnel hours for documentation, and permit semester-based catalogs. It should be noted that the changes proposed here are consistent with the NIU Constitution and bylaws:

> **15.1.5.** Final decisions on matters of curriculum shall be made by the curriculum council or committee in whose jurisdiction the decision appropriately falls. All curriculum decisions involving course content, description, titles, and numbers shall be considered and resolved at the department, and college level. Curriculum decisions involving general education, course duplication or overlap between colleges, cross-college concerns, or university standards shall be resolved at the university level. Curriculum decisions requiring notification or action of the Board of Trustees or of the Board of Higher Education shall be finalized by appropriate action at the university level prior to submission to the board.

This proposal defines those routine items that would be eligible for the streamlined approval process, provides a suggested format for identifying and documenting the catalog changes, and recommends revisions to the APPM to allow for the streamlined approval process.

Routine Items:

For purposes of this proposal, items that do not impact programmatic requirements would automatically be defined as routine. This includes, but is not necessarily limited to:

- minor course revisions (course number, course title, course description)
- course deletions that do not impact academic programs in other departments.
- Change in pre-req or co-req may also qualify, but would need to include appropriate justification.

Any change in the above items that affects another program (e.g. staffing, or students external to the program) then resolution of any conflicts would need to be documented in order to be eligible for the streamlined process. College-level curriculum committees would be responsible for exercising due diligence to determine whether or not such items are eligible for the streamlined process or if they should be forwarded to the next level (BC/GCCC) for consideration.

Documentation:

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Departments submitting routine curricular items for approval would need to list all items under consideration, and include appropriate documentation. An expedited approval form (Addendum 1) would be completed at the department level and forwarded to the College curricular body for review. In cases for which there are no discernable programmatic impacts these items could be approved at the college level and forwarded directly to the catalog editor. Providing a link to the current on-line catalog would allow the catalog editor to locate relevant occurrences of the item and to execute the necessary changes.

For items which may have programmatic impacts additional documentation will be necessary. The college curriculum committee would need to evaluate whether or not the change was justified and whether or not it may disadvantage students in the program. The College curriculum committee would be expected to determine whether appropriate accommodations are possible/reasonable before including such items on the list for the streamlined approval process.

Policy Revisions:

The APPM language defines the responsibilities of various bodies with regard to the University curriculum (relevant text in bold/italic):

"Responsibility for the University's curriculum is vested in its faculty. Academic resource allocation is the responsibility of the Executive Vice President and Provost, the deans, and the department chairs. It is the responsibility of university-level curriculum bodies to define university-wide criteria and guidelines governing curricula and degrees. ***It is the responsibility of a college curriculum committee to approve all curricular innovations and changes emanating from any department within the college.*** It is also the responsibility of the college to examine and confirm the availability of resources needed for new courses and units of instruction. ***Three academic councils are responsible for academic programs: the Academic Planning Council, the Baccalaureate Council, and the Graduate Council.***"
APPM Section III, Item 1.Preamble

The APPM specifies that the APC, BC, and GC are responsible for academic programs. It also outlines the levels at which approval is necessary for individual curricular items in two pdf charts (Approval Required By Chart, and Approval Process Flowchart), links to which are found in the APPM Section III Item 4 header. The majority of items are directly related to significant programmatic revisions (e.g., new (N), deleted (D), or changed (C) majors/minors/certificates), and it is entirely appropriate that such significant programmatic changes fall under the purview of the designated University committees. However, the last entry in the table (Courses), is ambiguous in this respect. While new courses should be vetted at the University level to ensure non-duplication across academic units, this is not be necessary for simple course revisions / deletions unless they significantly impact programs outside the

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proposing department/college.

The only changes to the current APPM would involve addition of language to clarify procedures for curricular items, and minor changes to the table that specifies bodies responsible for approval of various curricular items. The APPM currently lists the various curricular items under Section III.3. The items considered here include course deletions and course revisions. The APPM language for these items, with proposed revisions highlighted, is included here.

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III.3.E Course Deletion
1. Common rationales used are:
    a. The course no longer reflects the best scholarly substance of the academic discipline.
    b. The course has not been offered during the previous three years.
    c. The unit of instruction of which the course is a constituent part has been changed or deleted.
    d. Resources to teach the course are no longer adequate.
2. Other departments whose units of instruction may be affected by the deletion of the course should be notified. Where necessary and possible a suitable course to replace the deleted one should be provided for affected units of instruction.

III.3.F. Course Revisions
1. When implementing a course revision the initiating department (or college) should provide a supporting statement explaining the need for the change.

2. Courses that keep the same or similar title but whose course description bears little conceptual resemblance to the original course will be treated as new courses.

3. A course revision may affect one or more of the following:

    a. course number.

    b. course description (editorial changes), to clarify, abbreviate, or expand current descriptions (but not to expand course content so much as to warrant a new course proposal), or to incorporate recent developments or shifts of focus in a topic area.

    c. course title to conform to changing terminology within the discipline, or to reflect a change in course description, but with due sensitivity to cultural issues;

    d. number of credit hours that may be earned;
    e. prerequisite/corequisite to encourage adequate student preparation or optimal program sequencing, or as necessitated by changes in other courses.

If a prerequisite/corequisite is added or deleted, such changes should be evaluated to ensure that they do not create artificial barriers for student enrollment or success in the course or negatively impact program requirements for majors outside the proposing department/college..

Finally, changes to the Approval table are recommended to identify routine items (as outlined in this proposal) and indicate that such routine items could be forwarded directly to the catalog editor. This could be accomplished as a footnote to the table, with the footnote referencing approvals for Courses (see Addendum 2).

Streamlined Curricular Processes Proposal

The following checklist is appropriate to ensure that due diligence is exercised by College curricular bodies in determining whether a curricular item can be considered as routine and/or eligible for the streamlined approval process. The checklist is presented by individual Curricular Action item.

1. Course Revisions:
    a. Course Number Change:
        i. Is this a required course in the departmental program or other programs across the University?
        ii. Is the course number change appropriate (i.e., within level?)
        iii. Does the change impact the number of upper division credit hours (300-400) for a program?
    b. Catalog Description Change:
        i. Is the new catalog description consistent with recommended catalog language?
        ii. Does the description change reflect a significant change in course content?
    c. Change in Pre-requisites:
        i. Is this a required course in the departmental program or other programs across the University?
        ii. Will the change in pre-reqs negatively impact the ability of students to enroll in the course?
        iii. Will the change in pre-reqs impact the time to degree for students in programs that might require this course?
        iv. Will the change in pre-reqs impact the instructional staffing or teaching loads for the department offering this course and/or pre-requisite courses?
    d. General Criteria:
        i. Will the proposed changes impact the status of this course as either a general education, human diversity, or writing-infused course?
2. Course Deletions:
    a. Is this a required course in the departmental program or other programs across the University?

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      b.   Is this course a pre-req for other courses/programs within the University?
      c.   Has this course been offered in the last 3 years?

If the answers to any of these questions indicates that additional consideration/discussion beyond the College level is necessary/appropriate, then the item will be forwarded to the next level (GEC/BC/GCCC). If the responses to these questions indicate that there are no significant impacts resulting from the change, or if the proposing unit can provide documentation that any potential concerns have already been addressed, then the proposal would be eligible for the streamlined approval process. All items submitted for the streamlined curricular approval process must be vetted by the appropriate departmental and College-level curricular bodies.

TWO ADDITIONAL ATTACHMENTS ARE PART OF THIS REVISION

   1. **Addendum 1. NIU Expedited Curricular Change Approval Form**
   2. **Addendum 2. Curricular Approval Process Chart with Changes**