

[Return to Guidelines and Procedures Index](#)

## **CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES FOR THE DISBANDMENT OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS**

Approved by:  
University Committee on Academic Policy

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### **A. PREAMBLE**

Decisions that result in the disbandment of programs will be made only after careful consideration of their bearing on the complex mission of this University. That mission must continue to include quality instruction in both liberal arts and professional disciplines; quality research in both basic and applied fields; and outreach and service at many levels.

Academic units continually review academic programs to ensure the highest possible quality and most effective use of limited resources. These reviews sometimes generate proposals to add and delete courses and to modify programs in other ways. The criteria and procedures outlined below are not specifically designed to apply to these regular, continuing processes. While units may find them useful for such purposes also, these criteria are established for use under circumstances that suggest discontinuation of academic major or degree programs. For example, failure of resources to keep pace with rising costs may dictate that the university consider elimination of some programs in order to protect the integrity of those retained.

Proposals for disbandment should be developed and reviewed in an orderly manner designed to ensure careful and comprehensive assessment of impacts and implications, both internal and external to the department/school and college. The criteria outlined below in "II. CRITERIA FOR DISBANDMENT" are for use in the development and considerations of proposals to be presented to academic governance and other groups described in "III. PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES FOR DISBANDMENT."

The decision to disband a program will be neither reached by a tally of criterion scores, nor will it necessarily be based on the full range of criteria. Circumstances might dictate disbandment of a program on the basis of a few or possibly a single consideration, e.g., grave financial circumstances or a significant threat to quality and vitality. However, in all cases, a wide range of criteria should be initially considered in the decision making and consultation process.

### **B. CRITERIA FOR DISBANDMENT**

#### **1. State and National Needs and Priorities**

- a. Extent to which program fills educational needs that are otherwise unmet.
- b. Extent to which there is need for graduates from this program.
- c. Extent to which this program is relevant to social and economic conditions prevailing today or visualized for future years.
- d. Number, quality, and enrollment status of comparable programs in state or nearby states.
- e. Contribution to the positive image of the University as an essential state and national resource.

## **2. Institutional Mission and Priorities**

- a. Appropriateness of program to MSU's institutional mission (present and future).
- b. Extent to which program is essential to a good liberal education.
- c. Extent to which program meets professional needs and expectations.
- d. Extent to which program contributes to other institutional programs and priorities (e.g., internationalization).
- e. Impact upon enrolled students, other instructional programs, and institutional missions of instruction, research and outreach.

## **3. Program Quality**

- a. Faculty quality and vitality.
- b. Peer (e.g., CIC, AAU, land grant) ranking of educational program.
- c. Contributions to interdisciplinary programs.
- d. Contributions to research and outreach.
- e. Adequacy of facilities (classrooms, laboratories, offices, equipment, other facilities).
- f. Strength and priority of supporting or related disciplines.
- g. Quality and adequacy of library holdings, computing or other technology support, and other relevant support units and services.
- h. Adequacy of operating funds.
- i. Critical mass of faculty.

## **4. Faculty, Staff, and Student Considerations**

- a. Availability of appropriate alternative assignments for faculty and staff in the University.
- b. Availability of appropriate alternative educational programs in the University and the state for students.
- c. Student demand for the program, especially enrollment level and trends.
- d. Too low of a student-faculty ratio.
- e. Too low of a faculty-support ratio.
- f. Appropriateness of mix of temporary and tenure system faculty.
- g. Extent of contribution to overall student satisfaction.

## **5. Financial Considerations**

- a. Cost-effectiveness in relation to other similar programs in the state and at peer institutions.
- b. Amount of additional resources required to reach and/or sustain acceptable quality.
- c. Extent of grave financial circumstances.

## **6. Value of alternative uses of resources**

- a. Extent of enhanced return to teaching, research, and outreach productivity for alternative assignments of personnel.
- b. Contribution to quality and cost containment through migration of students to other programs.
- c. Cost savings of administrative reductions that can be used for direct investment, teaching, research, and outreach.
- d. Programmatic opportunities created by reassignment of positions.
- e. Contribution to overall cost containment/institutional effectiveness.

## C. PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES FOR DISBANDMENT

### 1. GENERAL CRITERIA:

A. All proposals should address in a systematic manner the Criteria for Disbandment specified in Part II.

B. Consultation at all levels should be governed by the following principles:

1. That all interested groups have a chance to confer and exchange views with due regard for each others legitimate views and perspectives.
2. That the advice given or information provided should be used to shape a final decision.

C. At all levels alternatives (unless the area is no longer germane) to discontinuation (e.g., sharpening unit focus, merging with other units, downsizing units, providing additional resources/personnel) should be considered.

D. In the case of a jointly administered program all appropriate units/colleges will use these procedures.

### 2. UNIT/COLLEGE LEVEL: INITIAL PLANNING DISCUSSIONS

A. Consulting on Unit Level Working Proposal: Units should be prepared to document, if requested all formal meetings which occurred, their date, and the outcomes if any, of the discussions.

- Consult all formal unit governance bodies (e.g., curriculum committee) in preparation of working proposal.
- Consult unit student groups.
- Consult other groups (e.g., alumni groups) when appropriate.
- Consult with other colleges and units which may be directly affected.

B. Guidelines For Consulting on Formal Proposal:

After consultation at the unit level the working proposal is modified as appropriate and sent to all relevant college governance groups, including especially student groups which might have a substantial interest.

A formal proposal is then prepared by either the Departmental Chairperson, the Dean, or the Office of the Provost. This formal proposal can contain minority reports from any of the interested parties (e.g., administrators, governance groups). The formal proposal should stipulate dates for phasing out the program and means for accommodating currently enrolled majors and other students.

### 3. UNIVERSITY LEVEL GOVERNANCE

A. Asked to Consult on Working Proposal When:

1. Students are going to be informed not to enroll in a program. University level governance will then give advice on whether a moratoria on student admissions is appropriate.
2. Resource and/or personnel decisions are to be made which substantially threaten the vitality of the unit.
3. The impacts of the proposal affect in a substantial way a wide number of units outside of the college.

B. Reaction to Formal Proposal

1. University level academic governance shall focus on whether the consultations on the unit/college level appear to have been appropriate and the broad university repercussions of the proposal.
2. University level governance groups can recommend that: the formal proposal be returned to the unit for further development; due to its major impact on the university it should be discussed in Academic Council; or the formal proposal should be sent on to the next level of review.

### 4. ADMINISTRATIVE LEVEL REVIEW

Final proposal, incorporating consultation from all of the above groups, sent to university level administrators.

The Provost examines the student, faculty, budgetary and general academic aspects of the proposal, including the consultations provided in all prior steps. If discontinuation is recommended, the Provost, in consultation with the Dean and Chairperson, establishes the dates and specific steps by which termination will be accomplished.

After the Provost's review and recommendation, the President considers the proposal and forwards it, with recommendations, to the Board.

#### **5. BOARD OF TRUSTEES REVIEW**

If the termination is approved by the MSU Board of Trustees, the President's Council of the State Universities of Michigan is informed.

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