

Implementation of HB1244's Academic Program Approval Process

For Informational Purposes

This document provides updates to the process enacted by the Maryland General Assembly for the review and approval of new academic programs and substantial modifications, specifically regarding undergraduate programs that can be implemented using existing institutional resources. The information described below reflects amendments made via HB1244 during the 2024 legislative session. The information provided in this document has been developed in collaboration with and reviewed by Counsel.

Key Change: Undergraduate Programs Using Existing Resources

- The General Assembly amended Education Article § 11-206(a)(1) to exempt undergraduate programs implemented with existing resources under § 11-206.1 from the full review process.
- Institutions must still submit proposals for undergraduate programs to be implemented with existing resources, but these program proposals are not subject to duplication or objection review.
- MHEC retains oversight authority under § 11-206.1(i) to monitor consistency with the State Plan and to terminate programs that fail to meet productivity benchmarks.
- Institutions will need to clearly articulate two key elements regarding resources. First, the proposal must identify all resources (e.g., faculty, facilities, equipment, operating budget) necessary to fully implement the proposed program or modification. Second, the proposal should assess whether these required resources are available entirely within the institution's current capacity or if they necessitate new or added resources. The proposal template will be updated so institutions clearly identify the resources needed and whether those resources already exist or require new investment.

Additional Changes Relevant to HB1244

- **Review Meeting Process** (effective Dec. 1, 2024): Institutions now receive at least 10 minutes, without interruption, to present, with discussion and formal action in open session. Rebuttal presentations were removed, and timelines simplified.
- **Definition of Substantial Modification** (effective Jan. 31, 2025): Threshold increased from 33% to more than 50%; changes mandated by accreditors or licensing boards are exempt; submission requirements simplified.
- **Establish a Program Review Process Advisory Council (PRPAC)**: bylaws were approved at the July 2024 Commission meeting and the Council has met regularly over the past year. Meeting information can be found on the MHEC website¹.
- **Statewide Workforce Need and Emerging Field Analysis**: Four specific appendices have been created (including a crosswalk with existing programs and recent graduates) and can be found on the MHEC website². These appendices should inform the development of new academic programs and modifications to existing programs for

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<https://mhec.maryland.gov/Pages/Program%20Review%20Process%20Advisory%20Council/PRPAC-Meetings.aspx>

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<https://mhec.maryland.gov/Pages/Workforce-Needs-Analysis--Public-Comment.aspx>

alignment with statewide workforce need. A workshop on utilizing this new resource was held at the recent 2025 Higher Education Summit.

- **Duplication Standards:** Draft standards presented at October 2025 Commission meeting; PRPAC will continue discussions and present recommendations in 2026. Relevant materials can be found on our website³.
- **Graduate Program Letters of Intent (LOI):** Process and template approved (August 2025). Required beginning Oct. 1, 2025, prior to full proposal submission. MHEC will review the LOI for potential duplication and assess opportunities for collaboration.
- **Harm Analysis:** Initial report submitted September 1, 2025.

These changes are intended to streamline the administrative process for institutions demonstrating responsible resource stewardship, allowing for quicker and more flexible program innovation.

Next Steps and Staff Availability

MHEC will continue to support institutions through:

- Monthly Office Hours (beginning January 2026)
- Direct guidance and ad-hoc meetings
- Training on new standards and processes

Dr. Natasha Cornell, Director for Academic Affairs, is available for questions and meetings and can be contacted at natasha.cornell@maryland.gov.

³ <https://mhec.maryland.gov/About/Pages/agendadetails.aspx?aid=542>