

Approval Requirements for New Degree and New Certificates

Version II revised April 2026

The University of Colorado adopted a revised version of its policy on New Degree Program Approval (APS 1038) on January 1, 2018. [Administrative Policy Statement \(APS\) 1038: New Degree Program Approval](#), required that each campus develop processes to implement the policy.

Academic units¹ seeking to offer a new degree or certificate must prepare and submit proposals, the contents of which vary with the nature of the degree or certificate and its particular attributes. The proposals will be reviewed by several administrative units and/or committees of the University, depending on the attributes of the degree or certificate.

This document outlines the materials and processes that are required to have new degree or certificate programs approved. These processes have been established not only to obtain the necessary approvals, but also provide notifications as required and ensure that the relevant information is correctly entered into appropriate databases of the University.

A. New Degrees

All new degrees require approval from the University of Colorado Board of Regents (BoR). Existing (previously approved by the BoR) degrees that have multiple distinct tracks with sufficient enrollment can receive BoR approval to “split” into multiple separate degrees through a simplified “track conversion” process.

Academic units seeking to establish a new degree must contact the Office of Academic Planning and the respective unit in the campus Administration and Finance Office after obtaining all approvals as required by their Department and their School/College (including the dean). Faculty and administrators who are preparing the proposal should work closely with the Office of Academic Planning and the respective unit in the campus Administration and Finance Office in preparing the supporting documentation. When the draft proposals have been approved by both the Office of Academic Planning and the designee of the Administration and Finance Office they will be presented to the Provost and the Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance at the sponsoring campus.

The contents of a proposal required to gain approval for a new degree that does not currently exist as a track within an approved degree for Campus and BoR approval are outlined in the appended document (Appendix A). The documentation required in a proposal for a track conversion are significantly less and should be discussed with the Office of Academic Planning and the campus Administration and Finance Office

¹ (Regent Law ([Article 4, Part A](#)), defines academic units are schools, colleges, and departments that roster tenured and/or tenure track faculty and offer at least one degree program.)

(depending on the performance of the track, proposals for a track conversion will follow a format somewhat similar to Appendix B).

While the documentation required for completely new degrees is different from that required to convert an existing track to an independent degree, the approval processes are essentially the same:

Proposals at CU Denver require approval of the Budget Priorities Committee of the CU Denver Faculty Assembly. This process is coordinated by the Administration and Finance Office following approval by both the Provost and the Senior Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance.

The Provost will present the proposal to the appropriate campus Chancellor for their approval.

In accordance with CU System [APS 1038: New Degree Program Approval](#), following approval at the campus level, the Office of Academic Planning prepares and submits the supporting documents to the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) for the CU System. After obtaining feedback from the VPAA, the proposal will be modified as necessary and then submitted to the University Affairs Committee (UAC) of the CU BoR.

The UAC usually meets about one-month before a public meeting of the full BoR is scheduled. Public meetings of the full BoR are currently scheduled in February, April, June, September and November. The Office of Academic Planning oversees the preparation of the Executive Summary and the slide presentation for the University Affairs Committee. The proposal is presented by the Provost, or if necessary their designee, to the UAC and at least one principal representative for the degree proposal should attend this meeting. If approved by the UAC the proposal is included in the next meeting of the BoR. After approval by the BoR, the VPAA notifies the Colorado Department of Higher Education for addition to their database.

Following approval of a new degree proposal by the BoR, the UAC notifies those involved in preparing the proposal as well as several administrative offices within the university including the following administrative offices: Institutional Research and Effectiveness; Registrar; Bursar and Financial Aid. These offices may require additional information on courses and other aspects of the degree and will contact the individual named as the initiator of the proposal as needed.

B. New Certificates

The requirements for approving certificates varies with the structure of the certificate and the nature (degree- or non-degree-seeking) of the students to whom the certificate is offered. These fall into three categories:

- i. Certificates comprised of (undergraduate or graduate) courses that award credit that can be applied to a degree at CU Denver or CU Anschutz. Enrollment in the certificate is restricted to students currently enrolled in a degree program at CU Denver or CU Anschutz.
- ii. Certificates comprised of (undergraduate or graduate) courses that award credit that can be applied to a degree at CU Denver or CU Anschutz. Enrollment in the certificate is NOT restricted to students currently enrolled in a degree program at the CU Denver or CU Anschutz. If the certificate is seeking eligibility for financial aid for non-degree students then it is classified as a Gainful Employment (GE) certificate and requires additional approval and annual reporting.
- iii. Certificates that do NOT award credit that can be applied to a degree at CU Denver or CU Anschutz. These certificates are known as “Certificates of Achievement” and are usually awarded by a School/College or another entity. As they are not awarded by the University, they are not entered into CU SIS, and are not eligible for financial aid. Non-credit bearing certificates do not have to be approved at the campus level.

Proposals need to submit the [Propose New Program](#) form (found in the Program Management option in [CourseLeaf](#) for CIM Programs Forms). Certificates that will award credit must submit the learning objectives and assessment plan to the Director of Assessment. Upon completion of the review process, the Registrar’s Office will create the certificate and coding in CU-SIS, making the certificate active in the system.

Notes:

Certificates that will accept non-degree seeking students and wish to have these students be eligible to apply for federal financial aid, must comply with the requirements for Gainful Employment reporting. Such proposals need to be approved by the Office of Financial Aid in addition to undergoing the approval process for other certificates. When reporting on Gainful Employment, as well as other disclosures, these certificates must include all students enrolled in the certificate, regardless of whether they are degree-seeking or non-degree seeking.

Title IV eligible certificates in which 50% or more of the courses were specifically developed for the new certificate and are NOT derived from courses in existing certificates or degrees, will require approval by the institutional accreditor, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC).

Certificates in which 25% or more of the credits are provided by another institution, or multiple institutions, accredited by an accreditor recognized by the U.S. Department of

Education as an institutional accrediting agency (termed consortial arrangements), may require approval by the HLC.

Certificates in which any portion of the credits are provided by an entity that is NOT accredited by an accreditor recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as an institutional accrediting agency (termed contractual arrangements), requires notification (if 24% or less of the credits for the certificate is outsourced to the other party) or approval (if the other party provides 25% or more of the certificate) by the HLC. Programs that outsource more than 50% of the educational certificate to a non-accredited entity are ineligible for Title IV (federal student aid) assistance.

Appendix A:
New Degree Proposals:
Table of Contents

1. Overview

- a. Describe the basic design of the proposed degree, including the degree level (baccalaureate, masters, doctoral, professional), field of study, and whether it is interdisciplinary.
 - i. If the degree will subsume or supplant an existing degree, the proposal for the new degree shall address the need for the discontinuance of the existing degree.
- b. Explicitly state the outcomes for students of this degree, i.e., what can a student expect to learn during the course of the degree and what skills will a student have after completing it?

2. Workforce and Student Demand

- a. Workforce Demand: Supply evidence of the opportunities available to graduates of this degree.
- b. Student Demand: Describe the target market and demonstrate evidence of student demand for this degree.
 - i. Provide realistic enrollment projections for the degree for the first five years (template provided in the appendix to this APS).

Explain the methodology and assumptions used to project enrollment and completion data. Relevant information might include national or regional enrollment trends in similar degrees and projected new demand from industry in the service area.

- ii. If applicable, explain how the design of the degree will address the needs of part-time, working students.
- iii. Discuss plans for the potential for full or hybrid online delivery.

3. Role and Mission Criteria

Describe how it supports the mission and fits with the applicable strategic plan of the campus. Identify particular institutional strengths in the proposed degree.

4. Duplication

Address duplication issues with other institutions in the CU system or elsewhere in the state of Colorado. Describe any unique characteristics or features of this degree that are not duplicated elsewhere in the state that would justify the degree. Address the impact of duplication on student demand.

5. Statutory Requirements

Describe how the proposed degree conforms to statutory requirements, such as the 120 credit hour limit for undergraduate degrees, GT Pathways and the Student's Bill of Rights.

6. Curriculum Description

- a. Describe the requirements, including total credit hours, credit hour distribution, methods of delivering the degree, field experience, and other pertinent aspects of the curriculum. Explain how this curriculum is like or unlike the usual curriculum in this field.
- b. Provide a sample curriculum for the degree and explicitly identify all new courses being created for it.

7. Professional Requirements or Evaluations

- a. Where pertinent, describe any regional or professional accrediting association or licensing requirements that helped shape the curriculum of the proposed degree. Specify the effect of these requirements on the length of the degree, restrictions on degree content or mode of delivery, and any budgetary requirements, such as minimal staffing levels, and equipment needs.
- b. Identify timetables, if needed, that have been established to meet the professional requirements.
- c. Describe qualifications of the faculty responsible for delivering the proposed degree.

8. Institutional Factors

- a. Explain how the implementation of this degree will affect other instructional, research, or service programs on campus. Describe the impact on existing resources, including libraries, educational spaces, and computer and laboratory resources. Explain how the implementation will affect other CU campuses.

- b. When delivery of the curriculum of the degree involves courses offered or taught by a department in a different school/college, a letter of support from that school/college's dean shall be included with the proposal.
- c. Describe formal relationships with other parties that are anticipated, such as inter-institutional arrangements, resource sharing, cooperative programs, clinical affiliations, etc. Describe and explain the type and extent of the relationship and the resources that the affiliating institution will provide. A copy of any draft contracts or agreements shall be included as appendices.

9. Physical Capacity and Needs

- a. Provide space estimates for space requirements required to deliver the degree. Base the projections on existing and five-year space planning assumptions and enrollment data from curriculum and student load projections and projected use of special or dedicated facilities, such as laboratories.
- b. Describe the delivery and space requirements, identifying additional space or equipment needs required to deliver the degree. When significant capital construction or equipment needs are anticipated, provide additional information and explanations.

10. Cost Description and Source of Funds

- a. Report cost estimates and sources of funds for five years, using the template provided in the appendix to this APS, including the instructions provided with the template. All cost and revenue projections for the five years shall be given in constant dollars, i.e., do not include an inflation factor. The provost's office shall include and clearly identify institutional overhead costs. Specifically, when tuition is shown as a source of revenue, any component of tuition returned to campus must be shown as an expense.
- b. Costs shall include operating, faculty start-up, and capital start-up needs required to deliver the degree. Estimates of operating costs shall be based on the delivery of the courses and services defined for the degree. Administrative costs shall be factored in. Budgets shall be calculated in a realistic manner. For example, additional work generated by the operation, management, and oversight of a new degree shall not be claimed to be absorbed into the workload of existing staff and faculty without an explanation of what other work will be reassigned or discontinued to make room for the new workload.

- c. A proposal shall include a written statement from the dean(s) verifying adequacy of resources to support the new degree as outlined in the budget, and confirming that projected resources are reasonable.

11. Other Relevant Information

Campuses may include any other information deemed relevant to support proposals for new degrees. The Board of Regents may request additional information pertinent to specific issues raised during their examination of proposals for new degrees.

The proposal must also include a suggested “Classification of Instructional Programs” (CIP) code that is used to describe the degree for reporting purposes to State and Federal agencies. A description of all available CIP codes is provided at:

<https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cipcode/Default.aspx?y=55>

Tables to be completed:

1. Enrollment table:

	<i>Year 1</i>	<i>Year 2</i>	<i>Year 3</i>	<i>Year 4</i>	<i>Year 5</i>	<i>Full Implementation</i>
<i>In-state</i>						
<i>Out-of-state</i>						
<i>Program headcount</i>						
<i>In-state FTE</i>						
<i>Out-of-state FTE</i>						
<i>Program FTE</i>						
<i>Program graduates</i>						

2. Revenue/Expenditure Estimates

	Year 0 ¹	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Projected Revenues						
Resident Tuition Revenue						
Nonresident Tuition Revenue						
Fee Revenue						
Total Tuition & Fee Revenue						
Institutional Investment						
Other Revenues						
Institutional reallocation (explain)						
TOTAL PROGRAM REVENUE						
Startup Costs ¹						
Capital Construction						
Equipment Acquisitions						
Library Acquisitions						
Other						
Projected Expenditures						
Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty						
Non-Tenure Track Faculty						
Financial Aid specific to program						
Program Administration						
Instructional Materials						
Equipment/Supplies						
Campus Overhead ²						
Fee Expenses						
Other Operating						
TOTAL PROGRAM EXPENSES						
NET REVENUE						

¹Costs that occur prior to enrolling students should be entered in the “Year 0” column.

² If no campus overhead, explain.

Appendix B:

Contents of Proposals for Converting a Track in an Existing Degree into a New Degree

(Note: this is just an outline and may not apply to all track conversions. Please discuss your plan with the Office of Academic Planning prior to preparing the documentation)

After obtaining all approvals as required by the Department and the School/College (including the Dean; if the degree will be conferred by the Graduate School, the Graduate School Dean and Graduate Council must also approve the proposal) the proposal should be submitted as a memo addressed to both the Provost Nairn and campus Chancellor and sent to the Office of Academic Planning.

The proposal must also include a suggested “Classification of Instructional Programs” (CIP) code that is used to describe the program for reporting purposes to State and Federal agencies. A description of all available CIP codes is provided on the [Classification of Instructional Programs \(CIP\) webpage](#).

The contents of the memo should include:

1. A history of the degree – when it started and when it was added as a track to the existing degree program etc.
2. A description of the degree – a brief description of the curriculum; the delivery mode (in class, on-line or hybrid); what students learn and what employment does it enable students to enter into. What is the historical job market for graduates with the degree? Does it also attract working professionals looking to enhance their skills and potentially their career? If it is a popular program for working professionals, does the scheduling of the course offerings cater to them?
3. The extent of overlap, including shared courses, with the other tracks currently in the degree.
4. The enrollment data for the past 5 years (if the track has existed that long).
5. A brief rationale why the track should be converted to an independent degree: What is the benefit to the track to convert to a degree (e.g. enhance visibility, improve marketing etc.)? Will making it an independent degree adversely affect the other existing track(s) in the program?
6. Would there be any change (increase) in tuition or fees if this track was converted to a new degree? If so, what? (any changes would trigger an analysis by the Administration and Finance Office).
7. What members of the Department and School/College (faculty, faculty committees) has this been discussed with and who has approved it? Has this been discussed with students in the track and are they supportive, or at least not opposed?
8. Would new resources – faculty, space, admin support be required to convert the track to an independent degree? If so the Dean’s memo should describe these and indicate that he/she will provide them. Depending on whether new resources are

required, this may trigger an analysis by the Office of Budget and Finance. If no new additional resources are required just include a sentence stating that.

9. Concluding paragraph summarizing the request.