



Tennessee Higher Education Commission

Letter of Notification (LON) Checklist Policy A1.0 New Academic Programs: Approval Process

A Letter of Notification (LON) must be submitted to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) to develop new academic programs as outlined in THEC Policy A1.0 – New Academic Programs: Approval Process. The LON should include all items in checklist below and must be accompanied by a letter from the appropriate President or Chancellor signifying support for development of the proposed program. Proposals seeking approval via delegation to THEC's Executive Director must submit an additional file addressing alignment to the delegation criteria as delineated in THEC Policy A1.0.3A.

Completed LONs will be uploaded as PDF files through the New Academic Program [Formstack](#). All documents should be continuously paginated (including all appendices) and should include a table of contents. Please format the document to include each element from the checklist as a heading. At the institution's and/or system's discretion, NAPPs may be submitted alongside an LON as a separate file.

Section I: Overview

Program information

- Provide the institution name, proposed academic program title and concentration(s), degree designation (both written and abbreviated), proposed Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) code, CIP code title, CIP code definition, corresponding Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes and SOC definition applicable for graduates of the program.
 - SOC codes listed may include those not explicitly crosswalked to the proposed CIP, but justification regarding alignment must be provided. If crosswalked SOC codes are removed from the listing for the proposed program, justification should also be provided.

Academic program liaison name and contact information

- The academic program liaison will serve as the information resource for the proposed academic program at the institution.

Proposed implementation date

- The proposed implementation date should provide a realistic estimate of when the program will have gone through all of the approval steps, including Commission or delegated approval, and be ready to enroll students.
 - The proposed implementation date should be in the following format: MM/DD/YYYY.

Delegation Criteria Alignment

For campuses seeking to utilize the delegated approval process, a separate file demonstrating alignment to all criteria must be provided. Campuses should identify a geographic focus area and utilize that same geographic focus area for all analysis. Campuses proposing Fully Online programs (as [defined by THEC](#)) should utilize **state level data** for demonstrating delegation criteria alignment,

but should provide local and regional data for the purposes of the Feasibility Section (Section III) of the LON.

- **High-priority field:** Provide evidence that the proposed program aligns to high-priority fields as identified by the [THEC Supply and Demand Report](#),¹ priority sectors aligned to TNWorks, by the O*NET Bright Outlook listing, or state research priorities.
- **Immediate or projected unmet labor market need:** Provide evidence that the proposed program and its aligned SOC codes have faster than average projected growth for the next 5-10 years and/or have a projected growth of 5% or greater over the same time period (utilizing O*NET and/or JobsEQ).
- **Median starting salaries at or above the living wage:** Provide the median salary associated with the proposed SOC code(s) using O*NET. If more than one SOC code is listed, an average of all median salaries should be calculated. Additionally, list the living wage calculation for the institution's region and/or metropolitan area utilizing the Living Wage Calculator ([LINK](#)).
- **For universities, program curriculum must contain less than 50 percent new content:** A signed form from the institutional accreditation liaison should be provided that attests that the proposed degree program consists of less than 50% new content in alignment with content guidelines provided by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

Section II: Background

Purpose and nature of academic program

- Provide an overview of the program including a short description of the academic program, total semester credit hours and a brief breakdown of curricular requirements, target audience (including any transfer considerations), purpose, delivery method aligned to current [THEC definitions](#) (See pg. 8), delivery location, and any other pertinent information.

Alignment with state master plan and institutional mission

- Succinctly explain how the proposed academic program specifically aligns with both the [THEC State Master Plan](#) and institutional mission statement or profile.

Institutional capacity to deliver the proposed academic program

- Briefly address how the proposed program will impact the overall capacity of the institution, including potential lost enrollment to other majors/programs, collaborative agreements between departments, etc.

Existing programs offered at public and private Tennessee institutions

- List all academic programs with the same or similar CIP code offered at public and private higher education institutions in Tennessee along with degrees awarded for the last three years of available data. Be sure to consider THEC's statutory responsibility to avoid unnecessary duplication, and include a short narrative regarding the distinctiveness of the proposed offering.

¹ If the Supply and Demand Report data is leveraged, please utilize the "[LEAP In-Demand Occupations Report](#)" dashboard and the appropriate regional level of analysis.

Accreditation

- If the proposed program has a programmatic accrediting agency, please describe plans, timeline, and any other information required to obtain accreditation (for example: required faculty ratios, student retention rates, and/or placement).
- If no programmatic accreditation is applicable, provide a timeline for the anticipated program review for Quality Assurance Funding (QAF).

Section III: Feasibility

- Provide evidence of a local and regional workforce need for the proposed program. Evidence should include anticipated job openings, labor market analysis, and workforce projections for at least five years after the proposed implementation of the program. Data provided should reflect demand for graduates at the degree level of the proposed program. If similar academic programs exist, how is the local and regional need/demand for the proposed academic program not being met by these institutions?
- Provide an assessment of the statewide and national employment opportunities for graduates from the proposed program. Evidence can include the number of anticipated job openings, an employer needs assessment, labor market analysis, and workforce projections. Projections should be for the first three years for associate and certificate programs, five years for undergraduate and master's programs, or seven years for doctoral programs. Suggested resources include the [THEC Supply and Demand Report](#) and the [Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook](#).
- **For programs seeking to utilize the delegated approval process:** Overlap between the delegation criteria alignment file and the feasibility section is likely. Campuses may utilize the same information so long as it answers all prompts fully.

Artificial Intelligence Disclosure (If Applicable)

Any content that is substantially generated, drafted, or edited using Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools must include a clear disclosure statement. The disclosure should:

- Identify the AI tool used (e.g. Microsoft CoPilot, Chat GPT).
- Describe the nature of the AI's contribution (e.g. summarization, drafting, formatting)
- Affirm that the content has been reviewed and approved by a human prior to submission.
- **Example disclosure statement:** "This document includes content generated with the assistance of artificial intelligence (AI) tools. All AI-assisted content has been reviewed and approved by institutional personnel."



Tennessee Higher Education Commission

New Academic Program Proposal

Policy A1.0 New Academic Programs: Approval Process

A New Academic Program Proposal (NAPP) must be submitted to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) as outlined in [THEC Policy A1.0 – New Academic Programs: Approval Process](#). The NAPP should follow the structure of the checklist below. NAPPs may be submitted alongside an LON as a separate file.

Completed NAPPs will be uploaded as PDF files through the New Academic Program [Formstack](#). All documents should be continuously paginated (including all appendices) and should include a table of contents. Please format the document to include each element from the checklist as a heading.

THEC staff will review the submission to ensure all required elements are present and evaluate recommended reviewers.

Reviewer Recommendation

The campus program liaison will submit the reviewer recommendation worksheet for THEC staff to review in accordance with THEC guidelines. The worksheet should include proposed dates for the external review site visit. **These recommendations should be submitted as a separate file via Formstack.**

Letter of Notification (LON)

The most current version of the LON (Sections I-III) must appear as the first section of the NAPP and should be adjusted to align with subsequent sections of the NAPP. Please ensure the LON has been updated (if submitted separately) to address THEC staff questions and comments, as well as any public comments received. Changes should be noted in a crosswalk document and/or by highlighting text.

Section IV: Implementation Timeline

Provide an implementation timeline for the proposed program that includes:

- If the proposal is considered substantive change, include accreditation considerations and timelines. If not, please indicate it is not a substantive change.
- Accreditation considerations and timeline for professional disciplinary accreditation organizations.
- Estimated date of external review site visit.
- Estimated date of submission of the external review report to THEC and the institution (within 30 days after the site visit).
- Estimated date of institution's response to external review.
- Estimated date of institutional board approval.
- Proposed date of the THEC meeting for the academic program to be considered for Commission approval (if applicable).
- Implementation date (MM/DD/YYYY)

Section V: Student Interest and Community Partnerships

Student Interest

- Provide compelling evidence of student interest in the proposed program. Types of evidence vary and may include enrollment in related concentrations or minors; representative student and alumni surveys; and national, statewide, and professional employment forecasts and surveys.
- Provide a brief narrative concerning projected enrollment, attrition, and graduates. Additionally, using Table 1 – Projected Enrollments and Graduates, provide initial projections for the first five-seven years of enrollment and graduates. Enrollment projections should be realistic and based on demonstrable student demand.

Table 1 – Projected Enrollments and Graduates

Projected Enrollments and Graduates				
Year	Academic Year	Projected Total Fall Enrollment	Projected Attrition	Projected Graduates
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6*				
7*				

*Year 6 and 7 projections are only required for doctoral programs.

Community and industry partnerships

- Provide an overview of existing and anticipated community and industry partnerships and how they will support the proposed program.

Section VI: Curriculum

- Provide an adequately structured curriculum that meets the stated objectives of the academic program, and reflects breadth, depth, theory, and practice appropriate to the discipline and the level of the degree. The curriculum should be compatible with disciplinary accreditation and meet the criteria for the general education core, as well as articulation and transfer, where applicable.
- Provide an explanation of the academic program requirements aligned to the program information section of the LON, including the courses (course prefix and number, title, SCH), and any special requirements including thesis, internships, practicum, etc.

Goals and Outcomes

- Program-specific learning outcomes: Provide the program-specific learning outcomes for the proposed program.
- Student learning outcomes: Outline the student learning outcomes for the proposed program. Outcomes should clearly state the specific and measurable outcomes students will

display to verify learning has occurred and include information regarding how each student learning outcome will be assessed.

- Provide the planned schedule for program review and major field test associated with Quality Assurance Funding. When possible, identify the major field test instrument to be utilized for the purposes of QAF.

Existing and new courses

- List existing and new courses for the proposed academic program including a catalog description and credit hours for each course.

Program of study

- Provide a program of study for full-time and part-time (if applicable) students enrolled in the program. The program of study should include all courses listed by semester necessary for students to complete the proposed program.
- If applicable, provide a program of study for targeted transfer students, including potential TTPs that would be accepted.

Section VII: Projected Costs and Revenues for the Proposed Program

Provide a narrative of anticipated costs and revenues associated with the proposed program.

Student Costs

- Provide the estimated average annual costs for students in the degree program. Averages from similar programs or disciplines, or even institutional averages, may be used if no other information is available. All required fees, course materials costs, and special charges must be included.

Costs

- Provide an overview of anticipated costs for the proposed program. and submit a financial projections form.

Tuition Revenue

- Provide an overview of anticipated tuition revenue which aligns with enrollment and graduation projections.
- The narrative should account for in-state, out-of-state, and international enrollment, with full-time and part-time distinctions included.

Grants

- If applicable, identify any grants that will be used to support the proposed program.
- Grant funds should only be included if funds have been secured or an application has been submitted.

Other

- Describe any other revenue sources that will be associated with the proposed program.

Section VIII: Institutional Resources

Faculty resources

- Current faculty: Provide a list of current faculty, including primary department, highest degree earned, and describe how they will support the proposed program (time devoted to the program, administrative responsibilities, etc.),
- Anticipated new faculty and instructional staff: Provide a list of anticipated new faculty and instructional staff positions required along with a narrative of how these positions will support the new program.

Non-Instructional staff

- Provide a list of anticipated non-instructional staff positions required along with a narrative of how these positions will support the new program.

Student support services

- If specialized support services will be offered that have added costs, please provide an explanation and cost estimate.

Equipment

- Assess the adequacy of the existing equipment available for the proposed academic program. If additional equipment is needed, please provide an explanation and cost estimate.

Information technology

- If additional information technology resources are needed, please provide an explanation and cost estimate.

Library resources

- Provide a summary of the current library resources available to support the proposed program. If additional library resources are needed, please provide an explanation and cost estimate.

Facilities

- Describe facilities that will support the proposed program. For existing space and facilities, briefly describe the type(s) of space and facilities (e.g., a listing of the number and types of classrooms or labs, student offices or spaces, etc.).
- If facility construction and/or renovation will be necessary, please provide an explanation and cost estimate.

Other resources

- Describe other support resources available to support the program.

Section IX: NAPP Appendices

The NAPP must be accompanied by several required Appendices, which are outlined below. Additional appendices can be included as the proposal requires. Campuses are **not** expected to include institutional strategic plans or the THEC Master Plan for Higher Education in the NAPP.

Appendix A – Letters of Support

- Provide any additional letters of support from regional, community, and/or workforce partners in the LON Appendix A. Letters should be dated and appear on letterhead and

address how the partner will support the proposed program (job placements, internships, advisory board, etc.).

Appendix B – THEC Financial Projections Form

- The THEC Financial Projections Form must be completed with all anticipated new costs and revenues, as well as student cost estimates

Appendix C – Marketing and Recruitment Plan

- Provide a general marketing and recruitment plan that identifies the target audience, outlines specific marketing channels, describes recruitment event plans, and details how the institution will attract qualified students to the proposed program.

Appendix D – Faculty CVs (if requested by reviewer)

- If requested by the external reviewer, a CV must be included for each faculty member who will participate in the delivery of the proposed program. Each CV must not extend more than three pages.

Appendix E – Course Syllabi (if requested by reviewer)

- If requested by the external reviewer, syllabi for all existing courses must be included.

Appendix F – Artificial Intelligence Disclosure (If Applicable)

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- Identify the AI tool used (e.g. Microsoft CoPilot, Chat GPT).
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