THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

STANDARD PRACTICE GUIDE

SECTION:	General University Policies	**Number:**	601.2
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SUBJECT:	Discontinuance of Academic Programs	**Date Issued:**	3/1/93
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APPLIES TO:	Schools, Colleges and other Academic Units		
ISSUED BY:	Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost		

The continuing intellectual vigor and distinction of the University will depend in some measure upon our capacity to provide critical and timely reviews of all existing programs and to adapt them in the light of changing intellectual interests, professional developments, social needs, and relative academic strengths and priorities. In a period of financial stringency, such review becomes of particular importance, not least because most new programs will have to be developed by replacement rather than addition, and partly because it becomes difficult to strengthen weak or limited programs by accretional funding.

Our success in withstanding the financial adversity of the last few years has been due in part to our willingness to make hard decisions involving differential cuts and allocations, not only among different units of the same School or College, but also among the Schools, Colleges, Centers and Institutes themselves. It is our intention to strive to maintain the distinction of the University by continuing this system of careful scrutiny, judicious planning, and careful budget allocation. Only in this way can we preserve and enhance the quality of our various programs.

From time to time during this process of review, evaluation, and planning we shall find that a particular program raises concerns which may appear to justify its reduction or even its elimination. It is for this reason that we now offer the following procedures which will apply in cases of program termination.

If it is decided that a program should be considered for elimination, then procedures and policies are needed to answer four different questions:

1. What criteria should be used in making these decisions?
2. Who should decide which programs to eliminate?
3. What safeguards should be given to tenured and non tenured faculty, and other employees, if a program is eliminated?
4. What safeguards should be give to students in the program?

I. What Criteria Should Be Used?

A program may be eliminated because it fails to meet the requirements of a particular School or College for academic excellence. This is consistent with an AAUP recommendation that decisions should reflect long-range judgments about the educational

mission of the unit and not cyclical or temporary variations in enrollment. Such long-term considerations will generally involve the analysis of financial resources and needs of the program and the parent unit.

Recommended Criteria

A. Criteria for determining whether a program should be eliminated ought to place greatest emphasis on the quality of the program involved. Such assessment should take into account the quality of the faculty, the value and particular character of the program and the performance of its students.

B. Is the program central to the overall mission of the administrative unit in which it is located? This issue of centrality must consider the role and mission of the program in the context of the perceived role of the University.

C. Is the program under consideration too costly in relation to other educational and program needs of the School or College? Here the total resources, not just general and/or instructional funds, must be considered. This consideration should also involve present and projected enrollments, and societal needs. Is the program so central and valuable that its high costs and low enrollment are acceptable alternatives to closing?

D. Is a comparable program offered at another institution within the State of Michigan?

E. Can the program be made less costly or combined with other units to bring it more in line with the role and mission of the School or College and financial resources of the University? Alternatively, should it be relocated outside the parent School or College, in some other unit, or as an independent unit within the University?

F. Does the program have a significant service-value to other units within the University?

II. Who Should Decide?

The ultimate responsibility for the discontinuance of a program rests with the Board of Regents. They are given legislative authority for the operation of the University; however, they may delegate sub-legislative powers to various University authorities. For example, Regents' Bylaw 5.02 states, "...the governing faculty shall be in charge of the affairs of the School or College, except as delegated to the executive committee, if any,..." Also, "The faculty of each School and College shall from time to time recommend to the Board for approval such regulations as are not included in these Bylaws and which are pertinent to its structure and major operating procedures, such as departmental organization..." (Bylaw 5.03). Also the Dean and/or Executive Committee of a School or College "shall be charged with the duties of investigating and formulating educational and instructional policies for consideration by the faculty and shall act for the faculty in matters of budgets, promotions and appointments" (Bylaw 5.06). The matter of program discontinuance will almost always

involve consideration and evaluation of both curricular and budgetary matters. Although the pattern of this consideration and evaluation will depend upon the traditions, practices and style of each School or College, the recommendation for closure of a program should emanate from the Dean and/or the Executive Committee, following prior faculty consultation and after the Governing Faculty of the appropriate School or College has met and formally expressed its views regarding the contemplated discontinuance. Such Governing Faculty action shall be duly noted and formally conveyed to the Vice President for Academic Affairs[1] and the Board of Regents, as an integral part of the closure packet.

The following procedures are consistent with current AAUP Recommended Institutional Regulations on Academic Freedom and Tenure which state that judgments about academic programs are the "responsibility of the Faculty or of an appropriate Faculty body."

Recommended Procedures

A. From time to time, the Dean and/or Executive Committee of a School or College or the Governing Faculty of that unit or the Vice President for Academic Affairs may consider that a particular program[2] may no longer by viable, or may be more effective if reorganized in some way. Periodic program reviews may also lead to a similar conclusion. In all such cases, an independent assessment of the quality and viability of a program by a peer review should then take place prior to recommending that a program be considered for discontinuance. In cases where there has been a rigorous periodic review within the previous two years, the new review committee should rely substantially upon the relevant data collected and analysis presented by the periodic review group.

   In identifying a new review committee, the Dean and/or Executive Committee should consult with the faculty and should consider a mechanism that would include colleagues outside the University community as well as faculty within the School and University. In cases where there is a dispute within the School or College concerning constitution of an appropriate peer review group, the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs will consult both parties and will determine the composition of the peer review group. Such reviews will be conducted so that there will be maximum opportunity for early and meaningful consultation with faculty and students and timely action in relation to admissions, appointments, and the budget cycle.

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[1] In the case of an undergraduate program at a branch campus, the Chancellor fills the role herein described for the Vice President for Academic Affairs. In the case of a graduate program at a branch campus, the Chancellor and Vice President cooperate to jointly fill the role.

[2] Because of differing terminology among the Schools and Colleges concerned with departments, divisions, programs, etc., the more generic term 'program' is used here. Its precise application is left in the hands of the Dean and/or Academic Vice President.

B. The Dean and Executive Committee of each School or College may recommend to the Vice President for Academic Affairs that a program be considered for elimination, following prior faculty consultation and after the Governing Faculty of the appropriate School or College has met and formally expressed its views regarding the contemplated discontinuance. Such Governing Faculty action shall be duly noted and formally conveyed to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Board of Regents, as an integral part of any closure packet.

C. With the approval of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Dean should then set up a consultative process with the program, the governing faculty and other affected parties, both inside and outside the program, discussing with them the factors used to determine the proposed "phase out" of the program and other alternatives which may be proposed for reorganization of the program. In appropriate cases, consultation with other institutions may be arranged.

D. The Vice President shall also submit such statements of financial exigency as may be included in the recommendation for assessment to an ad hoc committee, with members from the Office of Academic Affairs, ACUB, and SACUA.

E. The results of the various reviews and recommendations should then be forwarded to the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

F. The review of the Vice President for Academic Affairs will be made in a prompt and timely fashion, bearing in mind the effects of prolonged debate on the individuals and units involved. Full opportunity will be provided during the review for public and private consultation and the receipt of written comments.

G. In the light of these discussions, the Vice President for Academic Affairs will make a decision on the future of the program, which shall be brought as a recommendation to the Regents.

III. What Safeguard Should Be Given to Faculty and Staff?

Existing guidelines have been established within the University to give faculty and staff adequate notice, and rights of a hearing. Every effort will also be made to assist in relocation and retraining of staff affected by discontinuance of a program.

Recommended Procedures

A. Instructional Staff

1. Existing procedures for notice of non-reappointment for non-tenured instructional staff should be followed when a program is scheduled for termination.

2. The University has never released tenured faculty members because of program closure. The maintenance of tenured faculty and of essential instructional and supporting services remains the highest priority of the University. If, however, at some future time it should become necessary to release tenured faculty members within a program to be discontinued, the following procedures will apply.

   a) Every effort should be made to place tenured instructional staff members in other suitable positions. If a reasonable period of retraining of the affected staff member would qualify him or her for another position within the University, then such retraining and relocation should be negotiated.

   b) In cases where it is not possible to continue the appointment of a tenured faculty member, as described in (a) above, the procedures of Regents' Bylaw Section 5.09 will be available and severance pay will be provided if required under Regents' Bylaw Section 5.10.

B. Non-Instructional Staff

Existing procedures for reduction in force will be followed for non-instructional staff who are affected by the decision to terminate a program (see appropriate Standard Practice Guide).

IV. Safeguard for Students

Because students are severely affected by the termination of a program, the following procedures will be observed:

A. Although completion of the degree or transfer cannot be guaranteed by the University, every effort will be made to accommodate student needs. So as to give students a maximum opportunity either to finish their work or to transfer to another program, the termination of a program should be phased over a period of reasonable length.

B. If and when the Vice President for Academic Affairs has approved the recommendation of the Dean and Executive Committee of the School or College to consider a program for elimination, no new admissions ought to be made without consultation with the Vice President for Academic Affairs and also--where appropriate--the Dean of the Graduate School.

C. Opportunity should be given to students for participation in the review of programs proposed for termination.