

STATE COUNCIL OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR VIRGINIA
REQUIRED STATE ACTIONS
FOR ESCALATION OF DEGREE-LEVEL AUTHORITY AT PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Effective: October 1, 2018

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I. Statutory Duties Related to Escalation of Degree-Level Authority at Public Institutions

The Code of Virginia, Section 23.1-203, charges the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) and institutions of higher education with various responsibilities and duties. Those most directly related to the escalation of degree-level authority are listed below.

- “Study the proposed escalation of any public institution of higher education to a degree granting level higher than the level to which it is presently restricted and submit a report and recommendation to the Governor and the General Assembly relating to the proposal. The study shall include the need for and benefits or detriments to be derived from the escalation. No such institution shall implement any such proposed escalation until the Council’s report and recommendation have been submitted to the General Assembly and the General Assembly approves the institution’s proposal.” (Code of Virginia, §23.1-203(3))
- “Adopt such policies and regulations as the Council deems necessary to implement its duties established by state law. Each public institution of higher education shall comply with such policies and regulations.” (Code of Virginia, §23.1-203(15))
- “Insofar as practicable, preserve the individuality, traditions, and sense of responsibility of each public institution of higher education in carrying out its duties. The Council, “insofar as practicable, shall seek the assistance and advice of each public institution of higher education in fulfilling all of its duties and responsibilities.” (Code of Virginia, §23.1-203(27-28))

The Council has established the following policies and procedures related to escalation of degree-level authority at public institutions in fulfillment as part of its obligation “to advocate for and promote the development and operation of an educationally and economically sound, vigorous, progressive, and coordinated system of higher education in the Commonwealth....” (Code of Virginia, § 23.1-200)

II. Policy Statements on Escalation of Degree-Level Authority at Public Institutions

A. Introduction

It is the intent of this policy to support fulfillment of Council's statutory duties by providing guidance for the process of change to the institution's degree-level authority and programming. The policies and guidelines expressed here will help ensure that Virginia's public institutions continue to use resources efficiently, offer programming to address state needs, avoid unnecessary duplication, and contribute to the achievement of Council's strategic plan aspirations.

B. Operational Definitions of Key Terms

Escalation of Degree-Level Authority

To offer and support degree programs at a more advanced level/ a level higher than that level to which it is currently restricted. Council must review and approve or disapprove any escalation of degree-level authority at public institutions.

"Initial" Documentation

All documents required to initiate the review process for the escalation of degree-level authority.

"New Degree Program"

Curriculum leading to the award of a new degree that includes content in a discipline or field not currently offered by the institution; shares fewer than one-fourth of its courses (excluding general education core) with an existing program; and, requires a separate CIP code. Additional faculty, facilities, or funding may be required to initiate and operate the new program. Degree programs must meet policies, requirements, and procedures as specified in Council's "Academic Programs at Public Institutions: Policies and Procedures for Program Approvals and Changes" policy. Council approval is required to confer the new degree.

"Review Committee"

Administrators, faculty, and/or industry personnel selected by Council staff in consultation with the institution to review and determine whether the institution has the ability to support the proposed degree status change without adversely affecting the existing programs and operations and whether the proposed degree program meets the standards for approval as set forth by the Council.

C. Policies Relevant to All Escalation of Degree-level Authority

1. Public institutions shall inform SCHEV staff in writing of any proposed escalation of degree-level authority. Documents must be submitted for Council consideration and approval prior to initiation. No approval actions shall become effective until 30 days after adjournment of the session of the General Assembly next following the filing of such a report.

2. Approval of an escalation of degree-level authority does not obligate the Council to support capital or operating requests in excess of the amounts provided in the institution's current appropriation.
3. As partial evidence of the ability of the institution to grant degrees at a higher level, the institution must submit documents from the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC). The institution must submit a copy of: 1) the Institutional Summary Form for the most recent on-site reaffirmation review and 2) action letters from the fifth-year review and decennial review.
4. The institution must submit the self-study report and the findings and recommendations of accrediting agencies for any existing degree program(s) with programmatic accreditation, if the programs are in the area of the proposed degree program associated with escalation of degree-level authority. The materials should be submitted even if the next degree level does not require programmatic accreditation.
5. In accordance with the criteria of the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC), an escalation of degree-level authority constitutes a "substantive change" of which an institution must receive approval from the accreditor. Institutions must inform specialized and/or professional accrediting bodies and state boards, if required.
6. SCHEV staff shall assist in organizing the campus site visit and assist in interpreting Council policies, requirements, guidelines, and procedures. Staff shall provide additional information about the educational character of the state, if needed.
7. The Review Committee shall prepare a written report of its findings and make a recommendation to approve, defer, or disapprove the escalation of degree-level authority and the proposed degree program(s). Any mission statement change entailed by the degree escalation shall be subject to Council approval. SCHEV staff will share a copy of the committee's report with the institution for its review and correction of factual errors prior to submitting the report to Council.
8. SCHEV staff shall make its recommendation to the Council based on the recommendation of the review committee and its review of the proposed degree program. Staff will recommend that a request be approved, deferred, or denied. Staff shall notify the institution of its recommendation prior to Council action.

D. Additional Policies Related to Escalation of Degree-Level Authority

1. Policy on Programs at a New Degree Level

An institution wishing to propose an escalation of degree-level authority must simultaneously submit the proposal(s) for a new degree program and follow the policies, requirements, and procedures in the Council's "Academic Programs at Public Institutions: Policies and Procedures for Program Approvals and Changes." Disapproval of the proposed degree program results in denial of the request for escalation of degree-level authority. Approval of the degree escalation does not imply or entail approval of any subsequent degree programs at the same level. Each proposed new degree program will be considered individually.

2. Policy on Doctoral and First-Professional Programs

Doctoral degrees normally will be offered by the major research universities. Exceptions will be considered if: (1) another institution has a special capacity to offer a doctoral degree, usually a professional or applied degree type as distinguished from a research doctoral degree; (2) strong demand exists from place-bound professionals for the proposed program; or (3) special circumstances exist that support the proposed program. For the purposes of this policy, the following institutions are considered to be the major research institutions: the College of William and Mary in Virginia, George Mason University, Old Dominion University, the University of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Each institution awards doctoral degrees in many fields and all have at least one first-professional program.

James Madison University, Norfolk State University, Radford University, and Virginia State University each have "limited authority" to offer doctoral degrees.

E. Appeal of Council Action

Final authority to recommend approval and disapproval for the escalation of degree-level authority and new degree programs resides with Council. If Council disapproves the request for the escalation of degree-level authority, an institution may appeal the Council action. An appeal filed within the designated time period shall be considered by the Council at its next meeting. Any institution filing the appeal may be invited to present the appeal at a Council meeting.

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III. Procedures for Submission of Proposals for Escalation of Degree-Level of Authority

A. General Guidelines for Escalation of Degree-Level Authority

1. Proposals for escalation of degree-level authority must be submitted to Council at least 12 months prior to the date of the proposed change and in accordance with these policies and procedures. Documents should not be submitted more than 18 months in advance of the initiation date. Escalation of degree-level authority must be approved by the institution's Board of Visitors prior to formal submission to SCHEV.
2. Proposals for escalation of degree-level authority shall be submitted via the attached forms. All requests must include:
 - A cover letter from the president outlining the request;
 - SCHEV's Escalation of Degree-Level Authority Cover Sheet;
 - A complete proposal for a new degree program that meets the requirements, policies, and procedures outlined in SCHEV's "Academic Programs at Public Institutions: Policies and Procedures for Program Approvals and Changes" policy;
 - SACSCOC documents: 1) institutional summary form for the most recent on-site reaffirmation review and 2) action letters from the fifth-year review and decennial review;
 - Assessment of impact on academic programs and curricular offerings;
 - Assessment of impact on resources;
 - If applicable, a complete proposal for a mission statement change that meets the requirements outlined in SCHEV's "Mission Statement Changes at Public Institutions" policy;
 - If applicable, a complete proposal for an organizational change that meets the requirements outlined in SCHEV's "Organizational Changes at Public Institutions" policy;
 - If applicable, the most recent self-study report and its findings and recommendations of existing degree programs in the area of the proposed degree programs;
 - Additional supplemental documentation as needed.
3. Regardless of its form, the proposal must include sufficient information, in sufficient detail and quantity to permit SCHEV staff to determine whether the institution is prepared to initiate the process for the escalation of degree-level authority and whether the state needs the proposed degree program(s). SCHEV staff reserves the right to request additional information to evaluate the request and/or to determine adequate resources are available to support an escalation of degree-level authority.

B. Procedures and Instructions for Submission of Documents

1. General Proposal Format for All Documents

- Use Microsoft Word Times New Roman or Arial 12 Font for all text including appendix cover pages and page numbers.
- Use one inch margins and single space between narrative text.
- Number all pages of the document. Number appendices or attachments separate from the main document. Appendices/attachments are paginated separately.
- Provide a table of contents.
- Print one-sided. Print documents from the Word document format—do not print documents from the PDF.
- Use only SCHEV official forms – edited SCHEV forms will not be accepted. Use SCHEV category headings when provided within this document.
- Include support documentation (e.g., reports, MOU/MOA agreements, contracts) in a labeled appendix. Non-word documents should include a cover page and are to be scanned for inclusion in the appendix of the electronic copy, if applicable.
- Provide documentation of any Virginia General Assembly prior approvals relevant to the escalation of degree-level authority.
- Use a clip or rubber band—please do not bind materials.
- For formal submissions, send three hard copies of the documentation. One document must contain an original signature on the cover letter and the SCHEV “Proposal for Escalation of Degree-Level Authority Cover Sheet.” Electronic signatures will not be accepted.
- Address all formal proposal correspondence to the Director of Academic Affairs. Address all envelopes/packages to Administrative Assistant, Academic Affairs and Planning. An electronic copy on CD or flash drive is submitted upon final approval.
- For draft documents, submit two hard copies labeled "draft." Include a completed letter from the institution’s chief executive officer and the SCHEV Escalation of Degree-Level Authority Change Cover Sheet. Include a cover note from the SCHEV liaison that indicates the nature of the submission and the liaison's contact information (name, telephone number, and email address).

All requests that require institutional Board of Visitors (BOV) approval must be formally submitted to SCHEV within one (1) year of the BOV approval date.

2. Specific Instructions for Proposal Documents

- Complete SCHEV's Escalation of Degree-Level Authority Cover Sheet.
- Include a copy of the BOV approval of the escalation of degree-level authority.
- Complete the SCHEV Program Proposal Cover Sheet. Include a degree program proposal that meets the requirements, policies, and procedures outlined in SCHEV's "Academic Programs at Public Institutions: Policies and Procedures for Program Approvals and Changes" policy.
- If applicable, complete the SCHEV Mission Statement Change Cover Sheet. Include a proposal that meets the requirements and procedures outlined in SCHEV's "Mission Statement Changes at Public Institutions" policy.
- If applicable, complete the SCHEV Organizational Change Cover Sheet. Include a proposal that meets the requirements and procedures outlined in SCHEV's "Levels of Required State Action for Various Types of Organizational Changes at Public Institutions" policy.
- Include any attachments in a labeled appendix. Non-word documents must have a cover page and be included in the original format in the hard copy and are to be scanned for inclusion in the appendix of the electronic copy.
- Provide a descriptive narrative that addresses item iv. (see below).

3. Proposal Requirements, Components, and Forms

Proposals for escalation of degree-level authority must include the following components: (i) a cover letter signed by the president or chief academic officer; (ii) an "Escalation of Degree-Level Authority Cover Sheet"; (iii) a table of contents; and (iv) a narrative to explain the proposed escalation.

i) Letter from the President or Chief Executive Officer

A letter signed by the president or chief executive officer must accompany the proposal for intent to seek approval for escalation degree-level authority. The letter must:

- indicate the nature of the request, the proposed effective date, and the BOV approval date. BOV approval is required for a request.;
- provide a description the escalation and include the degree level and the degree program(s) being proposed; indicate the impact of the escalation on academic programs;

- indicate the impact of the escalation on academic units at the department level and above;
- explain how the change will fit with the institution’s mission. If proposing a mission statement change, it should be noted and indicate submission of the proposal with the escalation of degree-level authority.;
- describe the institution’s commitment to the escalation, in terms of financial and physical resources;
- describe funding plans for the escalation, including specified items and amount of the funding. Include a description of what the institution will stop doing or do differently in order to fund the escalation of degree-level authority, if applicable.; and
- include the contact information (name, title, email address, and telephone number) of person(s) other than the institution’s president or chief executive officer who may be contacted regarding the escalation of degree-level authority proposal.

ii) Escalation of Degree-Level Authority Cover Sheet

The SCHEV Cover Sheet for Escalation of Degree-Level Authority must be used to submit proposals for escalation request. The cover sheet must be signed and dated by the president or chief executive officer (see below).

iii) Table of Contents

Provide a detailed table of contents. The table of contents should reflect the headings and page numbers of the primary document and the headings and page numbers, if paginated for the attachments. Attachments/appendix items are paginated separately from the primary document and from other attachments/appendix items.

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**STATE COUNCIL OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR VIRGINIA
PROPOSAL FOR ESCALATION OF DEGREE-LEVEL AUTHORITY
COVER SHEET**

1. Institution	
2. Nature of Proposed Change. Please indicate change here and attach a detailed description on a separate page.	
3. Degree designation of proposed program	4. CIP code
5. Name of proposed program	6. Semester and year of initiation
7. Degree designation of proposed program #2	8. CIP code
9. Name of proposed program	10. Semester and year of initiation
11. Mission Statement Change Modification <input type="checkbox"/> Expansion <input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> No Change <input type="checkbox"/>	
12. Organizational Change Simple <input type="checkbox"/> Complex <input type="checkbox"/> No Change <input type="checkbox"/>	
13. Date of Approval by the Board of Visitors for the proposed escalation. (MONTH/DAY/YEAR REQUIRED)	
14. Proposed Effective-Date of Escalation of Degree-Level Authority. (MONTH/DAY/YEAR REQUIRED)	

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Title: _____ Phone: _____

iv) Narrative Description

Proposals for escalation of degree-level authority must include a detailed narrative description to address (at minimum) the areas and statements below. **Note:** The format for the proposal is **not** bulleted. A guide with the section headings to format the proposal can be found on page 13 and 14 of this document.

- Include a description of the nature of the proposed change.
- Include a narrative to describe a brief history and/or the events that have occurred to prompt the escalation of degree-level authority. **Note:** The background narrative does not include the rationale for the escalation.
- Indicate the purpose of the proposed escalation of degree-level authority.
- Indicate the new degree program(s) that will be proposed with the escalation of degree-level authority. Provide the designation level, name/title, CIP code, and anticipated date of initiation. **Note:** A proposal for a new academic program is required and will accompany the proposal for escalation.
- Provide the current approved mission. Include a narrative to describe how the proposed escalation of degree-level authority aligns with the institutional mission. If a mission statement change will be proposed, indicate such and provide the proposed mission statement. Describe how the proposed escalation of degree-level authority aligns with proposed institutional mission. **Note:** A proposal for a mission statement change will be required and accompany the proposal for escalation.
- Indicate whether new academic units (departments, schools, or colleges) will be proposed with the escalation of degree-level authority. Indicate the name, location, and proposed effective date of the organizational change. **Note:** An organizational change proposal will be required and accompany the proposal for escalation.
- Include a detailed rationale to provide justification for the escalation of degree-level authority. Describe the results and recommendations of any studies or needs assessment conducted to determine the feasibility of the proposed escalation of degree-level authority or the needs assessment. Include support documentation as an attachment/appendix. Attachments/appendices should be referenced in the proposal document at the end of the rationale section.
- Indicate the institution's current accreditation status. Indicate the date of the most recent review by the regional accrediting organization and whether the review was the Fifth-Year Review or the Ten-Year Reaffirmation Review. Indicate the dates of the next fifth-year review and the decennial review. Describe the findings and recommendations of the most recent off-site review and on-site review. Attachments/appendices should be referenced in the proposal document at the end of the accreditation section.

- Provide an explanation of the resources and a detailed description of the expenses needed for the escalation of degree-level authority. Describe miscellaneous expenses needed for the escalation. Include a line-item budget to show the costs for advertisement, promotional materials, website changes, and other specified items. Indicate whether the institution has adequate resources to propose and maintain the escalation. Indicate whether state support will be needed or requested to propose or maintain the proposed escalation of degree-level authority.
- Include additional supplemental documentation as needed.

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C. Procedures and Instructions for Appeal of Council Action

A. Guidelines and Procedures for Appeal of Council Action

- Council has authority to approve and disapprove an escalation of degree-level authority and associated degree programs. If Council disapproves an escalation of degree-level authority, an institution may appeal Council action. An institution seeking to appeal Council action must file documentation within sixty (60) days of the disapproval.

1. Document Format

- Include appropriate section headings.
- Include a detailed explanation for the appeal and provide quoted evidence and in-text citations, if applicable.
- Insert any charts, publications, if needed, and other support documents in a labeled appendix, if appropriate.
- See General Guidelines for All Documents on page 6 of this document.

2. Proposal Requirements and Components

Documents for an appeal must include four components: (i) a cover letter signed by the president containing the information listed below; (ii) supportive evidence of justification for the appeal; (iii) a revised proposal of the original request, if needed; and, (iv) a table of contents.

i) Letter from the President

A cover letter signed by the president must accompany the request to appeal Council action. The letter must:

- indicate the nature of the request and include the escalation of degree-level authority and the degree program name/title, degree designation, and CIP code, proposed initiation date (semester and year), administrative unit, the BOV approval date, and the Council date the escalation of degree-level authority and degree programs were not approved.
- provide a summary of the reasons for the appeal; and
- describe institutional commitment and, support and resources for the escalation of degree-level authority and associated degree programs.

ii) Evidence of Justification

Institutions must submit support documentation to show justification for the appeal. A detailed explanation should include compelling evidence of need by the state and can include need, nationally and globally.

Format/order of section headings for proposals submitted to SCHEV

This outline is provided for convenience and guidance in formatting escalation of degree-level authority requests submitted to SCHEV. Key section headings are provided. The parenthetical information gives guidance for text/explanation narrative and is not included in the formal document.

Note: Additional headings (e.g., accreditation, state licensing agency) may be needed to provide additional information. Such headings should be included as needed. Specific requirements regarding format and content can be found on pages 6-7 and 10-11 of this document.

Institution

(Name)

Nature of Proposed Change

(Indicate the nature of the request and the level of escalation (e.g, bachelor to masters, masters to doctoral) is proposed.)

Background

(Provide a summarized history of what occurred to lead up to the request for an escalation. Background is not rationale or justification for the escalation of degree-level authority.)

Purpose of Proposed Change

(Provide a statement to indicate the purpose of the escalation of degree-level authority.)

Degree Program

(Indicate the degree program(s) that will be proposed at the time of the escalation of degree-level authority. Indicate whether academic programs will be affected by the proposed escalation and the proposed new degree program(s). List the academic programs (e.g., degrees, certificates, and minors) in the academic unit in which the proposed degree program will be located.)

Mission Statement Change

(Describe how the escalation of degree-level authority aligns with the institution's mission. If proposing a new mission, indicate such and describe how the escalation will align with the new mission.)

Organizational Change

(Indicate whether a new academic unit will be established at the time of the escalation of degree-level authority. Indicate whether academic units will be affected by the escalation. List the academic unit(s) and include a detailed narrative describing the affects.)

Rationale for Proposed Escalation

(What are the reasons for the proposed escalation of degree-level authority? Include a detailed narrative describing the need for the escalation. Describe results and recommendations for the study or needs assessment. Support documents (e.g., reports, studies, letters from external key stakeholders) should be included as appendix items.)

Regional Accreditation

(Indicate the institution's current accreditation status. Provide a summarized overview of the institutions most recent review. Include a concise description of issue(s) the institution had to address and how the institution addressed the issue(s). Provide a) the Institutional Summary Form for the most recent on-site reaffirmation review and b) action letters from the fifth-year review and decennial review as separate appendix items.)

Resources/Budget

(Provide a brief introduction to summarize key aspects of the budget. Indicate existing resources and sources of the resources. Use sub-headings to provide a detailed description of expenses (e.g., academic unit(s), personnel, faculty, and physical resources) for the escalation of degree-level authority. To indicate additional areas for expenses, under a sub-heading entitled "other costs," provide the name of the expense, the dollar amount, and an explanation of the expense. Expenses should be presented separately. Include a sub-heading entitled "miscellaneous" and describe the initial support expenses (e.g., advertisement and promotion, website costs) for the proposed escalation. Include a line item budget to show the cost for each expense and indicate the total cost of expenses. Indicate whether the institution has adequate resources to propose and sustain the escalation of degree-level authority. Indicate whether a request will be made for state funding to propose or sustain the proposed escalation. Describe the resources and amount that would be requested from the state.)

Attachments/Appendices

(Provide original documents. Include a copy of the Board of Visitors (BOV) approval of the escalation of degree-level authority. Include a copy of letters and/or documents provided by the regional accrediting agency. Include a copy of Virginia General Assembly legislation and/or appropriation acts, if applicable. Include any support documents as needed.)

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Part I: Supplemental Information

1. If a study was conducted to determine the feasibility of the proposed escalation of degree-level authority, summarize its findings and attach a copy of the final full report. If no such feasibility study was conducted, summarize a needs assessment (the institution's need for the change and the needs of Virginia) and attach a detailed description of the necessity for the proposed escalation.

2. Summarize the new degree program(s) that will be proposed and attach a detailed description of new academic programs. A full proposal for new academic programs will accompany the proposed escalation of degree-level authority. Discuss and describe whether the institution will request new state appropriations.

3. Summarize here and attach a detailed description of the alignment or anticipated effect(s) of the proposed escalation of degree-level authority on the institution's mission. If the proposed escalation of degree-level authority will involve a change to the institution's mission statement, summarize here and attach a detailed description of the proposed mission statement and the alignment with the escalation. A full proposal for a mission statement change will accompany the proposed escalation.

4. If the proposed escalation of degree-level authority will involve the establishment or reorganization of academic units (e.g., department, school, college), summarize here and attach a detailed description of the impact of the escalation. A full proposal for an organizational change will accompany the proposed escalation of degree-level authority. Please discuss and describe whether the institution will request new state appropriations.

Part II: Resources and Impact Information

1. Summarize here and attach a detailed description of the institution's current functional scope, emphasis, instruction, research, or public service and the new functional scope, emphasis, instruction, research, or public service.

2. Summarize here and attach a detailed description of the current and proposed Carnegie classification, degree levels offered, and relative emphasis given to undergraduate and graduate instruction.

3. If the proposed escalation of degree-level authority will include a request for resources from the state, summarize here and attach a detailed description of the resources needed to support the escalation. If a study of resources was conducted, summarize here and attach a detailed description of the study conducted. The study must include the need for and benefits and/or detriments to be derived from the escalation. If no new resources will be requested from the state, summarize here and attach a detailed description of the institutional resources needed to support the escalation.

4. Summarize here and attach a detailed description of the effect(s) of the proposed escalation of degree-level authority on the state's system of higher education including state priorities.

Part III: Contact Information

1. Name(s), title(s), and contact information for institutional personnel who may be contacted to answer questions and/or supply additional information regarding this proposal.

Name Email Telephone

Name Email Telephone

2. Printed name(s) and dated signature(s) of person(s) who completed this form.

Printed Name

Signature Date

Printed Name

Signature Date

3. Printed name and dated signature of the president or chief executive officer.

Printed Name

Signature Date