This operating instruction provides the policy and process for requesting new academic degree programs, requesting changes to existing academic programs, and establishing specializations within existing academic programs. The instruction also catalogues definitions associated with academic programs and degrees.

SUMMARY OF REVISIONS

The revision to this operating instruction includes a title change that clarifies the instruction’s contents and incorporates the course approval policy and process from a policy letter.

1. References:

   ENOI 36-114, Requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree
   ENOI 36-117, Outcomes Evaluation and Assessment
   ENOI 36-135, Requirements for Award of the Master’s Degree
   ENOI 36-142, Guidelines for Graduate Certificate Programs
   AFIT/EN Curriculum and Degree Requirements Committee (CDRC) Standing Rules
   DoDI 5545.04, Policy on the Congressional Reporting Process for Military Educational Institutions Seeking to Establish, Modify, or Redesignate Degrees

2. Degree-Granting Procedures. Since AFIT is a Federal entity, authorization to grant degrees must be approved by Congress. Establishing new degree levels, new academic programs, and making substantial revisions to current programs requires AFIT to be accredited by an approved regional accreditation body, to obtain an approval recommendation from the Secretary of Education through the Department of Education (NACIQI), and to notify Congress through the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD (P&R)).
3. Policy:

3.1. Degree Programs: New graduate academic degree programs require administrative and academic approval before a department can execute the program. Academic approval is obtained through the established procedures defined by the Faculty Council. Administrative approval from the Dean is required to ensure the proposed program meets the vision and mission of the Graduate School and the department has sufficient resources to execute the proposed program.

3.2. Certificate Programs: Approvals for new graduate certificate programs or modifications to such programs will follow the procedures described in ENOI 36-142 and adhere to the requirements of paragraphs 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5.

3.3. Changes to Academic Programs: Changes to current academic programs may require prior administrative approval in addition to academic approval. Such changes may include the number of credit hours for the program, significant changes to the nature of the core courses, adding courses that represent a significant departure (content or method of delivery) from those offered when last evaluated (including new specializations), focus/purpose of the program, simultaneous CIP (Classification of Instructional Program) code and program/degree name change, transition of existing programs to on-line format, adding courses that represent a significant departure from existing program offerings (including specialization tracks), initiating an off-campus site, new faculty added to implement proposed changes, and adding faculty with new areas of expertise. Faculty must consult AFIT’s accreditation liaison for guidance with program changes.

3.4. All proposals to develop a new academic degree or certificate program or to substantially alter an existing academic program (including off-campus instruction) must be coordinated with the Provost since such requests could initiate approval processes from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). Approval by the HLC is required before enacting any substantive changes to the Graduate School’s academic programs. The implementation of curricula or instructional change may not begin until AFIT’s accreditation liaison has received written approval of the substantive change from the HLC. Requests that generate a substantive change application to the HLC also initiate a notification procedure to the USD(P&R) and the Department of Education (see DoDI 5545.04).

3.5. Requests for new programs or major changes to existing programs requiring a substantive change request to the HLC must be submitted at least 8 months prior to the anticipated start of the program.

3.6. New programs must be administratively and academically approved prior to 01 May for an offering for inclusion in the academic catalog for the upcoming academic year.

3.7. Departments introducing new or modifying existing courses or specializations (sequences) shall follow the procedures described below in order to maintain the integrity of the Graduate School’s offerings.
4. Process for Administrative Approvals:

4.1. New Degree Programs: New academic programs can be initiated from many sources. The need for the new program may arise as a result of student demand, market demands (i.e., demand and need within DoD), etc. The request can be initiated by a faculty member, program committee, or program director.

4.1.1. The head of the department where the program is to reside should informally conference with the Dean who will determine if continued development of the proposal is warranted on the basis of AFIT’s priorities and recognized strengths in the department.

4.1.2. The head shall also consult with AFIT’s accreditation liaison for an evaluation of external approvals.

4.1.3. The department submits a formal proposal for a new degree program to the Dean and Provost using the template in Appendix I.

4.1.4. Requests for academic approvals can be submitted simultaneously to the Curriculum, Degree, and Requirements Committee (CDRC).

4.2. Modifications to Existing Degree Programs: Modifications to existing programs resulting in a substantive change request will also require external approvals and, therefore, a new proposal for administrative approval. The Department Head or curriculum chair shall consult with AFIT’s accreditation liaison for guidance on major changes to programs. Typical substantive changes are listed in paragraph 3.3.

4.3. Modifying or Adding Program Specializations: Departments must provide an official memo, signed by the Head, to the Registrar’s Office through the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs for adding, modifying and discontinuing specializations with an existing degree program. For additions and changes, the memo must contain the list of courses that define the specialization as well as and the rationale for the request.

4.4. Discontinuing Programs: The department head shall submit a request to discontinue an academic program to the Registrar’s Office through the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and the Dean. The Dean’s concurrence is required. The request shall include the effective date of discontinuance, list of courses that will be archived (if applicable), and the impact on students throughout the Graduate School.

4.5. Reinstituting Programs: The department head shall submit an official memorandum with the request to reactivate an academic program. The memo shall contain the justification for reinstatement and an analysis of the resources required to deliver the program (see item 4 in Appendix I). The memo is routed to the Registrar’s Office through the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and the Dean. The Dean’s approval is required.

4.6. Course Policy:
4.6.1. New Courses: New courses shall be offered as an “experimental” or “trial” course for two consecutive offerings prior to the department making a formal request to add a new course to the official catalogue. This initial offering period allows time to determine whether or not the course has interest or sufficient student population to warrant a permanent catalogue entry. If the “trial” course is successful, the department can submit the approval documents to make the course permanent and part of the recurring curriculum.

4.6.2. Course Revisions: The department requesting a course revision must consult the Registrar’s Office prior to submitting the request. This consulting activity is required to determine whether or not course revisions are sufficiently significant to warrant a new course designation.

4.6.3. Timelines: Requests for new courses and course revisions must be reviewed and approved at least two quarters prior to the start of the term in which the addition/change takes effect. This requirement is necessary to meet course scheduling deadlines. It is highly recommended that requests for new courses be submitted immediately after evaluating the outcomes of “trial” offerings.

4.6.4. Process and Procedures: All forms required for requesting course actions are published on the EN’s SharePoint site under “Registrar Request Forms”.

4.6.4.1. “Experimental” or “Trial” Courses: The process begins with a faculty- or program-initiated proposal that has been discussed and approved by other program faculty and the department head. The formal request is made to the Registrar’s Office through the Department Head by using the Pending Course Form. The course will be created with an “A” identifier to indicate “experimental” or “trial”, i.e. LOGM-685A. Once the course has been offered twice, the department makes the decision whether or not to permanently add the course to the official catalogue. If the course is to become permanent, follow directions in 4.6.4.2. If the course will not be made permanent, submit a Course Change Request to deactivate the course. Specifically, the following actions are required:

(1) Complete the Pending Course Form;
(2) Route the form with a copy of the syllabus to Registrar’s Office through Department Head;
(3) Registrar’s Office will create course with “A” identifier and contact department if further information is needed;
(4) After second offering, the decision is made to create permanent course or deactivate “experimental” or “trial” course.

4.6.4.2. New Course Requests: Complete the New Course Request form and route it for approvals as indicated on the form. It is preferable to process course approvals at least three quarters before the term in which the change takes effect. Specifically, the following actions are required:

(1) Complete the new course request form;
(2) Route the form as indicated along with the approval for public release by the PA Office and a copy of the course syllabus; and;
(3) If the new course request is approved, the Registrar’s Office may contact the requestor for additional information needed to complete entry into student information system.

4.6.4.3. Course Revisions: Proposed revisions to existing courses are processed by completing the Course Change Request form and routing the form as indicated.

4.6.4.4. Course Deactivation: When a course is no longer useful, the department should take the initiative to have it discontinued. To discontinue a course, complete the Course Change Request form, obtain the necessary departmental and school approvals, and route as indicated in the instructions.

4.6.4.5. Courses required to meet degree requirements for new academic programs may be created when the new program proposal has been submitted for administrative approval. New course approval requests must be completed and approved prior to approval of the new program by the Faculty Council (academic approval).

4.6.5. Relaxing Provision: To provide for exceptional circumstances arising in any particular case, the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs may relax any provision of this course policy.

5. Procedures for Academic Approvals:

5.1. The Standing Rules of the CDRC provide the policy and procedures governing approval by the Faculty Council of new academic programs and changes to current academic programs.

5.2. All new academic program proposals and programs requesting major changes shall be presented to the faculty at a Faculty Council meeting.

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Dean
Graduate School of Engineering & Management
Air Force Institute of Technology
APPENDIX I

Elements of Proposals for New Degree Programs

All new degree program proposals must contain the following information so that the Graduate School administration can adequately assess the potential of the proposed program. All proposals must include a coordination/approval cover page (Appendix II).

1. Introduction

   a. Name of the program
   b. Degree contemplated
   c. Anticipated degree title
   d. Academic department offering the program
   e. Anticipated start term

2. Program Rationale

   a. Description of the need and rationale for the program.
   b. Indicate peer institutions with similar programs; uniqueness and distinctiveness of program.
   c. Discuss the sources and extent of advice and consultation that have been used in formulating the new program (e.g., industry, professional, DoD, etc.)
   d. Student Base – identify the source of students (AF, DoD, etc.) and projected enrollments by the second year of operation. Include potential restrictions, such as international participation, in your description.

3. Program Description and Objectives

   a. Description of program’s overall objectives and goals.
   b. List the program educational objectives
   c. List the program’s student outcomes
   d. Admission requirements and preparation required
   e. Description of proposed curriculum (degree requirements, courses, restricted courses, thesis/project based, resident, DL, etc.)
   f. Program implementation – describe the implementation, scheduling, and recruitment plans for the program.
   g. Accreditation: Describe any specialized accreditation to be sought, if applicable.
   h. Prepare the description for the Graduate School Catalog.

4. Program Resources

   a. Faculty Resources: Does the department have sufficient number of qualified faculty members to offer a quality academic program or the new track within the program?
i. List of faculty who be most directly involved with the program and provide data on the impact of their involvement on other programs in the department.
ii. Faculty manning projection (FTEs) given anticipated advising and teaching loads.
iii. Qualifications and strengths needed by faculty teaching in this program.
iv. Describe involvement of faculty in research, extension, and other activities.

b. Physical Facilities and Equipment: Do sufficient facilities exist to support the new program or track?

i. Describe existing facilities (laboratories, offices, etc) available for the proposed program.
ii. For programs that involve experimental research, describe the existing or anticipated capability to support the program.

c. Library Support: Describe the library support that is available to meet the needs of the new program, indicating the requirements for new acquisitions.

5. Research Information

a. Discuss the potential research areas in which faculty will be involved.
b. Discuss potential funding sources to support research including support for students, equipment, supplies, and salary for civilian faculty.

6. Financial Commitments: Provide estimates of additional cost to the department in terms of faculty FTEs, administrative support, additional funds for research, library costs, supplies, equipment, etc. Also, identify sources of financial support for non-military sponsored students.
APPENDIX II

Proposal Cover Page

New Program Coordination

Program Name:

Department:

Submitted by:

Date Submitted:

Coordination/Approvals:

Academic Department Approval: ________________________________
Head, Department of (Insert Department), Date

Academic Affairs Office Coordination: ________________________________
Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Date

Dean Approve/Disapprove: ______________________________________
Dean, Graduate School of Engineering & Management, Date

Provost Coordination (Accreditation Purposes) ________________________________
Provost, Air Force Institute of Technology
APPENDIX III

ACADEMIC PROGRAM DEFINITIONS

1. An Academic Program is defined as a coherent, systematic combination of core, required and elective courses, experiences, and related activities organized for the attainment of educational objectives (knowledge and competencies) by students and leading to a degree or certificate.

2. A Course is a class of instruction focused on a discipline-specific topic or theme with stated learning outcomes that is taught by faculty. A course may or may not award academic credit. A course carries a unique combination of title, course number, credit hours, and other course attributes that may include terms offered, cross listed courses, contact hours, pre- or co-requisites, credit type, level.

3. A Degree is an award as official recognition of the completion of a prescribed course of study following matriculation. (e.g. Doctor of Philosophy)

4. Degree Requirements are those attributes of a proposed plan of study that warrant faculty approval as meriting the degree in accordance with ENOI 36-135 master’s degrees and ENOI 36-114 for Ph.D. degrees. Degree requirements, although highly dependent on the specific program, are categorized by areas of proficiency leading to an expected level of mastery as evidenced by successful achievement of the student outcomes. Degree requirements are synonymous with program and major requirements.

5. A Program Guide is a description of the academic program and provides the courses and/or academic paths available for accomplishing a program of study. A program guide provides sufficient information so that students may select from alternatives those courses that best match their particular capability and interest and/or prepare them for academic research while still meeting the overall program requirements.

6. A Specialization (within a program) is a coordinated grouping of courses, typically 25 – 30% of the degree requirements, representing a sub-specialization or emphasis within a field available for students majoring in that discipline. The specialization is designated on AFIT transcripts when the degree is awarded.

7. A Student Education Plan is an explicit listing (approved by the major department) of courses and research activity by academic quarter, which articulates for a particular student how degree requirements will be met over a specified period of time. (See ENOI 36-140.)