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Senate Recommendation 2020-12-04 AA Policy 1.4100 Definition
of Areas of Expertise for Academic Programs (Revised by
Senate 12.10.20)



POLICY & PROCEDURE DOCUMENT

NUMBER: 1.4100
DIVISION: Academic Affairs
TITLE: Definition of Areas of Expertise for Academic Programs
DATE: January 20, 2005
REVISED: January 4, 2021
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I. Purpose and Scope

Several undergraduate majors and graduate programs include areas of expertise identified by various terms in the undergraduate and graduate catalogs (e.g. concentration, option, emphasis, track, sequence, specialization, etc.). However, currently the student transcript denotes these credentials under the single term "Concentration."

This policy defines areas of expertise at the undergraduate and graduate levels, how these areas of expertise are denoted and transcribed, and provides recommendations for establishing areas of expertise in new programs.

II. Policy

A. WKU adheres to the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) definitions:

1. Track - set of courses designed to develop expertise within a major or area at the undergraduate level.
2. Concentration - set of courses designed to develop expertise within a major or area at the master's level.
3. Specialization - set of courses designed to develop expertise within a major at the doctoral level.

B. Tracks, Concentrations, and Specializations are noted in the WKU catalogs, registration guide, degree audit system, marketing materials and all other official publications. The WKU transcript denotes all official areas of expertise as "Concentration."

- C. A department or school may consider proposing a track, concentration or specialization as a new major or degree program if the enrollment in the track, concentration, or specialization is substantially higher than the other areas of expertise under the major/program or if the program and/or student demand reflects the need for a new CIP code for reporting and marketing purposes.

III. Procedure

Tracks (undergraduate level), concentrations (master's level), or specializations (doctoral level) will be added to programs or established as new programs through shared governance approval. Areas of expertise that include new content may be subject to complete a SACSCOC Prospectus as outlined by the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy.

IV. Related Policies

V. Reason for Revision

January 2021

Over the years, this policy has been lost at WKU. CPE defined tracks, concentrations, and specializations for public institutions; however, three institutions (including WKU) did not have the capability adjust academic transcripts to use different terms. Therefore, these institutions created policies stating "concentration" would be used for all terms that relate to a focus in a specific area within a major.

In addition, the policy defined a concentration at WKU. However, at some point, the decision was made to follow the CPE definition, and the WKU policy was lost. CPE recently revised the New Academic Program Policy and removed their guidelines for concentrations. This has prompted questions on whether WKU should revert back to its old policy. In discussions with stakeholders, the majority view was to give departments/schools optimal flexibility in creating concentrations with recommendations on when to turn those concentrations into new academic programs.