

To: Josh Socolar, 2014-15 Chair of Academic Council
From: Ed Balleisen, 2014-15 Chair of Academic Programs Committee
cc: Sally Kornbluth, Keith Whitfield, John Willis

In response to the overview of APC's work in 2014-15, a member of Academic Council has sent the following query to AC Chair Josh Socolar:

"Of the various proposals that come before the APC, could the APC provide some quantitative data on the number of proposals considered, the number of times the proposals are sent back for revision and the number of proposals that are eventually withdrawn or not approved?"

This reply offers both the data requested and some a brief discussion of how APC fits into a wider filter for new program proposals at Duke.

The Nature of the APC Filter

The number of degree program proposals considered by APC varies significantly from year to year. This past year the number was 4 – the Masters of Science in Quantitative Financial Economics (MSQFE); the Masters in Biomedical Sciences (MBS); the Masters in Analytical Political Economy (MAPE); and the Masters in International Environmental Policy at Duke Kunshan University (DKU-IMEP).

Two of these proposals underwent significant revisions as a result of issues that surfaced during the APC review. In both of these instances, proposals underwent a single substantive revision at the APC stage of the review process (though see below for comments on earlier phases of review). In the case of the other two proposals, the Committee did not ask for proposal revisions, but did identify important issues that received attention in APC resolutions, to guide the decision-making of program administrators, and to structure (in part) the analysis of their first external reviews. In one of these cases, APC asked for quite a bit of additional information from the proposers before moving to a consideration of a resolution. All four of these degree programs received APC approval this year.

I also have consulted with the two most recent previous chairs of APC – Alex Hartemink and Scott Huettel – to ask about APC's consideration of new degree program proposals during 2012-13 and 2013-14.

According to Hartemink's records, APC considered proposals for five new Masters programs in 2013-14, and one new Ph.D. program. The latter was sent back for significant revisions before again been considered. APC endorsed all six proposals.

According to Huettel's records, in 2012-13, APC did not approve any new degree programs. It sent back one degree program proposal, which has not subsequently come back to APC. It also approved a status change for one academic unit in Trinity, though without requested authority to make tenure-track hires.

Broader Context of the Multiple Filters of Review at Duke

One should keep in mind that by the time that a program proposal comes to APC, it has already cleared several previous reviews. For units under the jurisdiction of the Graduate School, proposals must first receive the initial go ahead from the Associate Dean and Dean of the Graduate School. This first stage of informal feedback leads many units to postpone or drop potential proposals, and others to revise their first proposals significantly. The next step, after approval by the proposing unit or units, is consideration by the Executive Committee of the Graduate Faculty (ECGF). ECGF also frequently sends proposals back to departments for required revisions, and occasionally rejects them outright. (My understanding is that ECGF has returned at least two proposals to units in 2014-15, which will have to return to ECGF before moving forward in the review process.)

For professional schools, proposals for new Masters' must clear internal school consideration, and then undergo a rigorous assessment at the Masters Advisory Council. MAC can and does ask for quite significant revisions.

Thus before any proposal for a new degree program reaches APC, it has already undergone extensive review and often extensive revision, a process that often takes a full year and sometimes more. This prior review does not mean that programs receive cursory consideration at APC. But in essentially every degree proposal that comes before APC, previous assessments have already identified many significant concerns and led to revisions that have produced much stronger frameworks/justifications by the APC stage.