FIN-035

Academic Approval and Signatory Authority for Academic Program Agreements

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Policy Type University

Contact Office Executive Vice President and Provost (Office of the)

Oversight Executive
Executive Vice President and Provost

Applies To Academic Division.

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Reason for Policy

The University has established requirements for approval of academic program agreements to (1) provide adequate lead time to process agreements; (2) confirm that agreements advance the mission and priorities of the University; (3) secure approval from the appropriate academic oversight office and, where appropriate, confirm that all other required approvals have been obtained; and (4) secure approval from an authorized signatory of the University.

Definition of Terms

Academic Program Agreement (APA)

Description

Any contract, including an expression of intent, between the University and another institution or organization to establish a joint educational program, a collaborative academic relationship, or a research activity that is not a sponsored program as defined in FIN-001.

Authorized Signatory

Description

An individual authorized pursuant to the Board of Visitor's Signatory Authority policy to sign contracts with external parties on behalf of the Rector and Visitors of the University of Virginia.

Signatory Authority

Description

The legal authority to bind the Rector and Visitors of the University of Virginia (including any division, school, department, or business unit thereof) in a contract with an external party.

Contract

Description

Any agreement between the University and one or more external parties for performing, or refraining from performing, some specified act(s) in exchange for a valuable benefit known legally as "consideration." Agreements meeting this definition may be referred to by other terms (e.g., memoranda of understanding, statements of work, non-disclosure agreements, academic program agreements).

Policy Statement

All academic program agreements (APAs) are contracts and are therefore governed by policy FIN-036: Signatory Authority for Executing University Contracts, as well as this policy. Proposed APAs undergo several review and approval steps to align with the University's mission and strategic priorities, consider business issues, address applicable laws and contractual terms, and comply with the University's academic policies and oversight responsibilities.

1. **Types of Academic Program Agreements:**
   APAs include:
   - Agreements for the exchange of students or faculty with other institutions of higher education, either in the U.S. or beyond
   - International practicum agreements
   - Study abroad program agreements
   - Agreements to offer custom education programs to external clients
   - Agreements for membership in an academic consortium
   - Domestic or international combination degree program agreements
   - General collaboration agreements related to educational or non-sponsored research activities

   All other agreements, even those related to educational and research activities, are governed by other policies and/or procedures and are referred to the appropriate office as summarized in FIN-036: Signatory Authority for Executing University Contracts, Section 3. Review and Approval of Contracts.

2. **Approvals:**
   APAs require multiple levels of approval (related procedures can be found at the end of the policy):
   A. First, by the school dean and/or unit director. The review verifies that the APA effectively advances the mission and priorities of the school/department/unit and University, and that all commitments and liabilities are approved. Unless otherwise authorized by the executive vice president and chief

operating officer, the executive vice president and provost is the only signatory authorized to sign an APA in the name of the University.

B. Second, APAs with institutions or organizations outside the United States require the approval of the vice provost for global affairs (or designee).
C. Finally, as an authorized signatory, the executive vice president and provost provides administrative and legally binding approval. When an APA includes a combination of educational, research, and financial activities, the APA may, as determined by the provost (or designee), be signed by more than one authorized signatory.

3. **General Provisions for Academic Program Agreements:**
   - All APA requests, whether to draft a new agreement or review an agreement draft provided by an external collaborator, must be submitted via the form linked in the Procedures section as soon as possible once a University faculty or staff member is aware the collaboration may be pursued. APAs must be submitted before the University school/department/unit and the external collaborator negotiate terms.
   - APAs will be limited to a set term of years and may include an option to renew; however, APAs may not be established to automatically renew.
     - Generally, student exchange agreements will be limited to three-year terms and the parties must agree to achieve a precise balance of exchange students during the term of the APA.
   - APAs may not include terms that would waive sovereign immunity or subject the University to governing law or jurisdiction/venue outside the Commonwealth of Virginia.
   - All APAs will include language addressing the University's non-discrimination statement, unless compelling justification is provided.
   - In some cases, international external collaborators may ask that an agreement be signed in both English and the language of their country. In such cases, the requesting UVA school/department/unit will be responsible for identifying an individual fluent in the other language to certify that both the English and non-English versions use parallel language. Include in the APA that the English version is the controlling version in case of a conflict.
   - Any APA premised upon substantive change(s) to an existing degree program or the establishment of a new degree program at the University may not be executed until the proposed changes/new program have received the necessary approvals (see "New Degree Program" information available through the Office of Institutional Research & Analytics).

4. **Compliance with Policy:**
   Failure to comply with the requirements of this policy may result in personal liability and/or disciplinary action up to and including termination or expulsion in accordance with relevant University policies.

   Direct questions about this policy to the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost.

Procedures

Units wishing to develop or execute APAs must allow sufficient time for University review and communication with other parties to the agreement. To initiate the process of reviewing or drafting an APA, whether a new agreement or a renewal, the initiating individual will first contact their dean's office; individuals or academic departments/units outside a school, contact the Provost's Office. After contacting the dean's office or Provost's Office, the request must be submitted via the APA intake form (requires NetBadge). Following submission of the APA intake form, the Provost's Office initiates a central drafting and review process, which may include consultation with other offices, such as the International Studies Office for agreements that are international in nature or the Office of Sponsored Programs for agreements that are with a U.S. federal agency. Please see the

Guidelines for Developing Some Common Types of Academic Program Agreements for step-by-step instructions regarding the APA request, drafting, review, and signature process.

Direct questions about the APA process or whether a specific activity or type of agreement is covered under this policy to the Provost's Office Academic Program Agreements team at academicprogramagreements@virginia.edu.

Related Information

Guidelines for Developing Some Common Types of Academic Program Agreements
BOV Signatory Authority Policy (June 15, 2001)
FIN-001: Classification of Awards to the University as either a Gift or a Sponsored Program
FIN-036: Signatory Authority for Executing University Contracts

Major Category Finance and Business Operations

Next Scheduled Review Tuesday, June 27, 2028

Revision History

Updated Procedures 7/17/25; Expanded examples of APAs, addressed state law and institutional accreditation standards 6/27/25; Updated Links 1/31/22; Added Compliance section 7/19/21; Updated Procedures 5/20/20; Updated Office Names, 7/28/17, Revised 6/27/16.

Category Cross Reference
Academic Administration

Approved By Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer

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