

Academic Programs Committee
Annual Report 2024-25*
Rebecca L. Stein, APC Chair

Introduction

The Academic Programs Committee (APC) advises the Provost on university-wide academic issues. The agenda is developed jointly by the Chair and the Executive Vice-Provost for Academic Affairs. Most of the committee's work falls into the following categories:

- 1) Consideration of **external reviews of units** (departments and university institutes), **newly adopted degree programs** (subject to a required probationary review, typically after the first three years of operation) and **joint doctoral programs** between units.
- 2) Review of **interdisciplinary masters' programs** (those not covered in standard "unit reviews"). This is not regularly part of APC's charge, but we took it on for 2024-25 given that we had very few external reviews to consider. See also *explanatory note* below.
- 3) Consideration of **proposals for new degree programs or the creation, contraction, termination or merger of major units** (such as departments or university-wide institutes).
- 4) Consideration of **major academic policy questions with salience for the entire campus**, typically considered by the full APC committee

Organization

To ensure that APC's deliberations incorporate faculty perspectives from across the university, the Provost and the Executive Committee of Academic Council (ECAC) collaborate in the selection of members from each of the professional schools, as well as a range of departments in each division of Arts & Sciences. The Graduate-Professional Student Council and the Duke Student Government also have non-voting representation on APC. There are several *ex officio*, non-voting members from Duke's senior academic leadership.

Since 2014-15, APC has been split into **two 8 subcommittees**. Each one is structured to achieve the widest possible representation of schools and divisions. Each subcommittee meets once per month, save months without pressing business, and has the authority to act on behalf of APC as a whole. The full APC committee also meets once a month. By this mechanism, APC typically convenes three times a month. The APC Chair has the responsibility of ensuring comparable standards of evaluation across the two subcommittees.

The Provost appoints faculty members of APC to serve for three-year terms, with the Chair coming from the third-year cohort. Chair selection is made by the Provost, in consultation with both the Executive Vice Provost and ECAC, with an attempt made to rotate representation among schools and broad divisions of intellectual inquiry in the university. Stacy Horner served as Vice Chair for 2024-25 and will assume the role of Chair for 2025-26.

Mode of Operation

Typically, the two APC subcommittees handle external reviews or new degree/unit proposals, while the full committee discusses broader policy questions. On occasion, scheduling difficulties have resulted in a subcommittee discussing a policy issue. The Provost also retains the discretion to ask the full committee to consider an external review or proposal for a new degree program or unit.

When undertaking its standard review functions, APC receives the full documentary record concerning either the external review or the new proposal. These materials include the prior evaluation by the Executive Committee of the Graduate Faculty (in the case of departments or joint doctoral programs), or by the Masters' Advisory Council (in the case of professional degree programs or interdisciplinary masters programs). The APC chair then appoints a "lead discussant." This faculty member reviews the materials especially closely and, in consultation with the APC chair and Executive Vice Provost, authors questions for the head of the unit/program under review, or for the lead faculty members on a new program proposal. These queries provide a starting point for the brief presentation by unit/program heads at APC, and subsequent interaction between the presenters and the committee.

During an APC meeting considering an external review or new proposal, the lead discussant is responsible for opening the conversation with guests, taking notes on the committee discussion, and drafting the resolution. The resolution is a document that summarizes the discussion that APC had on the topic and provides concrete recommendations to the Provost on how to proceed regarding the proposal or review at hand. The resolution is drafted, in consultation with the APC Chair and the Executive Vice Provost and encapsulates the views of the committee. Committee members can comment on the draft or suggest an edit or amendment. After an online revision and feedback process, the committee votes on the final version of the resolution. These votes frequently take place electronically.

In the case of an external review, APC's resolution is provided to the respective unit/program and helps to inform any Memorandum of Understanding drafted by the Provost. In the case of a proposal for a new degree program or unit, the APC resolution, with the assent of the Provost, goes forward to ECAC, for consideration by that body and then the full Academic Council, before final consideration by the Board of Trustees. Before moving to generate a resolution, APC may ask for additional information from unit heads/lead proposers. In the case of new proposals, APC may also ask for minor revisions

to the formal proposal or send the proposal back for more substantive reconsideration and reframing (although note that this did not occur during AY 2024-25).

APC also receives visitors to frame its policy meetings of the full committee. The Provost, Executive Vice Provost, and the APC Chair work together to set the broad agenda for these discussions. The Executive Vice Provost then works with the invited members of the university community to identify appropriate background reading materials and structure brief presentations to set up discussion. Typically, the chair takes notes on these meetings, and where appropriate, solicits additional feedback from committee members. After the meeting, when appropriate, the chair submits a memorandum to the Provost and the heads of relevant university units/programs, summarizing the views expressed/suggestions furnished by APC members and, if appropriate, offering additional commentary.

APC activities during the 2024-25 academic year:

Policy discussions:

- Duke's Protest Management strategies (with Daniel Ennis and Mary Pat McMahon)
- DKU accreditation (with Don Taylor)
- Faculty Reference Check policy (with Abbas Benmamoun, Kimberly Hewitt, and Neera Skurky)
- QuadEx and the Student Experience (Mary Pat McMahon and Ben Adams)
- 2030 Education committee's recommendations regarding teaching standards (Ed Balleisen, Yakut Gazi, Jeff Glass, Noah Pickus and Emma Rasiel)

External Reviews of Departments or Units:

- Review of The Department of Biochemistry

Interdisciplinary MA programs reviewed:

- International Master of Environmental Policy (iMEP) program, jointly administered by the Nicholas School of the Environment and the Sanford School of Public Policy
- Duke Master of Fine Arts in Experimental and Documentary Arts (MFA-EDA)
- Duke Master of Interdisciplinary Data Science (MIDS)

Explanatory note: Duke's reviews of interdisciplinary MA programs were put on hiatus during the pandemic and were not subsequently reconvened. APC reviewed 3 such programs (listed above) during AY 2024-25 with the broader aim of considering the review process for such programs. We aimed to answer the question: should they be reviewed MAC alone, by a reconstituted "masters review committee," or some other institutional mechanism. In the process, APC also aimed to standardize the review template for such programs.

APC also considered the following proposals (new degrees/change existing degrees):

- Proposal by Duke Initiative for Science & Society to change the name of their Master's Degree from Master of Arts in Bioethics & Science Policy to Master of Arts in Applied Ethics & Policy
- Proposal by Department of Religious Studies to launch a new Ph.D. program

Appendix: Membership

Term Ending August 31, 2025:

Michael Boyce, Biochemistry
James Chappel, History
Campbell Harvey, Fuqua
Deb Reisinger, Romance Studies
Karin Reuter-Rice, Nursing
Rebecca Stein, Cultural Anthropology (Chair)
Jennifer Wernegreen, Nicholas School of the Environment
Brittany Wilson, Divinity

Term Ending June 30, 2026

Saskia Ziolkowski, Romance Studies
Stacy Horner, School of Medicine (Vice Chair)

Term Ending August 31, 2027

Kathleen Donohue, Biology
Luciana Fellin, Romance Studies
Lisa Griffin, Law
Stephanie Li, African & African American Studies
Amanda Randles, Pratt
Colleen Robles, Math
Patrick Smith, Divinity
Wilton Williams, Surgery

Ex Officio

Trina Jones, Chair, Academic Council
Suzanne Barbour, Dean and Vice Provost of the Graduate School
Alec Gallimore, Provost
Mohamed Noor, Executive Vice Provost

John Klingensmith, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Graduate School
Cam Harvey - ECAC representative
Terrence Oas - ECAC representative
Alessandro Dal Bon, DSG representative
Julian Liber, GPSG representative

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