

### 3.4.5

#### **Educational Programs: All:Academic policies**

The institution publishes academic policies that adhere to principles of good educational practice. These policies are disseminated to students, faculty, and other interested parties through publications that accurately represent the programs and services of the institution.

#### **Judgment**

Compliance    Partial Compliance    Non-Compliance    Not Applicable

#### **Narrative**

Tennessee Technological University (TTU) publishes academic policies that adhere to the principles of good educational practice and accurately represent the programs and services of the University. These policies are disseminated to students, faculty, and other interested parties through the Policy Central website [1] in addition to an online Student Handbook [2], Undergraduate Catalog [3], Graduate Catalog [4], the mission statement [5], and the Faculty Handbook [6].

#### **Process for Developing and Approving Academic Policies**

TTU, through its practice of shared governance, recognizes the key role of faculty in the formation of academic policies. Thus, administrators and faculty, through appropriate committees, develop and approve the academic policies for the institution. The university committee structure is organized hierarchically. The University Assembly is composed of the Academic and Administrative Councils. Ten committees report to the Academic Council, and 20 committees report to the Administrative Council. A separate body, the Faculty Senate, is composed of the elected representatives on the Academic and Administrative Councils. All University-level committees serve in an advisory role to the President, and their actions are subject to the President's review.

The University publishes the purpose and responsibilities of each University standing committee on its website and in University Committees Policy 102 [7][8]. Faculty, through these committees and councils, play a crucial role in assessing the effectiveness of existing policies and, where necessary, propose amendments to them or their revocation. Faculty may also propose new policies altogether to improve upon the educational programs of the University. This faculty participation in the creation and oversight of educational policies and programs contributes to the fulfillment of the University's mission to maintain high academic quality and a vibrant learning environment.

There are also committees at the college and departmental levels in the University. These committees are often the initiators of changes in academic or administrative policies through proposals that are sent from them to the Academic or Administrative Council. Ad hoc committees at all levels of the University address issues that do not naturally fall within the jurisdiction of a standing committee.

The President may also submit policy proposals directly to a Council or the University Assembly. The Council reviews the proposals and may accept the draft policy and/or implementation plan as submitted, request additions or deletions, or reject the draft policy and/or implementation plan in whole or in part. If the Council determines that the draft policy and implementation plan are appropriate, the Council will submit the draft policy and implementation plan to university counsel for legal review. After the university counsel has reviewed the policy, the Council will determine the appropriate reviewing bodies and submit the draft policy and, if appropriate, implementation plan to them for further comment. Upon completion of this review process, the draft policy and implementation plan have to be submitted to the President for final review and approval.

In addition to the above, any person at TTU may propose a new university-wide policy, an amendment

to an existing university-wide policy, or a revocation of a university-wide policy by following procedures outlined in the University's Policy on Policies [9]. The complete sequence of steps of the procedure can be found in Section V of the above document. Its key steps call for the proposer of a university-wide policy to submit the proposal to the appropriate vice president(s) or direct report to the President and to the University Counsel. If the appropriate vice president(s) or direct report determines that the proposal warrants consideration for adoption, the vice president/direct report or designee drafts a policy for review by the appropriate council(s). The draft policy has to be reviewed by the University Counsel before it is sent to a council.

The Graduate Studies Executive Committee (GSEC) [10] hears and votes on new policies and policy change proposals for the College of Graduate Studies. These proposals usually originate in departments or colleges with graduate programs and then move to the GSEC for review. The GSEC may itself form committees to investigate and propose new policies or change policies related to graduate studies. Policy decisions of the GSEC are subject to review by the Academic Council, the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR), and the University President.

The University adheres to the TBR standards for academic policies and principles, and this ensures compliance with all academic policies and guidelines initiated and adopted by the University with Board of Regents policies.

### **Extent to which Institution's Academic Policies are Made Available to Constituencies Affected by the Policies**

TTU makes its existing academic policies fully available to all affected constituencies through its online Faculty Handbook, Student Handbook, Undergraduate Catalog, and Graduate Catalog. When changes in University policies are made, those changes are included in either the Faculty Handbook, the Student Handbook, or in the Undergraduate or Graduate catalogs, or at all four sites, depending on the policy.

The minutes of the meetings of the Administrative Council [11] and the minutes of the meetings of the Academic Council [12] are posted on their respective websites. The minutes of Academic Council meetings provide numerous examples of the creation of academic policies that conform to good educational practice, such as the approval of an academic calendar that provides increased balance between the number of class meetings on each day of the week. Policies regarding Graduate Studies are disseminated through the Graduate Catalog.

### **Approval Process for Materials that the Institution Uses to Portray Itself**

Only the President has the authority to issue TTU policies and has final review and approval of all university-wide policies and implementation plans. It is noted that the academic policy development process at TTU described above ensures that the University Counsel for compliance with TBR academic policies and Tennessee State Law has reviewed academic policies receiving presidential assent.

TTU's policy [13] concerning published material complies with state law (Tennessee Code Annotated Section 12-7-104-106), which states that "publications (whether new or revised) must be reviewed, approved and assigned a publication number." At TTU, the President has placed this responsibility with the Office of Communications and Marketing. Materials defined as publications that are subject to these policies and procedures are any TTU publication, both printed and electronic format, which is produced for general distribution or display on or off campus.

### **Determination of Good Academic Practices within the Context of TTU's Mission**

Consistent with its mission, TTU has developed academic practices that are designed to nurture the qualities it desires its students to have at the time of graduation and for their careers thereafter. These good academic practices are nurtured in students by embodying them in the design of courses, research undertaken, other creative activities, and extracurricular activities.
















The University determines good academic practices by ensuring that existing policies and practices are always compliant with prevailing state and federal laws and by seeking feedback on its prevailing

policies and practices from its constituents of faculty, staff, students, alumni, and employers. As described above, the University has a policy-making/policy-review structure that invites input or policy-proposals from its constituencies of faculty, staff, and students to address any aspect of the University's mission that is determined to be not adequately accomplished by existing policies and practices. Further, the University, through its office of Institutional Research [14] collects data that relate to its mission, which allows the periodic review of the efficacy of existing policies and practices and determination of whether revisions are required. The University, through Strategic Planning [15], collects information on how well its existing academic practices, geared toward fulfilling its mission, are working and, if necessary, put in place remedial measures. Thus, it is through the continuous cyclic working of these policy development, implementation, and assessment processes that the University is able to determine good academic practices consistent with its mission.

## Conclusion

TTU publishes academic policies that adhere to principles of good educational practice. These policies are disseminated to students, faculty, and other interested parties through publications that accurately represent the programs and services of the institution. The process for developing and approving academic policies recognizes the key role of faculty in developing these policies. The Office of Communications and Marketing review all materials used to portray TTU. Last, TTU determines good academic practices by ensuring compliance with existing policies and practices and by seeking feedback from all constituents. Therefore, TTU is in compliance with Comprehensive Standard 3.4.5.

## Sources

-  [01] Policy Central Website
-  [02] Student Handbook
-  [03] 2014\_2015 Undergraduate Catalog
-  [04] 2014\_2015 Graduate Catalog
-  [05] Mission Statement
-  [06] Faculty Handbook
-  [07] University Standing Committees
-  [08] University Committees Policy 102
-  [09] Policy on Policies 101
-  [10] Graduate Studies Executive Committee Policy 272
-  [11] Administrative Council Minutes
-  [12] Academic Council Minutes
-  [13] Publication Policy 1010
-  [14] Institutional Research
-  [15] Strategic Planning