

RCEP: FAQs

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By Secretary of the Faculty

The RCEP process provides for collegial dialogue and consultation when budget reductions, resource reallocations, or shifting academic priorities lead to consideration of organizational restructuring. The process provides administrative leaders with counsel from faculty, students, and staff, both internal and external to the unit under review for restructuring, and provides directly and indirectly affected or interested parties a forum for gathering or contributing information and perspectives. This consultative and collegial process is intended to lead to fully informed decisions regarding academic unit reorganizations, consolidations, and eliminations.

The RCEP process is fully described in the *Faculty Code*, Chapter 26, Section 26-41, and the *Code* is the authoritative source on the process. This “FAQ” document is intended as an introductory, evolving, informational resource on some of the questions frequently asked by faculty, staff, students, and administrators about the RCEP process. However, because the information presented here is a brief summary of the *Code*, it does not substitute for the *Faculty Code* on any matters of dispute.

1. Question: What are the Guiding Principles for RCEPs?

A: Protect to the maximum extent possible: the overall curriculum and educational needs of the students; the quality of the program; other programs in the University that may be affected by the proposal; the University’s commitment to tenure; the University’s commitment to diversity in faculty, staff and students. Principles are defined in Section 26-41. C.2.g in the *Faculty Code*.

2. Question: What does “RCEP” Stand for?

A: “Reorganization, Consolidation, and Elimination Procedures,” a set of procedures outlined in the *Faculty Code*, Chapter 26, Section 26-41. These procedures apply to those organizational restructuring actions affecting either “programs” or entire schools or colleges.

There are two basic types of RCEPs, one for programs and departments *within* a school/college/campus (proposed by the dean or chancellor) and the other for entire colleges, schools, and campuses (proposed by the Provost). Each type has two variations: one is a full/extended set of procedures and the other is a limited or expedited set of procedures. Detailed descriptions of the procedures are described in sections 26-41 B, C, D, E, and F of the *Faculty Code*.

3. Question: RCEP procedures (*Faculty Code*, Chapter 26, Section 26-41, Subsections B and C) refer to “programs.” What is a “program?”

A: Roughly speaking, an RCEP “program” is a collection of faculty that offers a degree or a denoted track within a degree. More formally, an RCEP program is defined in Section 26-41 of the *Faculty Code* as follows:

- (a) A department or other degree-granting unit (other than a departmentalized school, college or campus), or
- (b) a sub-unit within a department, an academic unit in a non-departmentalized school or college or a group of faculty (from one or more departments) which offers a distinct degree or a track within a degree that is described as a distinct option in the University Catalog or in the course catalog of the college or school in question or is customarily noted as such on student transcripts.

It is important to note that a disagreement as to whether the object of a proposed action constitutes a “program” is resolved by the Senate Committee on Planning and Budgeting (SCPB); their decision is binding. The Dean or Chancellor and faculty group affected by the proposed action each submit a

statement of their position to the SCPB chair. SCPB has 10 instructional days after receipt of both statements to make a decision. [(Faculty Code, Chapter 26, Section 26-41, Subsections B and C)]

4. **Question: RCEP procedures (Faculty Code, Chapter 26, Section 26-41, Subsections E and F) refer to “college or school.” Which University units are a “college or school?”**

A: The procedures that refer to reorganization, consolidation, or elimination of a college or school apply to one of the 15 Schools and Colleges of the University of Washington Seattle campus or the reorganization or consolidation of the University of Washington Bothell or University of Washington Tacoma campuses. [Executive Order IX]

5. **Question: How do I know if a proposed action requires going through the RCEP procedure?**

A: If the answers to the following 2 questions are both yes, then an RCEP should be initiated. 1) Does the proposed action involve a “program?” (see above) or one or more schools or colleges? 2) Does the proposed action involve a (structural) reorganization, or a consolidation, or an elimination of one or more “programs” or Schools/Colleges/Campuses? If in doubt, please contact the Secretary of the Faculty for guidance.

6. **Question: Who initiates an RCEP?**

A.: If the proposed action is to reorganize, consolidate, or eliminate one or more “programs” *within* a single school, college, or campus, the RCEP is initiated by a Dean or Chancellor. This request must come from a direct report to the provost. If the proposed action is to reorganize, consolidate, or eliminate one or more schools or colleges or campuses, the RCEP is initiated by the Provost.

7. **Question: How does an RCEP get started/initiated?**

A: In keeping with the intended spirit of collegial dialogue and consultation, any RCEP proposal should be developed through discussions with the affected program faculty and administrator(s) and appropriate faculty advisory committees.

If the proposed action will occur *within* a school, college, or campus (i.e. a program-level RCEP), the Dean or Chancellor is required to consult with the unit’s Elected Faculty Council, and then request authority from the Provost to initiate a formal RCEP procedure. This request must come from a direct report to the Provost. The Provost considers that request in consultation with SCPB. The Provost contacts the chair of the Senate Committee on Planning and Budgeting (SCPB) to place the matter on an upcoming SCPB agenda.

If the proposed action will occur at the university level (a school/college/campus-level RCEP), the Provost first consults with the Dean or Chancellor and the Elected Faculty Council of the affected unit(s), and then presents a proposal to the President and the Senate Committee on Planning and Budgeting (SCPB).

It is suggested that preliminary discussions about the proposed action occur with the Secretary of the Faculty and SCPB chair, as well as staff in the Provost’s office. These individuals can provide guidance on the RCEP process and preparing the proposal to bring to SCPB.

8. **Question: The RCEP description in the Faculty Code seems very complex. How do I know what part applies to my situation?**

A: There are actually 4 distinct RCEP procedures. Each is described separately in the *Faculty Code*, Chapter 26, Section 26-41:

1. Program RCEP: Full Process [Faculty Code, Section 26-41.C]

2. Program RCEP: Limited Process [**Faculty Code, Section 26-41.D**]
3. School/College/Campus RCEP: Full Process [**Faculty Code, Section 26-41.E**]
4. School/College/Campus RCEP: Limited Process [**Faculty Code, Section 26-41.F**]

Program-level RCEP procedures apply to proposed actions that occur *within* a school, college, or campus and are initiated by the Dean of that unit.

School/College/Campus-level RCEP procedures apply to proposed actions that occur within the University and are initiated by the Provost.

9. Question: What determines if the RCEP will follow the procedures for a full or a limited process?

A: If the proposed action WILL have one or more of the effects listed below, then the full process is required. If not, then the limited process is allowed.

- a. The removal of tenured faculty or of untenured faculty before completion of their contracts.
- b. A significant change in the terms, conditions, or course of employment of faculty.
- c. A significant change in the overall curriculum of a college, school, or campus, or of the University as a whole.
- d. A significant departure from the stated mission of a college, school, or campus, or of the University as a whole.

When an RCEP proposal is presented to SCPB, members may ask for information to clarify that a proposed action fits the criteria for a limited process. Faculty in the affected programs(s) have the opportunity to petition to have a proposal proceed through the full (not limited) process if they believe it does not meet the criteria for a limited process. Ultimately, the Provost or President determines whether the limited process can be followed. [**Faculty Code, Chapter 26, Section 26-41, Subsection B.1., Subsection C, and Subsection F**]

10. Question: How long does an RCEP take to complete?

A: It depends on whether the full or limited process is followed. The full process for reorganization, consolidation, or elimination of a program or school/college/campus can take 1-2 quarters to complete. The time limits for various steps are outlined in the Faculty Code. In considering these time limits, note that some steps are specified as maximum limits and others are minimum limits; all time limits refer to “instructional days” and thus exclude weekends, holidays, examination periods, quarter breaks, and summer quarter.

The limited process can only be used for a reorganization or consolidation of a program or a school, college, or campus; it cannot be used for an elimination. The limited process can be completed in a minimum of 20 instructional days following presentation of the proposal to SCPB.

11. Question: What are the opportunities for affected faculty and other stakeholders to voice their opinions about the proposed RCEP action(s)?

A: All RCEP proposals should be developed through consultation with the unit(s) affected faculty, administrator(s), and elected faculty council before they are formally proposed. (This can take weeks or months.)

In a full RCEP, affected faculty and other stakeholders are also invited to provide testimony during hearings held by a Review Committee, as part of the RCEP procedures.

In a limited RCEP, faculty in the affected programs may file a petition if they believe a full RCEP process applies; if the petition is accepted, the faculty would then be able to provide testimony as stated above.

12. Question: In what other ways are the University faculty involved in the RCEP process?

A: Involvement of University faculty in the RCEP procedures include: participation as members of the elected faculty councils and individual faculty members of affected programs, as members appointed to the External Faculty Committee for program-level RCEPs, as members of the Senate Committee on Planning and Budgeting (SCPB), and as members of the appointed Review Committees.

13. Question: What is the role of the Senate Committee on Planning and Budgeting (SCPB) in RCEP processes?

A: SCPB has the following roles:

1. Resolves any disagreements as to whether the object of a proposed action constitutes a “program”. SCPB’s decision is binding.
2. Participates in determining if a proposed action meets the criteria for a “limited” reorganization or consolidation process. SCPB’s role is to consult with the Provost (for a program-level RCEP) or the President (for a School/College/Campus-level RCEP).
3. Participates with the Provost in granting the authority to a Dean or Chancellor to initiate a formal review (full RCEP) to identify one or more programs for elimination, reorganization, or consolidation. SCPB’s role is to consult with the Provost.
4. Must concur with a Provost’s proposal to begin a full RCEP process to reorganize, consolidate, or eliminate a college or school. The majority of the members of SCPB must concur with the request before the review of the proposal can proceed.
5. Confers with the Provost (or President) after the Review Committee (Full process for program-level or college-level RCEP) submits its final report and before the Provost (or President) makes a final decision.

14. Question: What is the role of the Faculty Senate and the Chair of Faculty Senate?

A: The Faculty Senate approves the legislation that sets forth the RCEP procedures. Senators may be asked to serve as members or chairs of External Faculty Committees or Review Committees. Individual Senators may also provide testimony in hearings held by Review Committees. The Chair of the Faculty Senate appoints members of Review Committees and receives reports from Review Committees.

15. Question: What is the appeal process for a President’s decision to reorganize, consolidate, or eliminate a program or school/college?

A: The Code does not specifically provide for further review following the President’s decision.

16. Question: Who do I go to if I have further questions concerning RCEP?

A: The Secretary of the Faculty.