

Program Improvement and Viability Process¹: Cañada College

Key Definitions

- Program of study: An “educational program is an organized sequence of courses leading to a defined objective, a degree, a certificate, a diploma, a license, or transfer to another institution of higher learning”[Title 5 §55000(m)].
- Instructional program: a discipline and/or a department; the entity that performs, and is the subject of, program review. An instructional program may contain a single program of study or multiple programs of study.
- Primary term: Fall and Spring semesters, excluding summer terms or any other possible term.
- Vitality: the state of being strong and actively meeting student, community, and/or industry needs.
- Viability: the ability to maintain quantitative and qualitative factors and learning outcomes that are evidence of adequately meeting student, community, and/or industry needs.
- Continuance: a program is accepted as-is with no stipulations.
- Revitalization: process of moving a program from a concern for its viability to a state of vitality.
- Suspension: temporary discontinuance of an instructional program for a set number of semesters, which is followed by re-evaluation of the program improvement and viability plan. Please note: programs of study cannot be suspended. According to Curriculum Committee rules, a program of study may only be inactivated/discontinued but can be reactivated in future years.
- Discontinuance: termination of an existing program of study or instructional program (that is, discipline, or department).
- De Facto Discontinuance: an intentional or unintentional discontinuance of a program of study in circumvention of this administrative procedure that results from the reduction of course sections or from any other institutional or administrative action, thereby rendering program implementation and completion impossible or improbable.

Context

[Board Policy 6.13](#) (BP 4020) stipulates that Program Review (PR) and Program Improvement & Viability (PIV) are academic and professional matters under the purview of the Academic Senate. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the Academic Senate, under [Administrative Procedure 6.13.1](#) (BP 4020 and 4022), to design and recommend to the college administration processes for conducting these evaluations of instructional programs.

The term “program” can have multiple definitions depending upon institution and context. An “educational program is an organized sequence of courses leading to a defined objective, a degree, a certificate, a diploma, a license, or transfer to another institution of higher education” [Title 5 §55000(m)]. At Cañada College, and in this document, we consider the term “program of study” to be synonymous with educational program.

Therefore, a program of study leads to a degree or certificate and is subject to the approval, requirements, and processes of the Curriculum Committee.

¹ Adapted from [Foothill Administrative Procedure 4021 – Program Discontinuance](#) by Cañada’s Academic Senate in September 2024. Revised by Cañada’s Academic Senate in December 2025.

However, in the context of program review, we generally define an “instructional program” by its discipline or department. This organizational and pedagogical structure has associated faculty who design, schedule, teach, and evaluate one or more programs of study. Regular cycles of introspection, analysis, and planning are mandated and integral to program review and are intended solely for the purpose of ensuring continuing efficacy, quality, and improvement of our instructional programs and their programs of study. In other words, regular cycles of program review are designed to address the waning and waxing of the strength and activity, the vitality, of our instructional programs. The term “vitality” is the state of being strong and actively meeting student, community, and/or industry needs. A program of study with a high degree of vitality could be characterized by:

- robust sustained enrollment,
- regular schedule of course offerings so that degrees or certificates are completable within required timeframes,
- evidence of successful student outcomes, such as degree or certificate awards, transfer, or gainful employment.

When, as a result of program review, an instructional program determines that one of its programs of study has low vitality, or conversely, an opportunity for growth and expansion, faculty create and revise curricula, establish plans, set goals, and request material, financial, and human resources. However, when program review reveals a persistent lack of vitality, it becomes necessary to consider the viability of the program of study, and potentially, the viability of the instructional program (discipline and department).

Unlike Program Review, the Program Improvement & Viability (PIV) process focuses on the persistent absence of vitality and, therefore, brings into question program viability. Program Review documents may inform PIV but should not determine the outcome of PIV. The intention of the PIV process is to design and implement plans and allocate institutional resources to revitalize instructional programs. If these efforts are unsuccessful, then the college may consider program suspension or discontinuance.

The Program Improvement and Viability (PIV) process is the mechanism by which Cañada College assesses the viability of its programs of study and of its instructional programs. “Viability” is the ability of an instructional program, or a program of study, to reach the condition of vitality. That is, a viable program is one that has the ability to maintain quantitative and qualitative factors and learning outcomes that are evidence of adequately meeting student, community, and/or industry needs.

When there is concern for a program’s viability, the Academic Senate initiates the Program Improvement and Viability (PIV) process. The purpose of the PIV process is to obtain a broad perspective and to assist the discipline faculty in the evaluation of a program of study or instructional program. The goal of PIV is to either identify opportunities for improvement and the resources that would be required in order to revitalize the program moving it from the state of “concern” to that of “vitality”, or, if justified, to recommend that a program of study be discontinued or that an instructional program be suspended or discontinued.

Criteria for Initiating the PIV Process and Determining Viability

In evaluating whether an instructional program or its program of study should undergo the PIV process, the college mission, vision, and values should be paramount. A PIV process is not necessary if there are no significant concerns about the vitality of an instructional program. A discipline faculty member can discontinue

a program of study without going through the PIV process following the college's program review and curriculum processes.

Concerns around an instructional program or program of study's ability to meet a significant number of the following indicators are reasons for initiating the PIV process. If a PIV committee is formed, then the following indicators will be the framework the committee uses to judge the viability of an instructional program and/or program of study:

1. Quantitative indicators include but are not limited to:
 - a. Enrollment trends over a sustained period of time as compared to the college average (note that amount of time will differ between established and new programs)
 - b. Productivity metrics
 - c. Student persistence, retention, and success as compared to the college average
 - d. Program completion trends over a sustained period of time
 - e. Frequency of course section offering
 - f. Impacts on diversity with respect to the students that this program serves and whether discontinuance will adversely affect this subset of our student population
 - g. The importance of the program for related certificates, degrees, and other programs
 - h. Projected future student demand
 - i. Projected market/industry demand for skill or major
 - j. Projected community needs
2. Qualitative indicators include but are not limited to:
 - a. Pedagogical changes in the discipline
 - b. Ability to recruit discipline faculty
 - c. Requirements from accrediting or licensing entities
 - d. The development of the whole student
 - e. The balance of college curriculum
 - f. The intended and unintended consequences for students of discontinuing the program
 - g. The potential for a disproportionate impact on diversity at Cañada College
 - h. The quality of the program and how it is perceived by students, articulating institutions, industry, and the community
 - i. The ability of students to complete their degree or certificate or to transfer, both in terms of courses offered by the college and any external requirements necessary to complete a degree or certificate.
 - j. The availability of comparable programs in the region
 - k. Program Advisory Committee or Advisory Board recommendation
3. Learning Outcomes
 - a. Taking note of institutional, program, and student learning outcomes that will be affected by the discontinuance of this program, and in which ways they will be affected

PIV Process

1. **Initiating the PIV** - The Vice President of Instruction, a division dean, a division or department faculty member, the Instruction Planning Council, or the Academic Senate may identify a program in need of PIV based upon [established criteria](#), and request a meeting with the division dean, the VPI, and discipline faculty to initiate the PIV process. A request for initiating the PIV process should examine the program's most recent program review, or for new programs, the plans and goals identified during their approval process in order to consider how the relevant [criteria](#) have or have not been addressed.

2. **Forming the Task Force** - The VPI calls for formation of a PIV task force consisting of at least one discipline faculty member from the program who acts as the task force chair, the division dean, dean of PRIE, one academic counselor, and two tenured faculty from outside the program with at least one of the two being from outside the division.
 - a. Faculty on the task force are appointed by the Academic Senate.
 - b. If there are no available discipline faculty from the program, a closely related discipline faculty member from the division can substitute as the task force chair.
 - c. Upon agreement of the Academic Senate, additional members including students, staff, faculty or external professional experts may be appointed.
 - d. Completing the PIV process is a significant time commitment on behalf of the task force members that requires more time than typical committee work. Given the time commitment, the Office of Instruction should consider any necessary support and compensation that may be needed.
3. **Timelines and Procedures** - After the task force is formed by Academic Senate, they should strive to complete their committee work within the subsequent two primary term semesters (Fall and Spring semesters). The task force:
 - a. Solicits and reports input from all relevant constituencies including faculty, staff, administrators, students, the employing business and industry, and the community.
 - b. Meetings should be open to the public with advance notice to the entire college community, using multiple means of communication. Meeting times, days, and location should be announced at least three days in advance on a publicly viewable webpage. Academic Senate should be notified of task's force's meeting webpage and post a link to it on its own webpage.
 - c. Establishes agreed-upon rules and record, and posts written records of the outcomes of discussions. These written records will be posted to the task force's publicly viewable website, which was shared with Academic Senate. Academic Senate can receive updates upon request during the task force's process.
 - d. If the committee believes there should be a longer timeline for the committee work, they should request an extension from Academic Senate.
4. **PIV Analysis** - The task force:
 - a. Considers the approved development plans and goals for new instructional programs and recent program review documents for established instructional programs.
 - b. Performs a detailed SWOT analysis, if required by Board Policy or Administrative Procedure.
 - c. Considers both qualitative and quantitative indicators noted above and Program and Student Learning Outcomes.
5. **Recommendations** - Based on its analysis the task force may recommend:
 - a. *Continuance*: the program of study, or the instructional program, is accepted as-is with no qualifications. Implicit to this recommendation is that the program will continue to receive the standard material, financial, and human resource support from the college and that the regular process of program review is deemed sufficient to ensure improvement and continued success.
 - b. *Revitalization*: the task force creates a plan for revitalization of the instructional program with measurable outcomes and a timetable, not to exceed two years, for implementation. Among other considerations, the task force may recommend ways of supporting or modifying the instructional program and its programs of study. This plan could include integrating or promoting continuing education, lifelong education and enrichment, transfer or non-transfer options, and GE offerings.
 - i. The revitalization plan must identify responsibilities of involved parties and required resources.

- ii. Program faculty shall be responsible for writing and submitting necessary resource requests in accordance with the college's annual planning processes. A decision to allocate any such resources outside of the standard college process or timeline would be at the discretion of the President and/or Board.
- iii. The VPI will monitor the instructional program's progress on the plan and report any concerns to the Academic Senate.
- iv. If insufficient progress is made by the fourth primary term semester the task force is reconvened to recommend:
 1. granting of an extension (length determined by task force) for revitalization with possible amendments to the revitalization plan, or
 2. Initiation of the suspension or discontinuance process.

c. *Suspension*: an instructional program is temporarily suspended from offering its program(s) of study for a set number of semesters, in order to develop new programs of study or wait for conditions to become more favorable.

- i. Depending on the length of the suspension, the instructional program may have to inactivate its curriculum, including one or more programs of study. See below for ramifications of discontinuing a program of study.
- ii. The task force identifies the duration of the temporary suspension and the criteria for reactivating the instructional program.
- iii. At the end of the suspension period, the task force is reconvened to re-assess the instructional program and determine whether to recommend it for revitalization or discontinuance.

d. *Discontinuance*: one or more programs of study are to be discontinued and possibly the instructional program is to be discontinued.

- i. The recommendation for discontinuance of a program of study may be one part of a recommendation for instructional program revitalization or instructional program suspension. Revitalization and suspension plans may require the development of new curricular programs of study to replace the current programs heading for discontinuance.
- ii. Discontinuance (inactivation) of a program of study is completed in compliance with Curriculum Committee procedures.
 1. The degree discontinuance will be submitted to the Curriculum Committee for approval.
 2. The degree discontinuance will be submitted to the Board of Trustees for approval.
 3. Once Board approved, the Office of Instruction (curriculum specialist) will initiate the discontinuance Standard Operating Procedure (SOP).
- iii. Discontinuance of a program of study requires the college to make appropriate arrangements to ensure that currently enrolled students are able to complete their plan of study in accordance with the college catalog in a timely manner and with a minimum of disruption (see ACCJC policy's for a teach-out plan).
 1. Contacting and planning with students
 - a. Identify and contact students in the affected major, degree, and/or certificate program.
 - b. Award degrees and certificates to students who have already completed but not petitioned.

- c. Identify courses that each student must complete, and identify which faculty will teach said courses. Develop Admissions and Records procedures to ensure students enroll in courses identified.
- d. Confirm sufficient counseling support exists for each student.
- e. Identify similar programs at area colleges. Determine if completed courses will transfer so that a student may complete the program, degree, and/or certificate at another college that is accessible to the student.
- f. Establish the length of time needed for each student to complete and identify the last scheduled offering of each course.
- iv. Discontinuance of an instructional program requires compliance with any relevant collective bargaining agreement that relates to any impacted faculty or staff.
 - 1. Contacting and planning with faculty
 - a. Follow district Human Resources policy for possible reassignment
 - 2. Closing the program
 - a. If needed, appoint a faculty member as program coordinator during the discontinuance process for tasks such as SLO coordination, program review, curricular processes for discontinuing programs of study.
 - b. Communicate the action plan to affected students as well as program faculty.
 - c. Communicate the action plan to the community and external agencies and licensing groups, where appropriate.
 - d. Program information will be removed from college and district informational materials, including catalog, schedule, websites, etc.
- v. Administrative Procedure 6.13.1 details specific tasks required before a program is discontinued.
- vi. If the task force recommends discontinuance, it should consult the current AP 6.13.1 and complete any required tasks that have not already been completed by the task force.
- vii. After completing any additional tasks set forth by AP 6.13.1, the task force should confirm whether or not it still recommends discontinuance.
- e. Task force recommendations should include, and identify as such, minority-opinion perspectives. The task force can decide how to include any minority-opinion perspectives.

6. Reporting & Decision-making Processes -

- a. The task force report and recommendations are presented to the Instructional Planning Council and Academic Senate for feedback and deliberation.
- b. Academic Senate deliberates and determines its recommendation to the President and the Board of Trustees.
 - i. As PIV is an academic and professional matter, the College President and the Board of Trustees shall rely primarily on the recommendation of the Academic Senate.
- c. The Academic Senate President and Vice President of Instruction shall present their respective recommendations to the Planning and Budgeting Council (PBC).
 - i. The feedback from the Instructional Planning Council is included in this report.
 - ii. PBC makes its recommendation to the college president including, if relevant, allocation of resources to support a revitalization plan.
 - iii. The College President makes his/her/their final decision regarding recommendation and sends it to the Board of Trustees.

- d. If the President recommends to the Board of Trustees that a program of study and/or an instructional program be discontinued, and the Board concurs, then the college will make appropriate procedures for discontinuance, [as described above](#).

Notifications of Possible De Facto Discontinuances

A De Facto Discontinuance is an intentional or unintentional discontinuance of a program of study in circumvention of this administrative procedure that results from the reduction of course sections or from any other institutional or administrative action, thereby rendering program implementation and completion impossible or improbable.

In the majority of cases, De Facto Discontinuances should be avoided, as the goal is to help struggling programs by following the official PIV Process. However, in some rare circumstances, any party listed in the PIV Process of this procedure may notify the Academic Senate President of a possible De Facto discontinuance.

Upon receipt of such notification the Senate President will inform the full Senate of the notification at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Academic Senate. The Senate President will request the College President or their administrative designee to report, before the end of the next primary term semester (Fall or Spring semester), to the full Senate on the status of the program in question. Academic Senate recommends that the program either go through the full PIV process or follows the [Administrative Procedure 6.13.1](#) (AP 4020, 4022) for permanent discontinuance.

Mandated Discontinuance and Mandated Revisions

A recommendation to discontinue is mandated if so ordered by an external regulatory, governing, or licensing body to which the program is subject, as stated in [Board Policy 6.13](#) (BP 4020). If such a mandate occurs, discontinuance of the program of study will be said to have been approved upon proper notification to the Academic Senate. Such notification should clearly cite the governing entity and legal or administrative authority requiring discontinuance.

Pursuant to a mandated discontinuance, program faculty must discontinue the program of study through Curriculum Committee processes regardless of whether a PIV process occurs. Similarly, if an external body requires revision of the program of study, the faculty must make any necessary changes through the Curriculum Committee regardless of whether a PIV process occurs. However if either of these changes raises significant concerns about the vitality of the instructional program (discipline), then a full PIV process should be initiated subsequent to complying with a mandated revision or discontinuance.

References

Educational Code 78016, Title 5 Sections 51022, 55000, 55130

[Board Policy 6.13](#) (BP 4020) and [Administrative Procedure 6.13.1](#) (AP 4020, 4022)

Los Medanos College Procedure 4008.01 "[Program Revitalization and Discontinuance Procedure](#)"