

GRADUATE PROGRAM REVIEW POLICY

(including guidelines for the Self-Study and Program Enhancement Plan)

Introduction

The department is the primary unit of analysis for the UNH academic program review process for both undergraduate and graduate programs. Whenever possible, the review of both undergraduate and graduate programs located in the same department should proceed together. This document describes academic program review for graduate programs. A separate document describes the review of undergraduate programs.

The Purposes of Graduate Program Review

The major purpose of Graduate Program Review at the University of New Hampshire is to ensure that programs are functioning at the highest possible levels of academic quality and are operating in ways that are consistent with the missions of the University and the Graduate School. The process of Graduate Program Review serves as a means to inform faculty, administrators, students, and University governance bodies with respect to the relative merits and areas of needed improvement in particular programs. In this sense, Graduate Program Review is a tool for critical reflection and change. Through careful documentation and analysis, faculty and students can take advantage of the review process to assess the quality, centrality, demand, and costs associated with specific programs and subsequently develop plans for program enhancement. Program reviews should result in a set of recommendations crafted by faculty and endorsed by academic administrators that include concrete strategies and benchmarks for achieving improved quality. In some cases, reviews may point to the need to significantly restructure a program or, in exceptional cases, initiate program closure.

Graduate Program Reviews follow a process that includes:

- The creation of an appropriate degree of common standards and performance for graduate programs across the University
- The generation of information for departments and related units for their own use in assessing program strengths and weaknesses
- An assessment of the quality of the educational experience of UNH graduate students
- An assessment of progress toward strategic goals at the department, college, and university level, including the ways in which graduate programs complement and sustain the undergraduate curricula
- Meaningful comparisons with discipline-specific standards, peer institutions, and related UNH units
- The identification of strategies for program improvement
- The dissemination of recommendations to faculty governance groups and academic administrators who have responsibility for setting priorities and allocating resources

Information generated in program reviews may be used by faculty to refine and

revise curricula, to recruit new students, to provide information to accrediting or professional associations, to argue for new or reallocated resources, to bolster proposals for external funding, and/or to modify faculty assignments. The results of reviews may also be used by University administrators to guide strategic decisions regarding program development and resource allocation.

Graduate Program Reviews occur on a septennial basis, primarily through a process of self-study complemented by external critique and validation and the development of a Program Enhancement Plan. The review process is grounded in both university-wide standards and criteria specific to discipline-based and interdisciplinary programs.

Self-Study

Graduate Program Review begins with a self-study by the appropriate graduate faculty. Departments may determine how best to conduct the self-study (who is involved, how the internal process works). It is advisable that those who know the program best (faculty and students) and those responsible for carrying out the recommendations of the review (graduate program coordinators, department chairs and members of executive committees) be closely associated with the self-study.

The unit of analysis for reviews may vary across departments and disciplines. For example, in some areas the review will focus on a single degree in a single department (such as the MA in Spanish or the MFA in Painting). In other areas, a review may entail one or more degrees that cut across programs (such as the MS and PhD in Genetics or the PhD in Natural Resources). Because the circumstances vary across programs and departments, the decision as to the appropriate level of analysis will be made jointly by the Dean of the Graduate School and deans of the schools/colleges in consultation with the Graduate Council.

The format and emphasis of the self-study should be determined by the relevant program faculty. Typically the self-study will consist of qualitative and quantitative analyses of descriptive material and contain the following sections:

1. *General Program Characteristics:* A description of the degree program, including the educational objectives and curriculum, should be provided. There should be a discussion of how this degree program enhances departmental, school/college, institutional, and disciplinary objectives, including those aspects of the program which make it unique and those which are interdisciplinary. When appropriate, the self-study should compare and contrast program characteristics with those of comparable or exemplary programs at similar universities. The discussion should include:

- a. What knowledge and skills are students expected to master?
- b. What contributions are program graduates expected to make in academic, industrial, government, nonprofit, or other sectors?
- c. How does the program reflect and contribute to departmental, school or college, and university goals?

- d. How has the program evolved since its inception, especially in the past five years?
- e. In what ways is this program distinct or comparable to similar programs at other universities?
- f. Who are peer institutions and which institutions does the program aspire to?

2. *Program Curricula:* An assessment of curriculum should illustrate the educational experiences of graduate students, the quality of those experiences, and, where relevant, the interconnections between the graduate and undergraduate curriculum. Questions to address include:

- a. What are the educational experiences of enrolled students, both required and elective?
- b. For doctoral students, what are the average and range of credit hours completed? (Include individual programs of study for 10 representative students who have achieved candidacy over the preceding seven years in the appendix).
- c. For master's students, provide a representative program of study and description of the capstone or concluding requirements (thesis, examination, projects, etc.). If multiple programs provide a typical program of study for each program.
- d. Provide a schedule for all 800 and 900-level courses offered over the past three years, including the number of courses taught weekdays, evenings, weekends, and summers.
- e. What is the nature and degree of curriculum integration between the undergraduate and graduate programs (including the use of 700/800 course listings)?
- f. How is the graduate curriculum integrated with research opportunities across the campus?
- g. How are graduate assistants assigned and utilized?
- h. How are teaching assistants prepared and mentored, including the process by which the cultural and communication competencies of international TA's are assessed and fostered?
- i. For doctoral programs, what curricular experiences are employed to prepare graduates for entry into college teaching, organizational management or other leadership roles?
- j. How are information and instructional technologies utilized in the curriculum?
- k. Where applicable, how are internships or other field experiences integrated into the curriculum?

3. *Faculty:* Faculty characteristics should focus on those aspects of faculty appointments that are directly relevant to graduate education, including teaching, advising, and research. Questions to address include:

- a. How many graduate faculty (tenure, clinical, extension, affiliate, or research track) are assigned to the program, how has the number fluctuated in the past five years, and what plans are in place to fill current vacancies? (cv's of all graduate faculty should be included in the appendix of the self study)
- b. How many associate graduate faculty (adjunct faculty, emeriti faculty, special consultants or visiting faculty) are appointed in the program, and what are their roles and responsibilities? What are the credentials of associate graduate faculty?

- c. What is the average and range of graduate advisees per graduate faculty member over the previous three years, and the number of master's thesis and dissertation committees chaired by each graduate faculty member and on which faculty serve is non-chair roles?
 - d. What is the number of graduate and undergraduate courses, credit hours, and contact hours for each faculty member over the most recent three-year time period?
 - e. What grant, contract, or fellowship (external) support have graduate faculty obtained (average per graduate faculty, total for the department/program, categorized separately for tenure and research faculty over the past five years) and how has this extramural funding been used to support students?
- 4. *Quality of student applicant pool:*** Describe the characteristics of applicants and enrolled students, including special attributes of students that may affect recruitment and admissions processes. Questions to address include:
- a. What evidence is there of student demand for the program?
 - b. What types of students are most attracted to the program and most likely to enroll?
 - c. What recruitment activities are use to attract the most qualified and capable students, including special efforts to attract students from traditionally underrepresented populations?

Data provided by the Graduate School to assist in this assessment include:

- a. An admissions profile of applications received, completed, admitted and enrolled for the previous 7 years. Data include information on residence, gender, ethnicity, UGPA's and test scores
 - b. A report of feeder institutions over the previous 7 years for enrolled students by term as well as a report of all feeder institutions over the past 7 years.
- 5. *Student progress and outcome measures:*** Here the focus is on the success of students in achieving program completion and moving into post-graduate placements. Questions to address include:
- a. What procedures are in place to orient new students to the program, assign advisors, and assure success in the first semester of enrollment?
 - b. What is the average time to completion of the degree for master's and doctoral students, respectively? How many students do not complete the degree within the prescribed time limits and why?
 - c. What are the sources and levels of financial support for students (including summers) and how do those supports change as students move through the program?
 - d. How are the responsibilities of teaching and research assistants integrated into program goals and the requirements for degree completion?
 - e. What opportunities and expectations are there for students to participate in professional meetings and publication? Provide examples as appropriate.
 - f. What awards or other recognitions have students received while enrolled or after graduation?

- g. How successful are students seeking professional licensure/certification?
- h. What are the initial and subsequent employment placements of graduates (provide an aggregated description of graduates indicating how many are appropriately employed in their field, gone on to further education or are underemployed or unemployed)?
- i. How do current students and program alumni assess the quality and relevance of their graduate education experience? An on-line survey has been developed by the Graduate School and Academic Affairs to assist in measuring enrolled students and alumni assessment of the program. **An assessment by students and alumni is required.**

Data provided by the Graduate School to assist in this assessment include:

- a. Enrollment reports for full-time, part-time and fee only students for the previous 7 years (total and new). Data include residence, gender and ethnicity.
- b. Attrition reports all students entering from 1989 to the current term.
- c. Coursework analysis for enrolled students by term for the previous 7 years.
- d. Graduation reports for the previous 7 years. Data include gender, ethnicity, GPA's, as well as thesis and dissertation titles as appropriate.
- e. Financial assistance reports on the various types of non-need based aid (assistantships, fellowships, scholarships). Data include gender, residence and ethnicity.

6. *Program Resources and Facilities:*

- a. What are the on-campus and off-campus facilities used to support the graduate program (classroom space, laboratory space, and faculty and student office space, computer networks) as well as faculty for their research and scholarly activity?
- b. How adequate are those facilities to achieving program goals?
- c. What library resources are used by the graduate program and are they adequate? (The self-study committee should consult with the appropriate University librarian before preparing this section of the report and should reflect the librarian's input in the self-study report).

7. *Other measures of quality determined by the program, such as:*

- a. national rankings and/or ratings
- b. extramural (state, national or foundation) programmatic support
- c. appointment of postdoctoral students
- d. visiting and adjunct professors/scholars
- e. significant outreach and/or public service activities related to graduate education
- f. external fellowships and awards given to faculty and students by disciplinary and/or professional associations
- g. special seminars or symposia offered by the program

8. *Self-assessment and Program Enhancement Plan:*

The final section of the self-study is the Program Enhancement Plan, which is an assessment *by the faculty* of the program's strengths and areas for improvement. Based on the data collected, as well as other sources of judgment, program faculty will address three questions in this analysis:

- a. What characteristics of the program should be maintained?
- b. What characteristics of the program should be ended?
- c. What characteristics of the program should be changed?

The answers to these questions will then lead to a Program Enhancement Plan that sets goals and objectives with specific timelines. If major changes are anticipated, the needed resources and their potential sources should be identified.

9. Appendices:

- a. Sample programs of study
- b. Faculty CV's
- c. Faculty Teaching Assignments (for each faculty member – courses taught, credit and contact hours per semester for most recent three-year period)
- d. Program Handbook
- e. Thesis/dissertation titles for past three years

A note on format: The format guidelines presented above are not intended to be either exhaustive or limiting. Individual programs should emphasize those specific areas that are most appropriate and present the information in ways that reflect program standards and priorities. The self-study will be most useful if it is concise, complete, well-organized, and reflective of the particular mission of the program under review.

A note on standards of quality: The Graduate School has not established a university-wide set of standards applicable to all master's and doctoral programs. Rather, we have delineated a range of indicators we believe should be used as benchmarks in any assessment of program quality. The interpretation of those indicators and the setting of benchmark standards is the responsibility of individual programs, which will draw on disciplinary standards and established best practices. It is program faculty and peers who will analyze the collected data and make the appropriate judgments regarding overall quality and areas for improvement.

Submission

One copy of the self-study is to be submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School, preferably by September 1 of the academic year in which a program is to be reviewed, with a copy to the appropriate school/ college dean. At this point, the school/college dean is invited to submit his or her own independent assessment of the program, including comments on the self-study. The self-study and the dean's statement are then referred to the Program Review Committee of the Graduate Faculty. The Program Review Committee to discuss the self-study and may request a meeting with the self-study committee. The Program Review Committee, though the Graduate Dean will notify the program of any needed clarifications or additions, which in turn must be submitted no later than January 1st.

The External Review

Upon acceptance of the self-study by the Program Review Committee, an external review panel will be organized. The panel will consist of at least three members—one University of New Hampshire faculty member and at least two senior faculty members from other universities with recognized expertise in the appropriate discipline or field. The UNH peer reviewer will be selected from the school/college in which the program is located (but not appointed in the same department) and nominated by the school/college dean. The external peer reviewers will be nominated by the program faculty; one of the panel members will serve as the panel chair. All nominations are subject to the review and approval of the Dean of the Graduate School, who will make the final appointments. (At the time that the initial self-study and dean's statement are submitted, nominations for the external review panel should also be put forward).

The external review will be scheduled by the Graduate School in consultation with the program under review. It will typically take place early in the spring semester. The agenda of the external review panel will be generally include:

- Initial meeting with the department chair, graduate program coordinator, school/college dean, and dean of the Graduate School to discuss the self-study and orient the panel to the program as well as the schedule
- Meetings with graduate faculty
- Meetings with graduate students if available, selected graduate alumni/ae
- Meeting with the Vice-Provost
- Meeting with the University Librarian
- Tour of program facilities
- Meeting with the school/college dean and graduate dean
- Exit interview with the department chair, graduate program coordinator, school/college dean, and dean of the Graduate School, Vice-Provost and members of the Program Review Committee

At the conclusion of the visit, the panel will submit a report within two to three weeks, addressed to the program faculty and copied to the school/college dean and the Dean of the Graduate School. The report will be organized around the following questions:

1. To what extent is this program central to the mission of the University of New Hampshire and the school or college and department where it is located? What changes would be necessary to increase the program's centrality?
2. What is the quality of the program's curriculum with respect to scope, depth, currency, and student requirements for degree completion? What changes would be necessary to improve the current level of quality?
3. What is the quality of the program's faculty with respect to teaching and advising effectiveness, scholarly or creative productivity, impact on the discipline or field, and

external recognition? What changes would be necessary to improve the current level of quality?

4. What is the quality of the program's students with respect to academic qualifications, diversity, and success after graduation? What changes would be necessary to improve the current level of quality?
5. What is the quality of the program's resources with respect to its teaching, research, and service obligations? What changes would be necessary to improve the current level of quality?
6. Is the demand for this program on the part of a) prospective students and b) post-graduate placements indicative of a high quality program with social utility? How is the current level of demand likely to change in the next three to five years?
7. Is the Program Enhancement Plan clear, appropriate, feasible? Does the panel have recommendations for changes in the Plan?

Within two weeks after receiving the report, the program faculty may write a response or rejoinder, addressed to the Dean of the Graduate School, to correct errors of fact or offer alternative interpretations.

Final Assessment

Based on the self-study (including the Program Enhancement Plan), the report from the external review panel, and any response to the panel's report from the program faculty, the Program Review Committee will make a final assessment and recommendation to the Dean of the Graduate School and the Graduate Council. The assessment and recommendation will fall into one of the following categories:

- *Area of Distinction* The Program Enhancement Plan should be adopted as put forward, with the commitment of new institutional resources necessary to achieve the goals of the Plan
- *Approval* The Program Enhancement Plan should be adopted as put forward
- *Provisional approval* The Graduate Council makes specific changes in the Program Enhancement Plan and sets a date by which implementation of the modified plan will be reviewed, normally within three years
- *Continuing review/probation* The Program Review Committee believes that there are substantive changes that need to be made in the Program Enhancement Plan and returns the Plan to the program faculty for changes and sets a specific date for the revised Plan to be submitted to the Committee for further review and recommendation
- *Closure* The program should be phased out and the necessary steps taken with respect to program deletion and programmatic displacement of faculty

Before making a final decision, the Dean of the Graduate School will consult with

the appropriate school/college dean and the provost. The Dean of the Graduate School will issue his or her decision by the end of the academic year in which the program review has taken place. A decision to phase out a program is subject to the appeals procedure approved by the Graduate Council in October, 1998.

Applicability

These policies and procedures apply to all graduate degree programs offered by the University of New Hampshire.

Addendum for Professionally Accredited Programs

For those professional graduate programs that choose to seek accreditation from external associations, the process for graduate program review will be modified. These programs include:

Business administration (AACSB)
 Communication Sciences and Disorders (ASHA)
 Education (as of 9/01, not externally accredited)
 Family Studies, Marriage and Family Therapy (CAMFTE)
 Nursing (CCNE)
 Occupational Therapy (AOTA)
 Public Health (pending)
 Social Work (CSWE)

The review process will be modified in the following ways:

1. In general, graduate program review will occur in the year *following* the completion of the external accreditation process.
2. The self-study prepared for the accrediting agency will serve as the internal self-study for the program review process. In some cases, supplemental material may be requested if the self-study does not address critical benchmarks required by "Guidelines for Self-Study and Program Enhancement Plan." It is assumed that the need for supplemental materials will be relatively rare, given the comprehensive nature of the accreditation review process.
3. At the beginning of the academic year in which the graduate program review process is to occur, the program will submit to the Graduate School a) the self-study prepared for the accrediting agency; b) the final report of the accrediting agency, including the determination of compliance with standards, official comments on program strengths and weaknesses, the final determination on continuing accreditation, and any materials written by the program as responses or rebuttals to the accrediting agency's findings and conclusions. The program should provide a cross-reference or index that indicates where in the self-study the specific items in Graduate School's protocol are addressed.

4. In addition, the program should submit a Program Enhancement Plan following the procedures outlined on page 5 of “Graduate Program Review Policies and Procedures.”

These materials will be reviewed by the Program Review Committee of the Graduate Council to assure that the self-study requirements have been met and to determine whether an external review panel should be a part of the program review process. The Program Review Committee, following acceptance of the self-study and the external reviewers’ report (if applicable), will make a recommendation to the Graduate Council regarding the “Final Assessment” (p. 7 of the Procedures).

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