The Purposes of Graduate Program Review

The purpose of the graduate program review at The University of New Orleans 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 mission of the university. The process also serves as a means to inform faculty, administrators, students, and university governance bodies of the strengths and weaknesses in our programs. And, more importantly, graduate program reviews are an assessment tool that can provide valuable information for program improvement. Program reviews should result in a set of 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, close a program.

Graduate Program Reviews follow a process that includes:

- A critical self-study
- A review with recommendations completed by an external evaluator
- A response to recommendations and a plan for improvement.
Self-Study

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:
   (1) Mission
   (2) Institutional Effectiveness Plan
   (3) Who are peer institutions and which institutions does the program aspire to?
   (4) What is the external program accreditation, including the name of agency and date of last accreditation action?

2) Program Curricula: An assessment of curriculum should illustrate the educational experiences of graduate students, the quality of those experiences, and the interconnections between the graduate and undergraduate curriculum. Questions to address include:
   (1) Learning Outcomes and Assessment Plan and Results including changes made
   (2) Provide a schedule for all graduate courses offered over the past three years, including the number of courses taught weekdays, evenings, weekends, and summers.
   (3) How are information and instructional technologies utilized in 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:
   (1) How many tenured and tenure-track faculty teach in the program, how has the number fluctuated in the past five years, and what plans are in place to fill current vacancies?
   (2) Provide a complete list of graduate faculty who have taught in the last three years using the SACS Faculty Credentials Roster and include complete cv’s.
   (3) How many non-tenure track faculty (adjunct faculty, instructors, professors of professional practice, etc.) teach in the program, how has that number fluctuated in the past five years.
   (4) Provide a semester by semester workload report (see attached example) for each person teaching in the program for the past 3 years.
   (5) For each of the three most recent years, provide average of the number of discipline-related refereed papers/publications, grants, books/book chapters, juried creative/performance accomplishments and notices of discoveries filed/patents issued separately per faculty.

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:
   (1) Provide a chart showing the number of applicants, number accepted and number of new students enrolled for each of the past 3 years.
   (2) Provide the admission factors and criteria used by the program.
   (3) What recruitment activities are used to attract the most qualified and capable students, including special efforts to attract students from traditionally underrepresented
populations?

(4) Please provide total enrollment headcount for the past 3 years by gender and ethnicity.

(5) Using the state’s completer data, please provide the ten year graduation rate for each of the last three years for doctoral programs. Provide the five year graduation rate for each of the last three years for masters programs.

(6) For the prior year, please provide the number of full time students with at least $1000 of annual support (fellowships, scholarships, GA-ships, etc).

(7) For the three most recent years, please provide the number of discipline-related refereed papers/publications, juried creative/performance accomplishments, book chapters, books, and external presentations per year by student FTE.

(8) What awards or other recognitions have students received while enrolled or after graduation?

(9) If applicable, provide the success rate on professional licensure/certification tests for the past 3 years.

(10) For each of the three most recent years, please provide the number of graduates by year who are employed, unemployed, attending school, and number of graduates whose employment history is unknown.

5) Other measures of quality determined by the program, such as:

(1) national rankings and/or ratings

(2) extramural (state, national or foundation) programmatic support

(3) appointment of postdoctoral students

(4) significant outreach and/or public service activities related to graduate education

(5) external fellowships and awards given to faculty and students by disciplinary and/or professional associations

(6) special seminars or symposia offered by the program

6) Self-assessment:

The final section of the self-study is the self-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?
7) Appendices

Submission

Please submit a copy of the self-study to the dean of the college or school and the Dean of the Graduate school on or before November 1 of the academic year in which the program is to be reviewed. The dean of the college or school may also provide an assessment of program and its self-study. The program head and dean of the college or school will meet with the Graduate Dean promptly to discuss the self-study. If any revisions are needed, the program will complete these revisions by December 1. The self-study will be forwarded to the external reviewer(s) on December 1.

The External Review

The external reviewer(s) will be identified by October 1 of the academic year of the review. There will be at least two reviewers for doctoral programs and one for masters only programs—all senior faculty members from other peer or aspirational universities outside of Louisiana with recognized expertise in the appropriate discipline or field. External reviewers are selected in concert by the chair and dean. Provide a brief biography of the reviewer(s) to the Graduate Dean, who will be the final approver.

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 developed in concert between the Graduate School, Dean, and department chair.

Within two to three weeks of the visit, the reviewer(s) will submit a report, addressed to the Dean of the Graduate School, which will address the following questions:

1. To what extent is this program central to the mission of The University of New Orleans 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 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) postgraduate 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?
**Final Assessment**

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

Within thirty days of receiving the report, the department in consultation with the college dean, will send to the Graduate Dean a plan for how to address the recommendations made by the reviewer(s) and by the department. The provost will convene a meeting of the, the Dean of the Graduate School, program chair, the dean of the college or school, and the assistant vice president for Institutional Assessment will meet to discuss the findings and action plans. The Dean will write a memorandum to the Dean of the Graduate School confirming the action plans proposed, directing additional steps for improvement as necessary, or recommending the closure of the program.

One year after the external review, the program will document its progress on the action plans in WEAVE, and the Dean of the Graduate School will convene a meeting of the program chair and dean of the college or school, to review progress on the action plans for improvement.

**Applicability**

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

**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 in the following ways:

In general, graduate program review will occur in the year following the completion of the external accreditation process.

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. It is assumed that the need for supplemental materials will be relatively rare, given the comprehensive nature of the accreditation review process.

At the beginning of the academic year in which the graduate program review process is to occur, the program will submit 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.

In addition, the program should submit an action plan following the procedures outlined for non-accredited programs.