

UNIVERSITY COUNCIL
ACADEMIC PROGRAMS COMMITTEE
FOR INFORMATION ONLY

PRESENTED BY: Terry Wotherspoon, Chair, Academic Programs Committee

DATE OF MEETING: March 15, 2018

SUBJECT: **Graduate Programs Reviews 2016/17**

COUNCIL ACTION: For information only

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND:

The graduate program review process assesses the quality of University of Saskatchewan graduate programs with respect to (i) teaching and learning and (ii) research and scholarly accomplishments. The College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (CGPS) is committed to this process and established the graduate program review process to assess the quality of graduate program activities and outcomes.

The terms of reference for the Academic Programs Committee requires that the committee report to Council the processes and outcomes of academic program reviews.

DISCUSSION SUMMARY:

The university's [*Framework for Assessment*](#) was approved by Council and the Board in 2008 and established the Graduate Program Review Process as the primary instrument to assess the quality of our graduate program activities and outcomes. The College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies had developed a process of review for all graduate programs. Two external reviewers, one from Canada and one international, as well as an internal reviewer from the U of S, conduct a review to determine if departments offering graduate degree program meet the quality standards for that discipline by conducting site visits and engaging in interviews with faculty and students.

The Graduate Program Review – Outcome Synthesis Report for 2016-17 was presented to APC at its February 28, 2018 meeting and a good discussion occurred around the process for graduate program review currently and going forward as well as next steps both for the graduate review process and for program review more generally.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Graduate Program Review – Outcome Synthesis Report 2016-17



Graduate Program Review – Outcome Synthesis Report 2016-17



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Background

Renewing the Dream (2002) committed the University of Saskatchewan to be a major presence in graduate education in Canada and to adhere to international standards in all that we do. Therefore, we expect our graduate programs to meet or exceed the quality standards demonstrated in similar programs at medical-doctoral and research-intensive universities across Canada and around the world.

The academic review of graduate programs is one of the priorities for assessment at the University of Saskatchewan. The university's *Framework for Assessment* (2008) established the Graduate Program Review process as the primary instrument to assess the quality of our graduate program activities and outcomes. A graduate program review is not an end in itself but a means by which information, data and analyses are used to improve all aspects of the program.

The quality of University of Saskatchewan graduate programs will be assessed in the domains of teaching and learning, research, and scholarly accomplishments. Review reports indicate whether programs meet or do not meet the standards of quality expected of other similar programs at comparable medical/doctoral and major research universities in Canada and internationally.



Process Summary

Quality Assessment Categories and Criteria

Graduate Program Review utilizes the following six quality assessment criteria as guidance for the review. The criteria are derived from the detailed degree level standards for graduate programs, articulated by the **Council of Ministers of Education, Canada**.

- 1 **Program Objectives and Curriculum** - A quality program has clearly stated objectives that are appropriate to: the level of degree offered, the academic context of the discipline and/or the expectations of the profession.

The program curriculum meets the program objectives at the level of degree offered, is current and includes opportunities for specialization, cultivating further conceptual depth or breadth of knowledge. Student learning success is assessed through written and oral examinations of knowledge and skills in all aspects of the discipline. Interdisciplinary collaborations provide opportunities for the acquisition, synthesis, application and integration of knowledge, cultivating the intellectual development of graduate students.

- 2 **Program Enrolment and Student Funding** - A quality graduate program has the profile and reputation to attract a viable number of high caliber students, who will have local, national and/or international backgrounds. The students entering the program have the capacity and preparation necessary to meet the challenges of the program and to successfully complete their degree.

Graduate student research grants, scholarships and awards contribute to the completion of the program.

- 3 **Student Outcomes** - Graduate students acquire a systematic knowledge of the discipline and are being suitably prepared for professional practice and for research and inquiry. Masters students engage in independent research, or practice, in a supervised context and demonstrate critical thinking and analytical skills. Doctoral students show a high degree of intellectual autonomy, an ability to conceptualize, design and complete projects, and generate knowledge through original research or creative activity.

Students participate in seminars and conferences; they present their research findings through posters and published papers; and have opportunities to develop professional skills. Graduate students are credited with a suitable number and quality achievement awards and conference invitations.

A quality graduate program demonstrates that its graduate students successfully complete their degree requirements on time, and that students can access a variety of career paths post-graduation. Students express a high level of satisfaction with their program.

- 4 **Learning Environment** - A quality student experience at the graduate level is built on strong interactions with faculty. Students are regularly advised, informed and guided by meetings with their graduate supervisor. The learning environment provides a range of opportunities for students to participate in intellectually and professionally challenging activities. Graduate course instruction uses state of the art modalities and processes that enhance the student learning experience.



Students have access to appropriate learning and information resources (such as library, databases, computers, classroom equipment, and laboratory facilities) and to an appropriate range of academic support services.

- 5 **Faculty Profile** - The quality of a graduate program is defined by the extent of the scholarly activities of its program's faculty, as well as by a high degree of faculty involvement in the graduate program as supervisors and teachers.

In doctoral and research-oriented masters programs, faculty members are credited with a suitable number and quality of discipline-specific publications, awards, research grants and conference invitations, all indicative of the breadth and level of their engagement in scholarly work.

- 6 **Administration** – A quality graduate program incorporates effective systems and procedures in the areas of recruitment and admissions, program management, and in the allocation of awards and scholarships to graduate students.

Program leadership anticipates the ongoing evolution of their discipline, which is reflected in evolving program delivery and program planning activities. There is an anticipation and analysis of how future trends in the discipline may impact on the recruitment and selection of students, on the content and quality of program delivery, and ultimately, on the student experience. The strategic vision of the program is aligned with the broader integrated planning environment at the university.



Steps in Graduate Program Review Process

There are four major steps in the Graduate Program Review process. Described below, these steps are completed during a 10 month period (July 1st to April 30th).

1. Appointment of Reviewers

A team of three senior academics will provide a peer assessment of the program under review. The academic unit will be asked to submit three nominations for each of the following reviewer types:

- Internal (from an academic unit at the University of Saskatchewan)
- External – Canadian
- External – International

Reviewers must have no conflicts of interest with the academic unit and its graduate program, so that any perception of a conflict of interest is avoided. Potential conflicts must be declared at the time of nomination and will be taken into consideration in appointing the reviewers.

Possible conflicts of interest include:

- Personal or professional relationship with a faculty member or student in the program under review
- Current or recent (within five years) research collaborations with a faculty member
- Being a recent (within five years) graduate of the program
- Being a recent (within five years) supervisor of a student in the program
- Being a former faculty member of the unit under review

2. Program Self-Study

A graduate program self-study document will be prepared and submitted by the graduate program chair or designates from the program under review.

The self-study document will provide data for the graduate program under review. The data will be a combination of historic and current graduate program attributes related to the six Quality Assessment Criteria. The period under review for each program begins five years prior to the last academic year completed before a review is undertaken. For example, a program review starting in July 2016 will include historic program data from the 2011-12 to the 2015-16 academic year.

The self-study document will be largely completed by the academic unit responsible for the graduate program. The unit will be assisted in its self-study by the Graduate Program Review Coordinator, the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies and Institutional Planning and Assessment. Much of the self-study data is retrieved from the University's centralized information systems and entered in the self-study templates in advance.

Typically the graduate program under review will begin completing the self-study in **October of the review year**. The completed self-study document will be submitted to the Graduate Program Review Coordinator no later than **4 weeks prior to the review team site visit**.



3. Reviewer Site Visit

The review team will conduct a two-day site visit of the program, between February 1 and April 30. During the site visit, the review panel should meet with:

- Dean of the College or Director of the School or Centre responsible for the program
- Dean of the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
- Head of the Department (for departmentalized colleges)
- Graduate Chair and members of the graduate/research committee associated with the program
- Faculty associated with the program
- Graduate students
- Other members of the university community as appropriate

Costs associated with the site visit will be covered by a fund managed by Institutional Planning and Assessment.

4. Review Outcomes

The review team will submit a review report within 30 days of the site visit. The review report will indicate whether the program **meets or does not meet** the standards of quality expected of other similar programs at comparable medical/doctoral and major research universities in Canada and internationally. The reviewers are asked to provide a rationale for their assessment.

The review report will also identify the strengths and the opportunities for improvement for the program, overall and in each of the assessment categories.

The report will be shared with the Dean or Director, Department Head and Graduate Chair responsible for the program under review. The Dean, Director, etc. will be invited to submit written comments about the review report to the provost and to the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research.

The Dean of CGPS, in consultation with the Provost, will issue a **written response to the review**. This response may include recommendations for action and reference to resources that are available to help with program improvements.

Summary of 2016-17 Reviews

List of Programs Reviewed

Program	Degree		
English	M.A.		Ph.D.
History	M.A.		Ph.D.
Philosophy	M.A.		
Religion and Culture	M.A.		
Writing	M.F.A.		
Kinesiology		M.Sc.	Ph.D.
Physical Therapy	M.P.T.		

Review Team Members

Program	Internal	Canadian	International
English	Terry Wotherspoon Sociology	Betty Schellenberg Simon Fraser University	Laura Mandell Texas A&M University
History	Linda McMullen Psychology	Doug Peers University of Waterloo	Bonnie Lynn-Sherow Kansas State University
Philosophy	Eric Neufeld Computer Science	Glenn Parsons Ryerson University	Edward Hinchman University of Wisconsin
Religion and Culture	David Parkinson English	Peter Beyer University of Ottawa	Eric Reinders Emory University
Writing	Debbie Pushor Curriculum Studies	Robert Budde University of Northern BC	Nat Hardy Savannah State University
Kinesiology	Marc Olver Psychology	John Kowalchuk University of Western Ontario	Howard Zelaznik Purdue University
Physical Therapy	Sheila Rutledge- Harding Pathology and Laboratory Medicine	Alice Aiken Dalhousie University	Bill Vicenzino University of Queensland

Review Highlights

Review teams are asked to evaluate whether a program meets or does not meet quality standards in each of the six Quality Assessment Categories. Through this evaluation, review teams provide an overall statement about program quality. All **seven** programs reviewed in 2016-17 were found to **meet standards of program quality**. Reviewers offered a number of suggestions for program quality improvement, which the Interim Dean of CGPS and the Interim Provost addressed in their responses to each program's review. Several common themes emerged from the review reports, including:

1. Program Objectives and Curriculum

- Program curricula are flexible and able to meet the learning goals of students
- Students would benefit from more clarity around program requirements and student expectations

2. Program Enrolment and Student Funding

- Student to faculty ratios are generally appropriate
- The ability to provide funding alongside offers for admission is an important tool in recruiting high quality students

3. Student Outcomes

- High student satisfaction with program and faculty support
- Where appropriate, connections with employers and professional practice communities was strong
- No significant concerns about time-to-completion or withdrawals were raised

4. Learning Environment

- Experiential learning opportunities and the mentorship provided by faculty is of high quality
- Programs should continue to enhance and include professional development to support a range of career paths
- More support and preparation should be provided for students who will be teaching

5. Faculty Profile

- The high quality of faculty was identified as a program strength in a number of reviews
- The need for new faculty hires to provide research and teaching capacity in emerging fields was a common recommendation

6. Administration

- The need for additional resources to enhance or expand space was identified in several reviews



Next Steps

Follow Up on 2016-17 Review Reports

The Interim Dean of CGPS and the Interim Provost issued a joint response to each program's review report in June 2017. They encouraged program leaders to consider follow-up actions that address the areas for improvement identified in each report. The Interim Dean met with program leaders where necessary and has offered CGPS's assistance in designing and implementing follow-up actions.

Program Reviews for 2017-18

The following programs will complete Graduate Program Reviews in 2017-18

Program	Degree		
Anatomy & Cell Biology		M.Sc.	Ph.D.
Biochemistry		M.Sc.	Ph.D.
Community and Population Health Science		M.Sc.	Ph.D.
Health Sciences		M.Sc.	Ph.D.
Microbiology and Immunology		M.Sc.	Ph.D.
Pharmacology		M.Sc.	Ph.D.
Physiology		M.Sc.	Ph.D.
Nutrition		M.Sc.	Ph.D.
Pharmacy		M.Sc.	Ph.D.
Nursing	M.N.		Ph.D.