



## External Review of New Graduate Level Academic Programs

### Background

Each university requesting a new graduate level professional or graduate degree program must complete an external review of the proposed program.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of the external review is to consider the proposed program in relation to goals for quality, access, employability, cost effectiveness, and equity, diversity and inclusion, and to include evaluation that uses the following criteria:

- The needs of Oregon for higher education and the state's capacity to respond effectively to social, economic, and environmental challenges and opportunities.
- Student demand that may not be met satisfactorily by existing programs.
- Program duplication is primarily of concern at the graduate and professional levels; therefore, a duplicated graduate or professional program must be specifically justified in terms of state's needs, demand, access, and cost effectiveness.
- The resources necessary for the program are available within existing programs; have been identified within existing budgets and will be reallocated; or will be secured to meet reasonable time lines for implementation, typically within a two year limitation.
- The congruity of the proposed program with the campus mission and its strategic direction.
- Where appropriate and feasible, the program is a collaboration between two or more institutions that maximizes student access, academic productivity, and quality.

### The External Review Panel

The external review process for a proposed new graduate level degree program may include a site visit by a panel composed of three highly qualified individuals in the specific field/discipline of the proposed program. Although scholars and professionals from Oregon may be included, the majority of the panel members must be selected from peer institutions outside the state.

Institutions may consider virtual or hybrid reviews in place of on-site reviews under the following guidelines:

- (1) If the proposed program is an online program;
- (2) If the proposed program has minimal special facilities associated with it;
- (3) If the proposed program has the need for an expedited timeline for needed approval; or
- (4) If the proposed program is closely related to an existing program (i.e., not a completely new area for the proposing institution).

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<sup>1</sup> At the request of an institution and by agreement with the Statewide Provosts Council, the review requirement may be modified or waived if the proposed degree program is closely related to an institution's authorized existing program; for example, adding a Master of Engineering in Civil Engineering where the Master of Science in Civil Engineering is already in place.

## **Site Visit**

Invitations to serve on the external review panel and to act as chair are extended by the institution. The institution will provide panel members with (1) the full written program proposal, (2) participating faculty vitae, (3) the projected budget, (4) other supporting or contextual materials, as needed, and (5) a site visit schedule and itinerary (if applicable), including all arrangements. All costs associated with the external review will be borne by the institution.

## **Report and Institution's Response**

On the basis of its visit, review of materials, and panel members' expertise, the panel will make a written report for which guidelines are provided. The external review report and any institutional responses will be included in the program proposal submitted for Statewide Provosts Council consideration.

## **External Review Panel Responsibility**

The panel is responsible for preparing the final report in a timely manner. The report will be based primarily on the full panel's evaluation of the written program proposal and the information gathered during the site visit, and will address areas set forth in these guidelines. Once completed, the chair will send the report to the institution provost or graduate dean; a copy will be provided to the academic unit that developed the program proposal.

## **Report Guidelines**

The panel is asked to assess the program within the present and projected future contexts, addressing program elements, faculty, need, and resources.

### **1. Program**

- a. The program objectives and requirements; the mechanisms for program administration and assessment.
- b. The program's alignment with the institution's mission and strategic objectives.
- c. The depth and breadth of coverage in terms of faculty availability and expertise, regular course offerings and directed study, and access to and use of support resources within and external to the institution.
- d. The relationship of this program to undergraduate and other graduate programs at the institution and other institutions in the state, if appropriate. Consider collaborative arrangements, partnerships, interdisciplinary programs, service functions, joint research projects, support programs, etc.
- e. The justification in terms of state needs, demand, access, and cost effectiveness (if this program represents duplication within the state).
- f. The probable impact of the program on the department or academic unit, as well as its effect on current programs.
- g. The program's major strengths and weaknesses.

## **2. Faculty**

- a. The quality of the faculty in terms of training, experience, research, scholarly contributions, ability to generate external support, stature in the field, and qualifications to serve as graduate faculty.
- b. The faculty in terms of size, qualifications for area(s) of specialization offered, and the student body served. Include analysis of program sustainability in light of such factors as upcoming retirements, etc.
- c. Areas of faculty strength and weakness.
- d. Faculty workload, including availability for student advising, research oversight, mentoring, and teaching effectiveness.
- e. The credentials, involvement of, and reliance upon support faculty from other departments within the institutions, from other institutions, and/or adjunct faculty.

## **3. Need**

- a. The evidence of sufficient demand and/or relevant employment opportunities for graduates of this program.
- b. The overall need for the program within the institution, state and/or region, and nation.

## **4. Resources**

- a. The adequacy of library, computer, laboratory, and other research facilities and equipment; offices; classrooms; support services for the program; and, if relevant, the program's utilization of resources outside the institution (e.g., field sites, laboratories, museums, libraries, and cooperative arrangements with other institutions).
- b. The proposed budget and any need for new resources to operate the program effectively. Where appropriate, review resources available to support graduate students (e.g., fellowships and other scholarships, teaching and research assistantships).
- c. In terms of national standards, the institution's commitment to the program as demonstrated by the number of faculty relative to workload and student numbers, support for faculty by nonacademic personnel (e.g., support, staff, technicians), financial support for students, and funds for faculty research and professional activities (e.g., conferences, visiting lectures).
- d. Institution leaders' commitment to this program in the long term.
- e. The institution's ability to sustain the program in the foreseeable future along with its current and future projected commitments.