

## **Policies and Procedures For The Review Of Graduate Programs**

Graduate Council  
Oregon State University

It is the policy of Oregon State University to conduct regular reviews of graduate level academic programs. Various types of reviews are conducted in the university, including reviews at the time a program is proposed, professional licensing or accrediting reviews, and research program reviews. In addition, the Oregon State System of Higher Education (OSSHE) requires a review of new programs within the first several years after authorization. These reviews commonly seek compliance with minimum standards and may be externally rather than internally initiated and controlled. Accordingly, while they may be supplemental and informative, they do not take the place of graduate program reviews. Many external reviews focus only on selected aspects of the academic program, such as the research efforts, and do not attempt to provide a comprehensive look at the graduate program. Graduate Council graduate program reviews are institution-initiated and they are evaluative, rather than descriptive. While recognizing financial and political realities, they are based on academic criteria. Importantly, they should lead to constructive action to enhance program quality.

A program review provides a mechanism for constructive change. It provides the opportunity to review, to evaluate, and to plan in a non-political and reasoned setting. The objectives and benefits of these reviews are several:

- To improve the quality of graduate programs
- To evaluate program quality relative to institutional standards, and in comparison to national norms for the discipline
- To stimulate review and planning within the program unit
- To advance cross-campus awareness of procedures and standards
- To identify areas of program need and opportunity
- To assist the institution and program units in achieving the best use and allocation of available resources

Graduate program review is an on-going process, with increased levels of activity and focus at selected intervals. The first step in program review should include compilation by the program unit of selected data on applicants, students, faculty, research activities, and program operations.

In-depth reviews should be conducted on a periodic basis, most typically on a decennial schedule. Supplemental interim reviews may be conducted as requested by the unit, by the college dean, or as deemed appropriate by the Dean of the Graduate School or the Graduate Council. Related reviews include research program reviews and accreditation reviews.

The material that follows describes guidelines and procedures for conducting in-depth decennial reviews, although some of the guidelines and procedures may be useful for other reviews as well. The purpose is to guide both the units being reviewed and the reviewers. The intent is to facilitate the review and to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the review process:

## **Decennial Reviews**

### **The Structure of Graduate Program Reviews**

#### **General Overview**

The Graduate School has responsibility for the quality of graduate degree programs at Oregon State University. Through the Graduate Council, in-depth reviews of graduate programs are conducted following a standard format: approximately once each ten years, or more frequently as appropriate.

The Dean of the Graduate School initiates a schedule of reviews, notifying the chair and college dean of programs proposed for review well in advance of the review schedule. Reviews typically include all graduate programs within the unit being reviewed. The Graduate Dean works with the department chair and college dean, and the chair of the Graduate Council, to establish the composition of the Review Committee and the timing of the review. The department chair is responsible for preparing the departmental self-study and other materials appropriate for the review.

Following review of the self-study, the Review Committee conducts a site visit. Based on the site visit and the materials presented in the self-study, the Review Committee submits its report(s) to the Graduate Dean. The report is then reviewed by the Graduate Dean and the department chair. After factual information has been confirmed, the report is formally reviewed and accepted by the Graduate Council, and forwarded to the Provost. Subsequently, the Provost, the Graduate Dean, the college dean, the chair of the review team or the chair of the Graduate Council, and the department chair meet to agree upon an appropriate plan of implementation. The Provost sends a letter to all parties, specifying issues to be addressed and actions to be taken.

At an agreed upon date, usually 1 to 2 years later, the Graduate Council will conduct a subsequent review to see if the expected actions have been implemented.

#### **Timing of Reviews**

Graduate program reviews must be scheduled carefully and well in advance. Advance notice is provided to the chair of the academic program and the college dean that a review is being

scheduled. Coordination among these individuals is essential to assure scheduling of all Review Committee members, especially the external member. Tentative timelines should be agreed upon, with consideration of the impact of summer activities on scheduling.

### **The Graduate Review Committee**

The Review Committee normally is to be comprised of two members of the Graduate Council, two additional members of the Graduate Faculty, and at least one disciplinary peer external to OSU. Additional participants may be desirable, especially external members. The Dean and Associate Dean of the Graduate School accompany the Review Committee during the site visit, but are not officially members of the Committee.

Assignment of Graduate Council members to a Review Committee is the responsibility of the chair of the Graduate Council (one of the Graduate Council members should have prior experience on a Review Committee, and is designated to chair the Committee). The Graduate Dean, having received recommendations from the department chair and the college dean regarding the external members, appoints the other members of the committee.

On-campus members of the Committee should be from a college other than that of the program under review. The external reviewer should be a highly knowledgeable and reputable leader in the field under review (see Appendix 1). Whereas Committee members may vary in their familiarity with the subject matter of the program, all should be well-versed in the practice of graduate education.

When a graduate program review coincides with another external review, such as a Cooperative States Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) or accreditation review, the Graduate Dean may elect to appoint the external member of the Review Committee from the second review panel. Thus, there is an external member who serves in common on both reviews. Similarly, one of the faculty Review Committee members may participate in the supplemental review. While it may be beneficial to combine reviews, supplemental reviews do not replace Graduate Program Reviews.

The report of the review is submitted to the Graduate Dean, who then routes it to the Graduate Council, college dean, department head, and Provost. However, expenses for the external reviewer, including travel, lodging, meals, and any honorarium, are the responsibility of the college dean whose program is being reviewed. Travel arrangements are usually made by the department head.

### **Self-Study Report**

A major initial step in the program review process is the preparation of a Departmental Self-Study Report. All graduate programs should regularly collect and monitor the data which will be needed in the self-study. Guidelines for the Self-Study Report are provided in Appendix II. Examples of effective Self-Study Reports are available in the Graduate School.

This document should be prepared collectively by the faculty and administration of the program unit. It should provide thorough descriptive materials about the program and should also offer an assessment of departmental strengths, weaknesses, needs, and opportunities. It should clearly address the goals and activities of the department, indicate how those fit into the mission of the university, and assess the effectiveness of the program. Nine (9) copies of the self-study are to be submitted to the Graduate School two weeks in advance of the scheduled site visit.

The self-study report should address:

**Objectives and Organization**

Indicate the objectives of the department; relation to institutional mission; policies and organization; strengths and weaknesses of the program, relative to growth areas within the discipline; objectives of the graduate program and related research; and need for the program. This should be a clear statement of current and long-range department goals and how it proposes to achieve them.

**Structural Data**

Listings of support personnel; numbers of active masters and doctoral students; degrees awarded; general budget data, including portion of budget used in support of graduate programs; and magnitude and impact of externally funded research and contract activity.

**Faculty Profile**

Number of faculty and nature of appointment; number of graduate faculty and apportionment of graduate student advising; adjunct faculty; recent and projected retirements and hiring; age, gender, rank, tenure, and ethnicity structure; relation of faculty to present and projected program goals.

**Other Faculty and Support Staff**

Number and responsibilities of classified and unclassified staff, technicians, post-docs, research assistants and associates.

**Research and Scholarly Activity**

Descriptions of faculty scholarship, especially that involving graduate students; grants submitted and funded.

**Faculty/Student Comparisons**

Faculty/student ratio; teaching loads; thesis load per advisor; teaching evaluations.

**Student Profiles**

Departmental admissions criteria and screening procedures; GPA; GRE scores, and related characteristics of recent applicants, admitted students, and matriculated students; actual enrollments by degree; nationality, gender, age, and ethnicity data; sample degree programs.

**Students Financial Support**

Percentage of students funded: FTE and annual rate data; listing of teaching and research assistantships, fellowships, or other support; selection process for funding; gender and ethnicity profiles.

**Facilities**

Classrooms, offices, laboratories and related research space; instructional and research equipment, libraries, and computers.

**Curriculum**

Degree requirements; course offerings; frequency of offerings; enrollments by course.

**Student Productivity Indicators**

Indicators of average time to completion of degree; success levels at comprehensive and final exams; number of theses and dissertations produced; listings of student publications, exhibitions, or awards; samples of theses or dissertations.

**Placement**

Listings of recent job placements or post-doctoral positions taken by graduates.

**Any other relevant data**

In addition to drawing upon the department database for the self-study, it is invaluable to solicit input from faculty and administrators in related programs, as well as from students and alumni. Questionnaires are often useful in soliciting impressions of program strengths and weaknesses. If used, questionnaires should be anonymous and designed with care. (The Educational Testing Service, in conjunction with the Council of Graduate Schools and the Graduate Record Examinations Board, has developed the Graduate Program Self-Assessment Service and sells sets of standardized questionnaires for evaluation of masters or doctoral programs.) Additionally, the review team may elect to distribute a questionnaire to graduate students prior to the site visit.

**Pre-review Meeting**

At least one week prior to the site visit, the Graduate Dean will meet with the on-campus members of the Review Committee. The self-study document will be reviewed, and the Dean will advise the Committee on procedures and significant issues to be examined during the site visit. During this orientation, individual Committee members may be assigned responsibility for specific topics of inquiry and the agenda of the on-site visit will be reviewed. If the college dean has requested of the Dean of the Graduate School that attention be given to specific aspects of the program, that will be presented for incorporation.

## **Site Visit**

Following review of the self-study report the Review Committee conducts a site visit in the department. The site visit is typically one day in length (see Appendix III), but may be extended if deemed desirable by the Committee.

Responsibility for the schedule and agenda of the site visit should be assumed jointly by the chair of the program being reviewed and the Graduate School. The visit allocates time to interview the college dean(s), the department chair, faculty, staff, and graduate students. Confidentiality must be assured in these discussions. Additional materials may be requested and reviewed at this time, if appropriate. Time should also be arranged for any faculty or staff member, or graduate student, who wishes to have a private meeting with the Review Committee.

The Committee usually surveys the research and instructional facilities of the program. The opportunity should be extended for additional feedback to the Committee after the site visit, to allow input from faculty and students who may not be present at the site visit or who may have follow-up comments. At the conclusion of the site visit the Committee, in executive session, should allocate time to review its findings and discuss its sense of the review. This is a particularly important opportunity to share the observations of the external reviewer. Following this discussion the Committee should agree upon format, content, and assignments for various components of its report.

At the conclusion of the site visit the college dean and/or the Dean of the Graduate School may wish to confer with the external reviewer prior to his or her departure.

## **Review Committee Report**

When the Review Committee has completed their review, they prepare a report of findings (see Appendix IV). This report provides evaluations and recommendations. In particular, assessments and suggestions of the external reviewer should be identified; frequently the external reviewer files a separate report, although those comments may also be incorporated in the report of the larger committee.

No format is specified for this report, but it should address the quality, vitality, and direction of the program being reviewed. It should also comment on the quality of the students in the program, the productivity of the faculty, the leadership of the program, and the continued relevance of the program. It is essential that all Committee members agree upon the structure and nature of the report, and the responsibility for preparation of its various sections. Unless the Committee agrees otherwise, the creation of the draft and final version of the report are the responsibility of the Committee chair.

The report should include recommendations concerning the future of the department's programs, structure, and activities. These could range from a recommendation to discontinue a program to a recommendation to expand greatly the scope of the department and its programs. A recommendation might be to change the direction, structure, or activities of the department's

graduate program in order to improve its quality, increase its effectiveness, or to utilize the University's resources more efficiently.

A draft of the Review Committee's report(s) should be completed by Committee members within two weeks of the site visit. This draft is reviewed by the department chair/head for factual content, and by the Dean of the Graduate School. Comments are returned to the chair of the Review Committee. Following this, a copy of the final report is to be submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School within two weeks. The Dean then provides copies to the department chair, the college dean, and the chair of the Graduate Council.

The chair of the Graduate Council will arrange for the report to be presented at a regular meeting of the Graduate Council. The department chair and college dean will be invited to that meeting to review factual issues of the report. After the Graduate Council has accepted the report, a copy is forwarded to the Provost by the Graduate Dean.

### **Implementation**

Completion of the review should lead to timely, positive actions to enhance program quality. Accordingly, there must be action to implement recommendations. Following a study of the review report, the Provost will convene a meeting including the Graduate Dean, the department chair, the college dean, and the chair of the Graduate Council or the chair of the Review Team, to discuss the recommendations and findings of the review. This should result in a memorandum of understanding, prepared by the Provost, as to what specific actions are to be taken, by whom, and in what time frame. This memorandum becomes a part of the review record and is used by the Graduate Council to guide follow-up activities. Only by a concerted effort of all of these parties can appropriate and timely action be expected.

### **Follow-up**

Annually, the Graduate Council appoints committees whose charge is to re-examine recent program reviews and the memorandums of understanding that resulted, and determine from the responsible parties if the expected actions have been completed as agreed. Reports of these follow-up reviews are shared with the Graduate council and the graduate Dean, who forwards copies to the Provost.

The sequence of events discussed above is summarized in Appendix V.

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**Appendix I**  
Guidelines For Selection of External Reviewers

1. External reviewers should be respected peers, with proficiency in the areas of specialization that are important to the unit being reviewed.
2. Reviewers should be experienced academicians, who understand university operations and graduate education, and who are able to evaluate realistically the unit's strengths and weaknesses relative to similar units at other comparable institutions, the unit's operations, plans for growth and development, and the professional activities of faculty members.
3. If a graduate program review is conducted in conjunction with another review (e.g., accreditation or CSREES), the reviewers should be aware of the objectives of the graduate program review, as well as those of the related review.
4. It is preferable to avoid appointing former mentors or close personal friends of faculty members, former employees or individuals who have applied or are likely to apply for a position at OSU, or individuals from institutions substantially different in character from OSU who will be less likely to understand specific circumstances here.
5. The long-run viability of the unit, and the credibility of the review will be enhanced, by identifying thoughtful, knowledgeable, and objective external reviewers.
6. When nominating individuals to serve as external reviewers, provide names, current addresses and phone numbers, and a brief statement of the individual's qualifications. The statement should consist of several sentences encapsulating the individual's expertise, and any previous experience with this unit or faculty.

## **Appendix II**

### Content of the Self-Study Report

There is no set format for the self-study report. The following outline is indicative of the type of content that is viewed to be essential to any such study. Additional information is invited if it will enhance the effectiveness of the presentation. Materials that do not relate to the objectives of the program review process should not be included.

#### **I. Background and Statement of Goals**

This should include a brief history of the program, including recent changes, and any recent or impending accomplishments or problems. There should be a clear statement of how the department and programs relate to the mission of the university. Specific goals, directions, and objectives for the future should be identified, along with a discussion of obstacles, needs, or opportunities. Has the department re-defined the objectives of its degree programs in recent years? How do the goals and objectives for the individual graduate degree programs relate to the overall goals and objectives of the department, college, and university? This section should provide a context for the rest of the self-study.

#### **II. Description of the Program Description of the Program**

##### **A. Resources**

##### **1. Personnel**

- a. **Regular professorial faculty:**  
List by rank and tenure status, including date of hire, highest degree earned, graduating institution, and most prominent area or areas of expertise or research interest. Append abbreviated (3-5 pages) vita for each faculty member, reflecting scholarly and creative productivity of recent years.
- b. **Other faculty:**  
Describe the program's use of visiting faculty, courtesy faculty, and graduate students in the instructional and research programs.
- c. **Staff:**  
List and describe staff support positions, including administrative or research assistance, secretarial, technical, student advising, etc.
- d. **Students:**  
Describe your current students and those of the last 3-5 years using data such as schools of prior degrees, GRE scores, TOEFL scores (when applicable), entering and exiting grade point averages, and retention rates. Indicate the number of minority vs. non-minority

students, international vs. domestic, resident vs. non-resident, male vs. female, full-time vs. part-time, etc. What percentage of applicants are admitted? What percentage of those admitted matriculate? What percent complete their degrees, and within what time period?

2. Future personnel needs

Briefly describe the program's projected needs or requirements in each of the above personnel categories. What is envisioned as the ideal mix of students the unit is attempting to recruit? What is the desired mix of faculty and staff? Relate this to the program's mission statement.

3. Physical facilities

Describe classroom and office space, laboratories, studios, libraries, museum, audio-visual equipment, computers, etc., which are important to the program. Discuss the central library and any departmental library holdings in the context of program needs. Discuss other special resources or facilities that are important.

4. Recruitment and retention of students

Describe the process of graduate student recruitment, including the mix of students recruited. Discuss the advising efforts offered to students to assure good academic standing. Include copies of materials used in recruiting and advising. Discuss accessibility of faculty, space, and facilities to graduate students. Are there limits to the number of students admitted? Characterize the institutions and programs from which most students are recruited.

5. Financial assistance

Describe the departmental financial assistance provided to graduate students. How many GRA/GTA positions are offered, at what stipend and FTE, and for what duration? What criteria are used to determine recipients? What other financial benefits are awarded (fellowships, travel grants, etc.)? Are the same criteria applied consistently to both GTA's and GRA's?

6. Affirmative action

Describe the efforts to extend affirmative action efforts to faculty, staff, and students who are members of minority, handicapped, or under-represented groups. Provide statistical detail and descriptions of procedures. Append the program's minority action plan.

## B. Graduate Instructional Programs

### 1. Curriculum

Describe the unit's various graduate degrees and how they differ. Does the unit award both research and professional degrees? What is the philosophy that shapes the curriculum? Explain how this philosophy is reflected in students' programs of study. When do students begin taking research credits? thesis credits? How does research relate to course work? What is the frequency at which listed courses are taught? What course offerings in other units are essential to support the department's programs? What courses in the department provide a service to graduate students in other units? Are enrollments adequate to support courses? Are there new courses that should be added to the curricula in order to keep the program current? What are examination policies? Is there a student handbook or advising guide? Are there thesis and non-thesis options for masters degrees? Is an orientation provided for new students?

### 2. Operations and Effectiveness

The self-study must provide information on the on-going operation of the graduate programs, as well as indicators of the effectiveness of the various programs. Some of the following may be useful for this purpose:

What are the indicators of effectiveness of the program? (From what caliber of programs are students recruited? What awards or distinctions have students received? Where and in what capacity are graduates employed?) What are the indicators that the program is meeting students' needs and expectations? How are on-going evaluations of students made, and how are the results of those evaluations fed back to the students?

Are all students expected to gain teaching experience? When are students advised of rules, regulations, and expectations? Are qualifying exams used for course placement or retention? How do graduate students select a major professor? Does the department have a graduate committee, and what are its responsibilities? Are students aware of grievance procedures?

Is the faculty available to the graduate students on a timely basis? Are there opportunities for the faculty and students to interact informally?

Is there a good working relationship between faculty and administrators? Are there opportunities for faculty input to the

formulation of graduate policies? Is the administration providing direction to the program?

What new innovations or developments are shaping the field, and is the department keeping abreast or providing leadership? How do faculty remain current? What direction must the program take if it is to remain viable?

### **Appendix III**

#### **Sample Site Visit Schedule**

The site visit usually involves at least one full day in the unit. More time may be preferable if schedules of Review Committee members permit. The unit administrator and the graduate School typically coordinate the schedule. It is important to establish in advance whether the college dean, the Dean of the Graduate School, or other key administrators wish to schedule a discussion with the external interviewer, following the site visit.

The Review Committee typically meets early in the day with University administrators (Dean of the Graduate School, college dean, program administrator or chair, and others), who review their expectations, concerns, and objectives.

Site visits must include time for the Review Committee to meet with students. It is also helpful to schedule this early in the site visit, so that the Committee can examine further any issues or concerns raised by students. Students should be given the opportunity to speak confidentially to the Review Committee. Any students unable to attend should be invited to communicate their comments directly to the Chair of the Review Committee.

Time needs to be scheduled to visit with faculty as well as with any special faculty groups, such as a departmental graduate committee. This visit should be conducted in a confidential manner to encourage candid discussion. The department head typically does not participate in discussions with these groups, but meets separately with the Review Committee.

The Review Committee usually prefers to meet again with the department administrator near the end of the site visit, to enable discussion of any questions or concerns that arose during earlier meetings with students or faculty.

(See attached sample schedule)

## REVIEW SCHEDULE

### Graduate Council Review GRADUATE PROGRAM / DEPARTMENT

#### Date

#### Graduate Council Review Committee

*Graduate Council Member, Chair*

*Graduate Council Member*

*OSU Graduate Faculty Member*

*OSU Graduate Faculty Member*

*External Reviewer(s)*

8:15-9:00	Meet with College Dean(s)
9:00-9:30	Meet with Department Head/Program Administrator
9:30-10:15	Meet with Departmental Committee(s) (e.g., admission committee, graduate committee)
10:15-10:30	Break
10:30-12:00	Meet with department faculty
12:00-1:00	Lunch
1:00-2:15	Meet with students
2:15-2:45	Meet with Departmental Committee(s) and/or faculty
2:45-3:30	Tour facilities
3:30-4:00	Meet with Department Head/Program Administrator
4:00-5:00	Executive Session

## **Appendix IV**

### Guidelines for Review Committee Report

#### **1. Summary of Findings and Recommendations**

This section serves as an executive summary of the report. A narrative style is common, but a numerical listing of key issues and findings may be useful. It also includes and summarizes all the recommendations found in the body of the main report. They should be organized by major category, preferably following the same organization as the main report.

#### **2. Detailed Findings**

This is the main body of the report. It highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the program. It provides the details of the review findings and provides the basis for the recommendations that are made. Specific recommendations are often interspersed throughout the narrative of the report, but should be highlighted in some manner so they may be easily identified. The subsections of the report will vary depending upon the unit being reviewed. There is no set format for this report, but a typical report might include:

##### **Introduction**

Specify the objectives of the review, the participants, the order of events, and the organization of the report.

##### **Graduate Teaching and Advising**

Review course offerings, teaching loads, curriculum, advising loads, the characteristics of the graduate program, and stature.

##### **Faculty and Research Programs**

Review size, diversity, and productivity of faculty and their involvement in graduate education, the vigor of the research program, and the involvement of graduate students.

##### **Graduate Students**

Review the quality and quantity of students, recruitment procedures, financial support, student concerns, and post-graduate placement.

##### **Facilities**

Review the amount and quality of space and facilities that pertain to graduate education, including accessibility.

## **Administration**

Review the internal governance of the unit, including committee structure, interactions between the administrators and faculty and students, student involvement in governance, and support staff functions.

## **Other**

**Appendix V**  
Sequence of Review Procedures

- ▶ College dean and program director notified and self-study report requested
- ▶ Review Committee appointed
- ▶ Site visit date established and scheduled to include concurrent external reviews (if appropriate)
- ▶ Self-study report received by Graduate School and distributed to Committee members
- ▶ Review Committee meets with Dean of Graduate School to discuss agenda and review materials
- ▶ Site visit with administrators, faculty, graduate students, staff
- ▶ Preparation of Review Committee report
- ▶ Report to Graduate Council with comments by program administrator and college dean
- ▶ Review and acceptance of report by Graduate Council with appropriate recommendations and responses
- ▶ Report forwarded to Provost
- ▶ Provost calls meeting with Dean of the Graduate School, college dean, Chair of Graduate Council or Review Committee, and program administrator to prepare memorandum of understanding
- ▶ Memorandum of understanding copied to Graduate Council
- ▶ Follow-up review by Graduate Council to assure implementation