**Academic Program Review: A Guide to Preparing the Self Study for Graduate Programs**

**Curriculum**

In a strong graduate program, required courses and designated electives fit together in a coherent whole. While the organization of the program will vary from field to field, the organizing principles and coherence of the curricular plan should be evident to students and faculty members alike.

Strong graduate programs offer courses regularly and in a rotation that ensures students can make timely progress toward their degree. Strong programs incorporate into the curriculum the pedagogical practices and/or technological innovations that enhance student learning. The curriculum alignment supports mastery of the program objectives and student learning outcomes thereby helping students develop the capacity to use the methods and perspectives of the discipline(s) in framing questions and in developing increasingly sophisticated analyses of those questions.

Strong graduate programs foster continuing growth and development in the discipline. The curricular content of strong programs reflects current standards and best practices. The curriculum progressively challenges students to effectively prepare them for careers. Recognizing that these capacities develop over time, these programs create curricular structures that provide students with opportunities to revisit issues they have met in prior courses and to bring to bear on those issues increasingly powerful analytic techniques.

In a strong program, the curriculum fosters both the continued development and the presentation of results and/or ideas effectively and clearly in both written and oral discourse. The curriculum engages students in discipline-specific research and/or professional practice and training experiences. Additionally, the program offers structured co-curricular activities that enhance and support student learning outcomes and professional development. Engaging students in open discussion of questions and conflicts about the presuppositions, methods, and findings of the field represents a powerful teaching technique that fosters intellectual development.

C1: The program ensures courses are offered regularly.

What mechanisms are in place for reviewing the structure and content of the curriculum? How frequently does a review take place? Provide examples of how assessment data are utilized to make changes focused on curricular improvements to enhance student learning.

C2: The program ensures that students can make timely progress towards their degree*.*

Provide a sample plan of study, including any pre- and/or co-requisites, in order to demonstrate that all requirements for the degree as well as the major may be fulfilled by a full-time student (taking a normal course load) within a reasonable time frame. Include a table which shows the frequency with which you offer your courses in order to demonstrate that required courses and electives are offered with enough regularity to meet student needs/interests.

C3: The program incorporates pedagogical and/or technological innovations that enhance student learning into the curriculum.

Describe pedagogical and/or technological innovations that have been incorporated into program coursework to enhance student learning. Provide examples of instructional methodologies that actively engages the learner in the learning. Describe how technological tools are utilized to enhance teaching and learning in the major.

*C4:* The curriculum is aligned with and contributes to mastery of program objectives and student learning outcomes.

Delineate the program objectives and the student learning outcomes. Demonstrate how the curriculum contributes to mastery of these. Describe how the required courses contribute to mastery of program and student learning outcomes. Provide specific examples. A curriculum map may be useful.

*C5:* The curricular content of the program reflects current standards and best practices in the discipline.

Describe numerous examples of how current standards and best practices of the discipline are present in coursework and program requirements. Explain how the relevant portions of your course syllabi demonstrate that your curricular materials and content reflect current standards, practices, and/or contested issues in the discipline.

*C6:* The curriculum progressively challenges students to effectively prepare them for careers.

Describe how the curriculum progressively builds from introduction of topics and/or concepts to summative assessment of those topics/concepts in a way that is meaningful to both the student and the program. Include descriptions of how these challenges are designed to prepare students for careers in the discipline. Your curriculum map should demonstrate this progressive building of topics/concepts through the program toward capstone/cumulative coursework.

*C7:* The curriculum fosters the continued development of and the presentation of results and/or ideas effectively and clearly in both written and oral discourse.

Describe how the program uses both written and oral discourse, i.e., required papers, required presentations, as part of the assessment of student learning for the program. Include any rubrics utilized for those assessments.

*C8:* The curriculum fosters ongoing student engagement is discipline-specific research and/or professional practice and training experiences.

Describe any tasks, requirements, and/or assignments that incorporate discipline-specific research and/or professional practice and training into student learning (i.e., research projects, internships, travel study, etc.).

*C9:* The program offers structured co-curricular activities that enhance and support student learning outcomes and/or professional development.

Describe any structured co-curricular activities (i.e., service learning, student organizations, etc.) that enhance and support student learning and professional preparation and growth.

**Economic Development and Program Sustainability**

Strong graduate programs assess local, regional, state and national workforce needs at advanced levels. Such programs stay abreast of current and future workforce opportunities and strive to ensure the program meets the needs of the workforce while also ensuring students are optimally prepared for existing and future employment opportunities. Describe how your program produces graduates who are prepared to fulfill those advanced needs.

EDPS1: The program demonstrates responsiveness to local, regional, state, and/or national workforce needs.

Describe how your program assesses current local, state, regional, and national needs related to your program. What mechanisms are utilized to gather and analyze data?

EDPS2: The program identifies applicable workforce, skills-based, and/or disciplinary trends and uses the information to improve the program.

Describe the methods used by your program faculty to identify and incorporate applicable workforce, skills-based, and/or disciplinary trends. Demonstrate how your program uses this information to inform changes to the program.

EDPS3: The program regularly and systematically collects data on graduating students and evaluates placement of graduates.

Describe the various mechanisms utilized to collect follow-up information on students graduating from your program and how you evaluate their post-graduation placements. Provide evidence of the post-graduate success of your majors in areas such as employment and professional advancement. This should be based on systematic data rather than hearsay evidence of isolated individuals.

*EDPS4:* The program has a history of enrollment and/or graduation rates sufficient to sustain high quality and cost-effectiveness.

Provide data showing enrollment for the past 5 years in your program. Also provide data showing the number of graduates and graduation rates for your program. As appropriate, include opinion survey data regarding satisfaction with the department's program and post-graduation placements.

Describe the department's plan for actively recruiting prospective students. How can you demonstrate that the program is attractive to well-qualified students.

*EDPS5:* The program's operating budget is consistent with the needs of the program.

Provide summary data about the operating budget (excluding equipment) for the last five years. What actions have you taken to ensure the best use of limited resources? Show how special projects within the mission of the department are funded from resources provided to the department. From THEC or other available data for comparable programs, judge the appropriateness of the resources for your program(s).

**Faculty**

Strong programs have sufficient faculty to adequately cover the teaching load. Such programs actively seek to recruit a faculty that represents diversity in many areas. Faculty members should be recognized as having Graduate Faculty status. Adjunct faculty members, if needed, are well qualified, uphold the standards set by the graduate program, and maintain the credentials expected by SACS.

Faculty members must be active in the field if they are to design and teach a relevant and vital curriculum. They must be well-qualified initially, and they must maintain an active regimen of scholarship. Some will be researchers or creative artists. Others may focus on interpretive, expository, or teaching and learning issues. All, however, must belong to the community of scholars: learning, exploring issues within a collegial community, and sharing new understandings with students.

Any program's faculty members will be committed to a diverse set of activities including teaching, scholarship, course and curriculum development, advising, evaluation, and assessment. The quality of the program depends on strength in all of these areas. This does not mean that every faculty member in the program must be personally committed to excellence in each of these areas. It does mean, however, that all faculty members must acknowledge the importance of each of these areas; that for each area there are faculty members in the program who devote significant time and energy to the area; and that excellence is recognized, appreciated, and rewarded.

Just as program quality should be reviewed periodically, so should each faculty member's teaching, scholarly and creative work, and service, with a goal toward measurement, accomplishment, and improvement.

*F1:* Full-time and part-time faculty credentials align with program requirements, graduate faculty status, and accreditation guidelines, supporting effective instruction and student success.

In support of your narrative for this and the subsequent criteria under this standard, provide resumes for all regular and part-time faculty in an appendix. (Use the standard UTM format.) Identify the number and percent that do not have a terminal degree. For those who do not, explain why, for example, exceptional expertise or a special situation. Please refer to UTM’s Faculty Qualifications Report for these faculty (<https://www.utm.edu/offices-and-services/accreditation-and-assessment/_media/FQR%20Instructions%20April%202019.pdf>).

*F2:* The program maintains faculty staffing levels to meet the needs of the program.

Describe the teaching load of your program faculty in the past 10 years using the teaching workload analysis established in fall of 1992. Check with the Academic Affairs office to verify the accuracy of your data. Provide data regarding the average workload of your regular faculty and the credit hour production per FTE faculty. Utilize any THEC data available to determine if the department's staffing is consistent with formula generation. Also include a discussion of the faculty advising load over the past five years (numbers of advisees assigned to faculty members). Tables will be helpful.

*F3:* The program implements clearly defined, transparent, and fair processes to evaluate faculty contributions in teaching, scholarship, creative activities, and service.

Provide a copy of the current evaluation system. What measures are used to evaluate teaching quality (student evaluations, peer evaluations, teaching dossiers, reviews of syllabi, etc.), scholarly and creative activities (types of activities included, how counted), and service? Describe the weighing for each category, the types of data collected and how it is all evaluated.Finally, show how it is tied in with the annual evaluation system to facilitate improvement and how it is used in combination to make judgments—particularly regarding promotion and tenure.

*F4:* The institution provides ongoing professional development opportunities for faculty members as teachers, scholars, and practitioners, consistent with the institutional mission.

Summarize in the narrative the number of faculty involved in the each of the above categories and the diversity of their activities. Refer the readers to some specific examples in the resumes of faculty in the appendix.

*F5:* The faculty are actively engaged in planning, evaluation and improvement processes that measure and are designed to advance student learning and student success.

Describe the processes by which faculty engage in program planning, evaluation, and curricular improvement. How often is the curriculum of the program reviewed? How do you use assessment data to “close the loop” to enhance student success?

**Learning Outcomes**

Every academic program is designed to assist graduate students in achieving advanced student learning outcomes. Ultimately, the quality of the program must be judged on how well it produces those outcomes. Faculty members' perceptions, anecdotal information, and evidence of the quality of the teaching process are not sufficient. Necessary is evidence showing that the intended outcomes are realized. Two key questions must be answered: What are the intended student learning outcomes of the program? To what extent are these outcomes being achieved?

Strong graduate programs articulate clearly the outcomes for students' learning. These outcomes are made explicit and understandable to the students. They should include clear expectations about the purposes and character of introductory, middle-level, and culminating work; the nature of and rationale for program requirements; and the rationale for curricular structures as they relate to these outcomes.

Strong graduate programs incorporate multiple occasions for assessing student learning, for marking educational milestones in the program through formative assessments, and for evaluating cumulative learning. Assessment is intended to document the successes of the program; flag areas in which goals are not being met satisfactorily; and, ultimately, lead to improvements in the program.

*LO1:* Program objectives and student learning outcomes are clearly identified and measurable.

Provide your department's mission statement. For each graduate major you offer, describe the intended purpose(s) of the major and the student learning outcomes expected of all graduates. If the list of program outcomes is lengthy, you should provide a summary here and refer the reader to an appendix where the complete list is located. The intended outcomes should be measurable and stated in terms that permit judgments about the extent to which they are realized.

*LO2:* The program implements a structured process to collect and analyze evidence to evaluate achievement of program objectives and student learning outcomes.

Describe the evidence used to determine whether or not your graduates have achieved the program and student learning outcomes identified for each graduate major. These should include the results submitted in the Assessment Reports submitted annually and any additional information you believe is important to judge the success of your curriculum. Explain how each of these indicators provides useful information.

*LO3:* The program uses the results from evaluation of program objectives and student learning outcomes to seek continuous improvement.

Reproduce in the narrative or an appendix (if voluminous) the data collected. Describe the process used for regularly reviewing goals, courses, and curricular structures considering the findings from these data. Summarize the conclusions which have been drawn from this analysis. Finally, describe any modifications which have been initiated to enhance the quality of your programs. In particular, show how the data have been used to build on strengths or overcome any weaknesses. For example, describe any changes in your goals, curricular requirements, course sequencing, development of new courses, restructuring of existing courses, changes in teaching/testing strategies, etc. which have been implemented in response to the information collected.

*LO4:* The program objectives and student learning outcomes align with the institution's mission.

Provide narrative that addresses how the graduate program fits within the university’s mission. Clearly delineate the connections between the program’s mission, student learning outcomes, and the university’s mission, providing examples of specific program components. For example, consider using a table that outlines key activities in terms of their contribution to the university’s mission, program mission, and SLOs.

**Learning Resources**

LR1: The program faculty has access to resources/professional development opportunities to support teaching and learning activities.

Describe the learning and information resources you use to support graduate level teaching and learning. Describe any resources that you are currently lacking. Provide cost analysis for any additional resources.

LR2: The program regularly evaluates its equipment and facilities, encouraging necessary improvements within the context of overall institutional resources.

Explain how your department regularly evaluates its existing equipment (including computers) and facilities to judge their continued usefulness and to identify any new needs. Is the existing equipment modern and in good repair? What are the department's equipment and capital needs for the support of instruction? Does the department have a plan and budgeting method for systematic replacement of equipment as demanded by wear or obsolescence? How do you prioritize your needs and determine their importance within the needs and resources of the school and university?

LR3: The program provides defined resources and support services to facilitate research, creative activities, and/or scholarly publication appropriate to the discipline and program level.

Describe where and how expectations regarding research, creative activities, service, and/or scholarly publications that are appropriate for the discipline and program levels are communicated to the faculty and others. Describe the resources and support services that facilitate these endeavors.

**Student Engagement**

Strong graduate programs include quality teaching in an environment conducive to student success. Strong programs are taught by faculty who place a high priority on the quality of their teaching. Teaching quality involves not only the performance in the classroom, but the learning atmosphere fostered and supported by the teacher. It includes attending to the needs of students with a diversity of interests, backgrounds, and learning styles. It includes interacting with students both inside and outside the classroom in relation to the overarching learning goals of the graduate academic experience as well as to the goals of a particular course or program. It includes staying current with the instructional practices of the discipline and with recent research in teaching and learning, followed by a willingness to alter teaching styles on the basis of that knowledge. It includes responsibility for addressing the shared goals of the overall program in planning courses and in giving feedback to students on their work and progress. Student evaluations of the faculty’s effectiveness are regular and the results are used as a basis for improvement.

Quality advising is more than monitoring students to ensure that they are making satisfactory progress toward a degree, and it is more than suggesting choices among possible options. Quality advising includes discussing goals and expectations of the program, the institution, and the student. It includes discussing opportunities in the field and strategies for achieving students' goals both during and after their program of study. It includes discussing the relationship among courses in the program and between the program and general education. High quality advising is built upon knowing each student's background, beliefs, hopes, and expectations. Ideally, advising is an interactive process that makes a definite contribution to the student's education, informs faculty members about students' concerns, and results in a shared understanding of a plan or plans of action that will serve the needs of the student.

The learning environment of strong graduate programs provides practical support and encouragement for students' intellectual growth and development. This includes frequent opportunities for interaction and dialogue among students, between students and faculty members, and with professionals in the field, in addition to that which occurs in the classroom. Such contacts seek to include a wide variety of groups, ideas, and perspectives.

Strong graduate programs are supported by adequate library holdings and access to the necessary electronic information in the field.

SE1: The program provides students with opportunities to regularly evaluate the curriculum and faculty relative to the quality of their teaching effectiveness.

Provide a copy of the current departmental instrument for student evaluation of the instructor/course. Explain how the reliability and validity (credibility) of the instrument was established. Describe the frequency of use.

SE2: The program provides opportunities to introduce students to professional and/or career opportunities within their field of study.

Describe any student clubs, seminars, or interest groups associated with your program(s) which are designed to provide opportunities for interaction outside the classroom. Show the extent of membership and participation during the last five years. In addition to these activities, describe any opportunities for interaction with professionals in the field.

SE3: Students have access to academic support services.

Describe the academic support services available for students within your program(s). Data on how often these support services are utilized will be helpful.

Describe how faculty in your department are trained to provide appropriate and effective advising for students. Additionally, describe any opportunities students are provided to evaluate the advising process.

SE4: The program incorporates and values multiple perspectives, experiences, and approaches to learning through its academic and/or professional activities, events, and programming.

Describe how the curriculum is structured to include, where appropriate, the multiple perspectives, experiences, and approaches to learning.  Include course instruction and reading materials, sponsored events, professional activities, and programming.  How do you periodically review your curriculum to ensure, where appropriate, the inclusion of relevant new scholarship in these areas?

SE5: The program provides students with the opportunity to apply what they have learned to situations outside the classroom.

Describe any field experiences provided in the program which allow pre-professional experience and “hands-on” application of classroom learning.

**Improvement Measures Plan**

In your last Program Review, strengths and weaknesses were identified and you developed an Improvement Measures Plan. Based on your Improvement Measures Plan, what actions did you take and what were the results of those actions. If no actions were taken, please explain why.