Graduate Program Reviews

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Introduction

Periodic program review allows programs to reflect on strengths and opportunities for growth or change. It allows program leadership and participants at all levels to offer input on what is working and what might be improved. For these reasons, periodic reviews are required as part of the Texas Administrative Code (Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 5, Subchapter C, Rule §5.52).

Program review entails submitting three components to the THECB:
- **Self-study**. Each program prepares this document based and an analysis of their program. This analysis is guided by a common framework and data. CIERP will provide much of the data but not all. Programs should budget at least one semester for data collection, analysis, and discussion among a variety of stakeholders (e.g., faculty, students, alumni).
- **Feedback from External Evaluator(s)**. The external evaluator(s), selected by the academic and graduate deans based on input from department, prepare this document based on their analysis of the self-study and site visit (if necessary). Master's programs require one evaluator and do *not* require a campus site-visit, though a virtual site visit is recommended. Doctoral programs must have two external evaluators and a campus site-visit.
- **Institutional Response**. The Dean of the Graduate School works with the Program Chair/Director, Academic Dean, and Provost to create this document. It provides a brief overview of the evaluators' main points and steps that will be taken to address any concerns and improve the program.

Graduate programs that undergo an accreditation review may use the self-study, accreditation report, and institutional response to satisfy the THECB review. If you have a program with an accreditation, please see the section entitled, *Procedure for Programs that Undergo External Accreditation.*

Master's and doctoral programs that have the same Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes will be reviewed together. Graduate programs within a department that do not share CIP codes may be reviewed together if appropriate.

Review Timeline

October – November

- Dean of Graduate School (DGS) works with the Center for Institutional Evaluation, Research and Planning (CIERP) to update data for programs that are scheduled for review.
  - Core faculty
  - Individuals who should have access to the graduate program data (Program Director, Chair, Administrative Support Personnel)

December – January

- The DGS notifies directors/department chairs and academic deans of programs scheduled for review and requests that each:
  - Verify and make corrections to list of core faculty from CIERP, and
  - Confirm individuals who should have access to the CIERP program characteristics data.
- The DGS schedules a meeting with all Directors/Chairs to discuss review process, core faculty, program data, timeline, external evaluator(s), and template for self-study.

February – March

- Chair and/or Program Director verifies access to the CIERP data and reviews data for any inaccuracies (e.g., core faculty)
- Department submits their graduate student handbook to DGS for review
- Department or Program initiates the self-study.
  - The self-study should include meetings with all relevant faculty members to review data, discuss trends, assess strengths and opportunities, discuss next steps, etc.
  - Program leadership should also carefully review the CIERP financial tools (e.g., Enrollment Management Tool, Cohort Revenue, & Net Revenue Per Section) and discuss the program's financial status with the academic dean and program leadership.

April – May

- Department/Program continues work on the self-study.
- The DGS reviews Graduate Handbook and provides feedback to Chair & Program Director.
- In consultation with Academic Dean (AD), program:
  - Identifies a list of 3-6 potential external evaluators and collects curriculum vitae (CV) for these individuals
  - Submits list of potential reviewers to the DGS.

May – June

- Program completes self-study and submits it to the DGS for review.
- The DGS reviews self-study and provides feedback to the Department/Program and the AD.
- The AD reviews self-study and provides feedback to the Department/Program.
- The DGS contacts potential external evaluator(s) for each program and identifies evaluator(s) who are willing to assist.
- Once self-study is approved (by AD and DGS), the DGS sends external evaluators:
  - An electronic copy of the self-study;
  - A copy of the Graduate Student Handbook (and/or Department/Program Operation Procedures that pertain to the graduate program);
  - Other critical documents that may be relevant (e.g., strategic plan, marketing materials, etc.); and
  - The Authorization for Personal Services (APS) and the Supplier Information Form (SIF) so external evaluator(s) can be reimbursed.
  - The Chair/Program director contacts the external evaluator(s) to assist them in coordinating final details of a campus or virtual site visit (see *Site Visit Guidelines*).

July - September

- The external evaluator(s) conducts a virtual or campus site-visit (see *Site-Visit Guidelines*).
- The external evaluator(s) writes the report and sends it to the DGS.
- The DGS shares the external evaluators' review with the AD and Chair/Program Director.
- The DGS issues the honoraria to the external evaluators after the report(s) are received.
  - The honorarium for each reviewer is $1000 for master's review and $2000 for PhD review
  - In cases where the same external evaluator reviews related programs (e.g., MA in History, PhD in History), the reimbursement is $2000. The DGS may approve slightly higher rates if warranted for external evaluators who review a few programs.
  - **Completing the review before the fiscal year ends is important.** *Programs that do not finish the review before this deadline may have to help pay for the review if the Graduate School budget cannot accommodate this shift to the next fiscal year.*

October – December

- The Chair/Program Director in consultation with the AD prepares a draft of the institutional response.
- The DGS and AD work with the program to create the final draft of the intuitional response and advance it to the Provost.
- Following the President's approval, the Provost's Office uploads the self-study, the external evaluator's CV, the external evaluator's report, and the institutional response to the THECB's reporting website, with an electronic copy sent to the UT System.

Instructions for Accessing Data for your Program

1. Go to Graduate Program Reviews Page on the Graduate School Website (Faculty > Graduate Program Reviews)

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2. Click "CIERP Graduate Program Characteristics" button which takes you to this page
3. Login using UTEP credentials and accept security statement
4. Select *Level, College, Department and Major* for your program.
5. Click on "**Get Report**" button.
   a) You should see a set of tables with the 21 characteristics of your program.
6. Verify the core faculty in your program by clicking "**details**" in *Table 11 Number of Core Faculty*
   a) Contact the Graduate Dean if any core faculty should be added or excluded from this list
7. Use the "details" links in each of the tables to identify any anomalies or outliers in the data that may need to be revised or explained.

External Evaluators

Two external evaluators are required for doctoral programs. A single external evaluator is sufficient for master's programs

The External evaluators must meet the following qualifications:
- Be affiliated with a peer or aspirational institution with a comparable program outside Texas and must have expert knowledge of and experience in the success of graduate programs.
- Hold tenured status in a department/program that awards terminal degrees.
- Be nationally recognized and have an active publication record in the discipline.
- Have administrative experience as a graduate program director, departmental chair, associate dean, or dean.
- Have no perceived or real conflict of interest. For example, an external evaluator who has collaborated with a member of the program/department or served on a program/department member's dissertation committee is unacceptable.

Peer Institutions

When selecting external evaluators, a primary focus should be identifying evaluators whose *department/program* is comparable. It is also useful to identify evaluators from *institutions* that are comparable to UTEP. The institutions listed below are all classified as R1 in Carnegie Classification System and relatively close to UTEP in the overall analysis (please note that Texas institutions were excluded because external evaluators cannot be from Texas). If you want to check the Carnegie Classification for an institution, please go to this page.

U. Central Florida
Georgia State U.
West Virginia U.
Kansas State U.
U. New Hampshire
U. Louisiana, Lafayette
Montana State U., Bozeman
U. California, Riverside
Oklahoma State U., Stillwater
U. Arkansas, Fayetteville
U. Nevada, Reno
U. California, Santa Cruz
North Dakota State U.
U. Maine
U. Alabama, Huntsville
New Jersey Institute of Technology
U. Alabama, Tuscaloosa
U. Oregon
U. Mississippi
SUNY, Binghamton U.
SUNY, U. Albany
U. Montana, Missoula
U. Maryland, Baltimore County
Colorado School of Mines
U. Nevada, Las Vegas
U. North Texas, Denton
U. Southern Mississippi
U. Memphis
Old Dominion U.
U. Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Ohio U.

Site Visit Guidelines

A one-day campus site visit is required for all doctoral programs. For doctoral program reviews, the Graduate School will cover the cost of travel and housing for two external evaluators. Departments/Programs should plan on covering the costs of meals. Departments are responsible for planning the visit and arranging airfare and hotel accommodation. Each itinerary must include (at a minimum) the following activities:
- Orientation Meeting with the Dean of the Graduate School

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- Meeting with Department Chair and Graduate Program Director(s)
- Meeting with program faculty
- Tour of relevant facilities
- A meeting with a group of representative doctoral students
- Lunch and/or dinner, dependent on the duration of the program review.
- One hour period for external evaluators to talk before the exit interview
- Exit Interview that includes the Department Chair, Graduate Program Director(s), Academic Dean or Associate Dean

To help facilitate all visits, every participant should be provided with a copy of the program's self-study and the curriculum vitae of the external evaluators prior to the visit.

A virtual site-visit is recommended for master's programs.

Procedure for Programs that Undergo External Accreditation

When creating the schedule for the THECB Graduate Program Reviews, we attempted to schedule each program's THECB review about a year after the program's accreditation review/renewal. This allows us to easily use the accreditation process for the THECB review and make the THECB process relatively easy and painless. In the sections below, we briefly discuss how to use the accreditation process to generate the three documents required for the THECB.

Self-Study
The self-study should be a single PDF that is less than 15 MB in size. You can use the same file or files that were submitted in your accreditation self-study. If the size of the file is larger than 15 MB, you can eliminate "non-essential" sections or try reducing the quality of images and/or scanned documents. If you have questions about reducing the file size, please communicate with the DGS.

Feedback From External Evaluator(s)
Create a single PDF that has the feedback from your accreditation review. If the review had multiple letters, combine these into one file and add a brief introduction and/or a table of content or to help the THECB review understand what has been combined to create this PDF. Be sure to include the site visit report that may have some specific commentary, not just the final letter of accreditation.

Institutional Response

The final step in the review process is to prepare an institutional response that will be advanced to the UT System and the THECB. The institutional response should be a *collaborative effort* and the final authors should include the Graduate Program Director, Department Chair, Dean of Academic College, and the Dean of the Graduate School.[1] Once the document is ready the Graduate Dean will advance it to the provost for review and approval.

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1 Use this list as an example of the types of people who should be included depending on the structure of a program. For example, Department Chairs sometimes perform the duties of the Graduate Program Directors. Other programs may be housed in the College so an Associate Dean may serve as the Graduate Program Director and there is not a Department Chair.

The program (Chair and/or Graduate Program Director) should prepare the first draft of the institutional response and then advance it to the Academic Dean and Graduate Dean for input. The institutional response should be written so that it can be understood without requiring a reader to first read the self-study and feedback from reviewers. It must have at least four components:

- A brief overview of the review process (e.g., reviewers and their qualifications, dates of self-study and site visit, etc.)
- Discussion of major items raised by the reviewers, both strengths and areas of opportunity. Please note that it might be necessary to discuss parts of the self-study to provide a context for reviewer's feedback.
- Action items that have been done or will be done to address feedback from reviewer(s). If "action items" are proposed, they should identify the individual or entity that is primarily responsible for enacting the item and provide an appropriate timeframe for action (use **boldface** for sentences that have action items).
- Strategic direction(s) for the program and goals to help assess progress toward the strategic direction(s).

When drafting the institutional response, it is important to contextualize both feedback from reviewer(s) and action items. To do this, you should consider departmental programs and strategic objectives, departmental finances, and College/University strategic objectives.

- *Departmental programs and strategic objectives*. The reviewers are charged with reviewing a single graduate program, but most departments have multiple programs and changing one program will impact the others. Thus, programs should think about the overall objectives of their department when crafting action items. If reviewer's comments are central to your department's objective, this should be mentioned. If reviewer's feedback would detract from objectives, this can be discussed in the institutional response.
- *Departmental finances*. Prior to drafting the review, the chair/program director should review the CIERP tools that provide financial information (Enrollment Management, Cohort Revenue, & Net Revenue Per Section). You should consider other departmental resources and whether they are relevant (e.g., endowments, indirect returns from grants, etc.)
- *College/University strategic objectives*. Review the University and College strategic plans and think about how the programs contribute to these plans.

Finally, the self-study and review process should involve everyone in your department, not just the chair and program director. This is especially important when crafting the institutional response. Graduate Program Directors and Department Chairs should get input from departmental members prior to crafting the institutional response. Use this process as an opportunity to assess your department's strategic plan and align it with those in the College and University.

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