GRADUATE PROGRAM REVIEW PROCEDURES

University of California, Riverside
2008/09

I. Overview

Reviews of graduate programs are accomplished by the Graduate Council, usually with the aid of extramural review teams; the process has the approval of the Riverside Division of the Academic Senate. The primary aim of the review process is to help improve programs or, if necessary, to close programs found to be undesirably weak.

The Graduate Council establishes the sequence of program reviews; the sequence is reviewed at least annually and can be altered by action of the Council. Usually four to five programs are scheduled for review each year; this pattern normally yields a 9-11 year cycle between reviews. The current sequence of reviews is available from the Graduate Division.

II. Preparation for Council Review

The graduate program is notified approximately 6-12 months prior to the scheduled review. At the time of this notification the program is asked to prepare the following information regarding its program for submission to the Graduate Council and to outside reviewers (see attached formats):

1. A brief (approx. 2-5 pages) statement concerning the program’s strengths and weaknesses, long-range goals, major changes since last review, and anything the program wishes to bring to the attention of the visiting team or the Graduate Council.

2. Program material distributed to graduate students (handbook, program description, procedures, statement, etc.).

3. A list of faculty members by rank followed by 2 page biographies of each (abbreviated version of full biography).

4. Placement data for all Ph.D.s awarded since the last review, arranged by date of award of degree, listing dissertation director, first position and current position.

The Graduate Division gathers statistical information from the Office of Academic Planning and Budget including:

1. Program expenditures.

2. Faculty (ladder and budgeted) as of Fall (year).

3. All courses taught per year (ladder FTE and headcount) for past three years.
4. Graduate courses offered during past three years and enrollment in each.
5. Non-faculty instructional personnel for (year).
6. Staff personnel for (year).
7. All course enrollments for last three years.
8. Student workload FTE and faculty FTE justified for last two years.
9. Headcount majors for last two years.
10. Courses taught by faculty from other departments/programs for last three years.
11. Summary of degrees for last three years.

The Graduate Division provides:

12. Extramural funding history for all faculty for past 5 years (obtained from Office of Research web portal).
13. Admissions profiles, enrollment data, degrees awarded (and time to degree), dropout rate, and historical statistics including fraction of UCR undergraduates and international students admitted to each program.
14. Summary of financial support provided all graduate students for last 3 years.
15. Catalogue copy of all graduate courses taught by the program.

Items 1-15 are sent to the program before dissemination so that any differences concerning the statistics can be resolved.

A questionnaire dealing with academic program quality matters including space for written comments is sent to each faculty member; a separate questionnaire is sent to current graduate students and to Ph.D. awardees since the last review (masters awardees in the case of a masters only program). Statistical summaries are provided where appropriate, and a verbatim compilation of all comments is included in the review materials.

III. Composition of Extramural Review Team

When first notified of the pending review, the program is asked to provide a list of distinguished, neutral reviewers as shown in the following excerpts from a letter of request:

... 15 names of distinguished potential extramural reviewers. Please include names from the following categories: 1) faculty from other UC campuses; 2) faculty from other institutions throughout the U.S. If you could arrange these names in groups which cover your program’s major areas and include their specialties, it would be helpful. Please indicate research areas that should be covered in the appointment of reviewers.... The Graduate Council Review Subcommittee asks that it be assured in
writing that the proposed extramural reviewers can carry out an impartial review in the sense that they are not closely allied to UCR members in the program under review. The Graduate Council Review Subcommittee is specifically concerned about the following Indicators: (1) personal friendships; (2) visitor and UCR faculty member present in same graduate (or postdoctoral) program at the same time; (3) graduate research advisors or postdoctoral mentors; and (4) cooperative research efforts or joint textbook writing. If any of these four items apply to a proposed reviewer, the individual should be eliminated or the Graduate Council Review Subcommittee should be informed of the facts of the relationship. This paragraph is inserted in all requests for nominations from programs under review; it is not pointed specifically at your program.

The Graduate Division obtains published biographies from various web-sites and may contact related programs elsewhere to ask about scholarly reputation and probable utility of a potential reviewer in the review process. Other names may arise from these queries; they are sent to the program for comment. The combined lists are examined by the Graduate Council Review Subcommittee, and (typically) a list of three names is selected by the subcommittee, along with a list of alternate names for each area of expertise selected. Team members receive travel expenses and an honorarium.

The Graduate Division formulates a ‘standard’ set of questions that the Extramural Team may (not “must”) use to guide its deliberations; most of the questions are used in all programs, but some are program specific. The program examines the questions before they are sent to the Extramural Team.

About thirty days prior to the scheduled visit, the information above is sent to each member of the Extramural team (contents of package follow below). An identical information package is provided the members of the Graduate Council Review Subcommittee. The program’s College Dean and Executive Vice Chancellor receive a copy of the package from which the questionnaire responses have been deleted for purposes of student/faculty confidentiality.

The following items are included in packets sent to extramural review team members:

1. Tentative schedule/campus map.
2. Table of organization/ Questions for reviewers.
3. Program review statement.
4. Graduate program handbook and other publications related to the graduate program.
5. A list of faculty members with digested biographies (abbreviated version of full biography).
6. Faculty grant activity.
7. Graduate Division admission data/program history.
8. Graduate student support for last three years.
9. Graduate student placement data.
10. Budget/workload information/program graduate courses catalog copy.
11. Questionnaires.

**IV. Extramural Review Team Visit and Report**

A typical team visit begins with a briefing of the Team by the Dean and Associate Dean of Graduate Division on procedures regarding the review, no particulars regarding the program. The Graduate Council Chair and Graduate Council Review Subcommittee then join this meeting which is chaired by the Chair of Graduate Council. The briefing includes discussion of the campus' perceptions about the strengths and weaknesses of the program being reviewed and any particular areas of concern. The reviewers are asked to provide an assessment of the quality of faculty, students, and the program; areas of strength and weaknesses; advice on areas to remove or strengthen; adequacy of facilities, morale, and any other issues they wish to address. They are asked to participate in an exit interview and to furnish a written report of 10-15 pages within 30 days of their visit.

Following this briefing, the Team meets with the College or School Dean. The Team then organizes itself and then meets the program chair and graduate advisor, followed by meetings with faculty and students in the program. The team examines the physical facilities and usually meets with chairs of closely related programs. These chairs are chosen by the Associate Dean of Graduate Division in consultation with the Chair of the program being reviewed. The Team will meet with the EVC if warranted. The final on-campus activity is the exit interview during which the Team-discusses its findings with the College or School Dean, the Dean and Associate Dean of Graduate Division, the Graduate Council Chair and Graduate Council Review Subcommittee. The Chair of the Graduate Council chairs this exit interview.

When the Team report is received, the honoraria are sent. The Team report is reviewed by the Graduate Division for matters of confidentiality, and the report (redacted if necessary) is sent to the Program with a three week response deadline for preliminary comment about factual inaccuracies and misperceptions.

**V. Graduate Council Findings and Recommendations**

The Graduate Council Review Subcommittee integrates its knowledge of the history and status of each program, together with the information and material generated by the program during the review process (including the extramural team report), to formulate a draft of the *Findings and Recommendations* -- a cohesive plan of action for improvement of the program. The *Findings and Recommendations* are developed through the following process:
1. When the external review committee report and the initial Department/Program response are received in Graduate Division, copies are forwarded to all Graduate Review Subcommittee members.

2. The Associate Dean of Graduate Division constructs an initial draft of the Findings and Recommendations to be forwarded to subcommittee members (via email).

3. The Graduate Council Review Subcommittee meets to discuss and either endorse or revise the initial draft Findings and Recommendations.

4. Based on the Subcommittee discussion, a second draft is prepared by the Associate Dean in consultation with the subcommittee chair and then forwarded to subcommittee members and included in the agenda of the next Graduate Council meeting.

5. Graduate Council either endorses the report, approves contingent on minor changes (authority delegated to subcommittee chair), or refers the report back to the subcommittee. In unusual circumstances, the Council may also choose to consult with the department/program or any University official or body prior to acting on the Findings and Recommendations.

For its consideration of the draft Findings and Recommendations, the Council is provided with copies of the extramural team report and the department’s preliminary response to the extramural team report. Not usually sent to all individuals on the Council, but available to members upon request, are all other data available to the Graduate Council Review Subcommittee. If substantial problems are anticipated, arrangements are made to have all members of the Council become familiar with the entire data set. When a draft acceptable to the Council is achieved, the Findings and Recommendations is sent to the program which is to distribute it to its faculty for discussion as a working document. The document is provided to all faculty and the program should meet to discuss implementation of the recommendations and provide Graduate Council with a detailed response, within 3 months, either outlining plans for implementing the recommendations or detailing reasons for not doing so. The Findings and Recommendations are a policy document, and failure to comply or to provide justification for noncompliance can lead to a moratorium on graduate admissions or other actions.

When the Graduate Council is satisfied that changes are being implemented by the program as provided by the Findings and Recommendations, Graduate Council will close the review and provide the program with a letter so stating.

Copies of the unedited extramural team report, the program preliminary response, the Graduate Council Findings and Recommendations, the program final response, and the Graduate Council letter closing the review are sent to the Chancellor, Executive Vice Chancellor, College or School Dean and Academic Senate office. A brief summary of the programs reviewed and Graduate Council
actions are included in the Graduate Council Annual Report to the Riverside Division of the Academic Senate.

The review of the master’s level programs follow the same format, but the Graduate Council Review Subcommittee may play the role of the extramural team at the option of the Council.

Graduate programs may be asked to provide Graduate Council with a progress report 3 to 4 years after a review has been closed.

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