

Graduate Academic Program Review Guidelines

Graduate Academic Program Review is a collaborative, mission-driven, evidence-based process designed to ensure the quality, viability, and continuous improvement of graduate academic programs. The process supports strategic planning, academic excellence, and informed decision-making. Following review, recommendations are shared with the graduate program director, unit head, dean(s), and Provost.

Guiding Principles

- Mission-driven and future-focused
- Evidence-based
- Continuous improvement
- Collaborative and faculty-engaged

Definition of a Graduate Academic Program

A graduate academic program is a course of concentrated study leading to a master's, specialist, or doctoral degree. Each degree program is reviewed independently unless otherwise approved.

Review Cycle

Graduate programs participate in a periodic review coordinated by the Graduate School. Reviews include preparation of an Assurance Report, Graduate Council review, recommendations, and program action planning.

Assurance Report

The Assurance Report is the central document in the review. Reports should be no more than 20 pages excluding appendices and should include data, analysis, evidence, and future planning.

Characteristics of a Strong Assurance Report

- Analyzes rather than describes
- Uses multiple sources of evidence
- Acknowledges challenges honestly
- Demonstrates continuous improvement
- Articulates a compelling future vision
- Aligns with university priorities, mission and vision

Required Components

- Unit and program Information
- Program Context and Mission/History
- Graduate Program Curriculum Quality
- Faculty Quality and Engagement
- Student Quality and Success

- Program Quality and Continuous Improvement
- External Positioning: Peers and Competitors
- Program Viability and Sustainability
- Appendices

Guidance for Each Section

For every section, explain what the evidence shows, why it matters, how trends have changed over the past five years, including what actions have already been taken, program successes, and program vision for the next 6-10 years.

Evidence

Programs should use institutional data, assessment results, graduate exit surveys, alumni and employer feedback, advisory board input, accreditation findings, benchmarking, workforce data, and other relevant evidence. Year-over-year trends should be emphasized whenever possible.

Writing Expectations

- Be concise
- Interpret rather than describe
- Support claims with evidence
- Identify strengths and challenges
- Describe planned improvements
- Write for an audience outside the discipline

Evaluation Criteria

Graduate Council evaluates reports using two overarching criteria: (1) Program Quality and (2) Program Viability and Sustainability. Recommendations are intended to strengthen programs through continuous improvement.

Roles and Responsibilities

Graduate program faculty prepare the report collaboratively and share draft with the dean's office. The Graduate School coordinates the process. Program personnel should partner with Institutional Analysis to secure program. Graduate Council reviews reports and forwards recommendations to the Graduate School. Academic leadership uses findings to support planning and resource decisions.

Appendices

Appendices should contain supporting documentation (e.g., enrollment tables, curriculum maps, assessment reports, benchmarking, faculty summaries, strategic plans, external review reports, and other evidence referenced in the report).