MERRIMACK COLLEGE

Graduate Academic Program Review and Evaluation Process
August 2019

Office of the Provost

Goals of Program Review and Self-Evaluation

Graduate program review provides faculty and academic administration the opportunity to systematically examine: (1) the extent to which programs reflect excellence in teaching and learning; (2) the dimensions of program quality; (3) program innovation and/or new program development; (4) alignment with the graduate student market; and (5) the adequacy and effectiveness of how College resources are being used to support these programs. The review process allows academic programs to assess student learning, evaluate student career preparation, reflect on their achievements, plan for the future, and insure that their graduate programs and related activities are aligned with the College's mission and strategic plan.

The graduate program review and the crafting of the self-evaluation report are intended for four audiences: your own Program/Department; your School Dean; your outside evaluators; and the Provost's Office. In turn, this review and self-evaluation process are structured so that you can evaluate and assess your graduate programs on three levels: institutional, programmatic, and student.

Programs to be included in the self-evaluation include all master's programs, graduate certificates, and other credit-bearing offerings that are on-ground, blended and/or online.

Standards of the discipline, the marketplace, and the NECHE Standards for Accreditation for Graduate Programs (Appendix A) provide benchmarks for program evaluation that help in establishing program quality and viability. The program review should:

- Describe and document the history of the program (informed by annual reports), current status, strengths, weaknesses, and goals for the next 5 years;

- Delineate how the program is striving toward effective and impactful practices as exemplified in the NECHE standards for accreditation for graduate degree programs (Appendix A), including with regard to assessment practices and curricular programming;

- Compare the program curriculum to peer and aspirant institutions in terms of quality, cost-effectiveness of delivery, consistency with disciplinary standards;

- Review and evaluate how well the program(s) is aligned with the graduate student market, making recommendations on how to improve alignment; and

- Identify short-term and long-term resource needs for strengthening and/or modifying the program using assessment data on student learning and achievement, post-graduate student employment, graduate student markets, and other evidence.

The review process should rely on evidence based review and assessment of effectiveness, and the use of mission driven strategic goals as the primary criteria for program evaluation. Therefore, in working on program review, the faculty should keep in mind NECHE's description of a culture of assessment as cultivating within an institution:

> *...a habit of inquisitiveness, both formal and informal, about its effectiveness, with a corollary commitment to making meaningful use of the results of that curiosity. In this way, deficiencies are recognized and corrected and processes to strengthen practice are identified and implemented. The effectiveness of the institution is thus improved.*

Given that the College's strategic goals provide direction to its activities and a basis for the assessment and enhancement of the institution's effectiveness, the extent to which graduate programs support and advance the College's mission driven strategic goals should be an important focus of the program review process.

The Review Process

In consultation with the Deans of the Schools, the Provost has established that during academic year 2019-2020, all non-accredited graduate programs will complete a program review. For Departments who conduct programs reviews as part of a professional accreditation process, these two processes will be completely aligned so as to avoid duplication of efforts; an official accreditation review report is considered equivalent to completing a program review as outlined in this document.

In consultation with the Dean of the School, the Department Chair will constitute a *Graduate Program Review Committee* of at least two full-time (preferably tenured) faculty members from the Department, including the Department Chair. Departments may choose to have more faculty members on the Committee, including all members of the Department if so desired. If a Department has fewer than two full-time faculty members, the Dean of the School, after consultation with the Department/Program Chair and the Provost, will appoint to its Program Review Committee additional faculty member(s) from other Departments. It is especially important to have closely related or curricular-integrated Departments included in the Program Review Committee.

The Graduate Program Review Committee will work with the Dean and Provost to identify potential external peer reviewers who will provide an external review. Funds to cover the costs associated with external review ($1,500) and other significant costs will be provided by the Dean

of the School (for a single external reviewer) and the Office of the Provost (for a second external reviewer).

The Program Review Committee will prepare a **Self-Evaluation Report**. The Report will be submitted to the external reviewer(s), who will examine the self-evaluation, visit campus to collect additional information, and provide a written review to the Department/Program faculty. The members of the Department will prepare a response to the external review.

The Self-Evaluation Report, the external review, and the departmental response will be submitted to the Dean of the School, who will discuss the program review with the Program/Department faculty. The Dean will then write a brief summary report and forward all the materials to the Provost with recommendations concerning the Program/Department and the implementation of any recommendations arising from the review process.

Annual Reports versus Program Review and Self-Evaluation Report

For graduate programs, the Departmental Annual Report and the Program Review Self-Evaluation Report are designed to be aligned with each other. Annual Reports emphasize year-to-year changes and description/evaluation of a particular year. The Program Review emphasizes longer-term trends and changes. Graphical representations of change over time are helpful in that regard, and are highly recommended. In short, Annual Reports should look back over the last year; Program Review should use those "looks" and direct attention forward to improvement, growth, and development.

Graduate Program Review Schedule (10-month Review Process)

September 3	Provost and Deans officially notify Programs and/or Departments due to begin the program review and self-evaluation process
September 15	Department/Program notifies Dean and Provost of the membership of the Self-Evaluation Review Committee; Committee receives data from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness
October 1	Self-Evaluation Review Committee gathers relevant information, identifies peer and aspirant programs/institutions, and begins drafting the self-evaluation report
November 1	Department/Program submits to Dean a list of possible external reviewers/consultants
December 1	The external reviewer(s) is selected by the Dean and Provost and the visit is arranged
January 15	The draft self-evaluation report is reviewed by the Department faculty
February 15	The final self-evaluation report is submitted to the Dean, and a copy is submitted to the external reviewer(s)/consultant(s)
March 15	A visit by the external reviewer(s) is completed by this date; the External Review Report is due 30 days after the visit
April 15	The External Review Report is reviewed by Department/Program and faculty write a response
April 30	Program review documents (self-evaluation and external report) are submitted to the Dean
by May 15	Dean meets with the Department/Program faculty to discuss the Program Review and writes a summary report that includes recommendations to the Provost
by June 15	Provost meets with faculty and the Dean to discuss the Program Review results

GRADUATE PROGRAM SELF-EVALUATION REPORT TEMPLATE

Please note the following formatting and submission guidelines for the report:

1. Please submit your self-evaluation as a single Word document, if possible.
2. Please do not submit documents as part of this report that are scanned pdf versions of other documents.
3. Please include page numbers on your report and refer to items in the appendices by page number in your narrative.

INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

I. Title Page

> Include title, date, Department Chair/Program Director, lead author of report and contributors.

II. Description of the Program's Role within the School and the College

A. Program's mission statement (please create one if you do not have one) and its relationship to the School's mission and the College's mission.

B. Relationship between the program mission and the College's strategic plan (Agenda for the Future).

PROGRAM LEVEL

III. Graduate Program's Established Goals/Objectives

Please review and reevaluate the goals listed by the program when it was created or in its previous review.

A. List your current program goals. Discuss how the goals will help the Department meet the mission of the College, the School, and the Program.

B. Service provided by the graduate program to any other graduate programs and/or undergraduate majors (if any).

IV. Program Learning Goals and Outcomes

A. List program learning goals and outcomes (e.g., "Graduates with an M.A. in _____ will be able to…")

B. Specific learning outcomes for any concentrations or certificates should be listed as well.

C. Discuss your assessment plan, provide an overview of assessment methods used, and provide evidence of program improvements based on assessment practices.

<u>V. Market Analysis and Peer-Aspirant Program Review</u>

A. Based on the market analysis data provided, discuss how your program is aligned with graduate program market trends and how to improve/enhance alignment over the next 5 years.

B. In consultation with the Dean and Provost, identify 5-7 peer institutions offering similar programs. Given that curriculum often differs between 4-credit and 3-credit based institutions, the institutions included should all be on 4-credit systems. In addition, be sure to choose the relevant modality of program delivery (e.g., on-ground versus online). How do your program's structure, curriculum, learning outcomes, goals, etc., compare to those of the peer group?

C. In consultation with the Dean and Provost, identify 5-7 aspirant institutions offering similar programs. Again, be sure to choose institutions with relevant modalities of program delivery (e.g., on-ground versus online). How do your program's structure, curriculum, learning outcomes, goals, etc., compare to those of the aspirant group?

D. Describe and evaluate your program's curriculum/resources, degree requirements, and market alignment compared to the peer and aspirant institutions. Also identify any potential growth areas and how your program(s) might be expanded.

STUDENT LEVEL

<u>VI. The Program</u>

A. Students in Degree Program
    1. Discuss course enrollment and graduation data for up to the last 5 years of students enrolling and graduating with master's degrees or certificates. What is the average time to graduation?
    2. Discuss information on your current students, including their geographic distribution and any other pertinent data that you collect.
    3. Describe current recruitment strategies for students.
    4. Describe admissions requirements and admissions procedures for current students in the Master's and/or Certificate program.
    5. Describe fellowship opportunities and the number of fellowships that are available.

B. Student Learning
    1. Describe and evaluate the program's efforts to assess student learning.
    2. Describe and evaluate how the program ensures that its course offerings and content meet the unique needs of graduate students in preparing them for this profession:
        a) content of graduate seminars
        b) quality of the research experience
        c) productivity and professional involvement of graduate students
        d) professional contributions of graduates of the program

3. Describe how the program has used its collected assessment data to make curricular or other program changes to improve student learning. Discuss the extent to which you have carried out your improvement plans since the last review and the success of the improvements (if this isn't your first program review).

C. Pedagogy and Effective Teaching
   1. Explain how each student learning outcome is supported by the teaching practices of the full-time and part-time faculty members of the program.
   2. Detail how the program's faculty members engage with a wider, off-campus professional audience in order to keep current in both the content of their discipline and the best practices of teaching within their discipline (e.g., professional contacts with colleagues at other institutions, conferences, performances, workshops, advisory boards).

D. Alumni
   1. Based on the information you have, provide a narrative summary of what your students do after leaving your program.

STAFFING AND RESOURCES

VII. Staffing

Please comment on the staffing of your graduate program(s):

    A. Faculty members teaching in the graduate program are generally engaged in scholarship, research and leadership in the profession for which they are preparing their graduate students. Please comment on how the program's faculty members are involved in such ways with the profession.

    B. What is the supervisory structure of the graduate program? Who is responsible for supervising instructors in the program? What is the relationship of the Director to the Chair of the Department and/or Dean? How are responsibilities for the decisions affecting the program divided among parties within the program and in the Department?

    C. Who is responsible for advising graduate students and how is advising performed? What is the total advising load of this person or persons within the graduate and undergraduate programs?

VIII. Resources and Facilities

    A. Evaluate how the resources at the disposal of the program are allocated to deliver the program's curriculum. In what way are resources allocated to preserve the quality of instruction of both the graduate program and the Department of which it is a part?

    B. Evaluate how faculty teaching and work load and staff load affects the program's ability to fulfill its mission.

    C. Evaluate the program's use of general College learning resources (e.g. classroom and laboratory facilities, McQuade Library, CETL, Career Services/O'Brien Center, IT, work-study and fellowships, Sponsored Research, etc.).

    D. Evaluate the program's use of computer and information technology to meet goals and objectives.

FUTURE PLANNING

IX. Five-Year Planning

    A. Provide a plan for achieving your program goals over the next five years. Please list specific goals, and for each goal list its rationale, the time frame for accomplishing the goal, and a brief sketch of how you will accomplish it.

    B. What enrollment trends are predicted over the next five years and how will the program respond to them?

    C. Discuss how faculty and staff structure will impact future plans for the program.

    D. What pedagogical or content developments in your discipline merit consideration in future planning?

    E. What institutional support will be needed to meet program goals and learning outcomes?

    F. Identify any changes needed in the program's assessment plan.

OUTSIDE REVIEWRS

Questions for Outside Reviewers

List five or six specific questions or issues that you would ask the outside evaluators to address in addition to the general review of your program. These items should cover areas in which you would like the evaluators' targeted advice.

When the outside evaluator's report becomes available, it will be forwarded to your program. The Department should prepare a step-by-step evaluation of the reviewers' comments.

Appendices and Addendum

Please include additional relevant information here. This may include:

- Dedicated or specialized teaching facilities (e.g., labs, practice rooms)
- Equipment (list of equipment)
- List of all courses and enrollments over the last 3 years
- Teaching loads of faculty
- List of full-time tenured, tenure-track, and non-tenure track faculty as well as adjuncts
- Advising loads by faculty member for the current year
- Listing of fellows and/or work-study students

Appendix A. NECHE Standard Four for Graduate Degree Programs

https://www.neche.org/resources/standards-for-accreditation/#standard_four

Graduate Degree Programs

4.20 Graduate degree programs are designed to give students a mastery of a complex field of study or professional area. Programs have an appropriate rationale; their clarity and order are visible in stated requirements, in relevant official publications, and in the learning outcomes of graduates. Learning objectives reflect the high level of complexity, specialization, and generalization inherent in advanced academic study.

4.21 Graduate programs are not offered unless resources and expectations exceed those required for an undergraduate program in a similar field.

4.22 Faculty responsible for graduate programs are sufficient by credentials, experience, number, and time commitment for the successful accomplishment of program objectives and program improvement. Research-oriented graduate programs have a preponderance of active research scholars on their faculties. Professionally-oriented programs include faculty who are experienced professionals making scholarly contributions to the development of the field.

4.23 Students admitted to graduate degree programs are demonstrably qualified for advanced academic study.

4.24 The institution's graduate programs have cohesive curricula and require scholarly and professional activities designed to advance the student substantially beyond the educational accomplishments of a baccalaureate degree program. The demands made by the institution's graduate programs on students' intellectual and creative capacities are also significantly greater than those expected at the undergraduate level; graduate programs build upon and challenge students beyond the levels of knowledge and competence acquired at the undergraduate level. The institution offering both undergraduate and graduate degree programs assesses the relationship and interdependence of the two levels and utilizes the results for improvement.

4.25 Degree requirements of the institution's graduate programs take into account specific program purposes. Research-oriented doctoral programs, including the Ph.D., and disciplinary or research-oriented master's degree programs, are designed to prepare students to generate new knowledge; they emphasize the acquisition, organization, utilization, generation, and dissemination of knowledge. Doctoral degree programs afford the student substantial mastery of the subject matter, theory, literature, and methodology of a significant field of study. They include a sequential development of research skills leading to the attainment of an independent research capacity. Students undertake original research that contributes to new knowledge in the chosen field of study. Disciplinary or research-oriented master's programs have many of the same objectives but require less sophisticated levels of mastery in the chosen field of study than does the research doctorate. While they need not require students to engage in original research, they do provide an understanding of research appropriate to the discipline and the manner in which it is conducted.

4.26 Professional, performance, or practice-oriented programs at the doctoral or master's degree levels are designed to prepare students for professional careers involving the application or transmission of existing knowledge or the development of new applications of knowledge within their field. Such programs afford the student a broad conceptual mastery of the field of professional practice through an understanding of its subject matter, literature, theory, and methods. They seek to develop the capacity to identify, evaluate, interpret, organize, and communicate knowledge, and to develop those analytical and professional skills needed to practice in and advance the profession. Instruction in relevant research methodology is provided, directed toward the appropriate application of its results as a regular part of professional practice. Programs include the sequential development of professional skills that will result in competent practitioners. Where there is a hierarchy of degrees within an area of professional study, programs differ by level as reflected in the expected sophistication, knowledge, and capacity for leadership within the profession by graduates.

4.27 Programs encompassing both research activities and professional practice define their relative emphases in program objectives that are reflected in curricular, scholarly, and program requirements.

4.28 Students who successfully complete a graduate program demonstrate that they have acquired the knowledge and developed the skills that are identified as the program's objectives.