AY 14-15 UTEP GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAM REVIEW GUIDELINES

In accordance with the requirements of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Colleges (SACSCOC), UTEP has developed a process to review the quality and effectiveness of existing degree programs for continuous improvement. In addition, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board requires each graduate degree program to engage in a self-study that provides a systematic evaluation of the quality of the program and its effectiveness in supporting UTEP’s mission. The review of the program is to be conducted every seven years. No more than 20% of UTEP’s graduate programs may be reviewed in any one year. The criteria for the review are identified in Rule §5.52 of the Texas Administrative Code. The self-study will be reviewed internally by the Academic Dean, Dean of the Graduate School, and the Provost; and externally by evaluators with subject-matter expertise who are nationally recognized for excellence in the discipline and are employed by institutions of higher education outside of Texas (see Figure 1). The timeline for the self-study process is provided in a separate document. UTEP will submit a report on the outcomes of the program review, including the evaluation of the external reviewers, recommended steps for improvement, and a response from the program to the Academic Affairs and Research Division of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

* Program Director/Department Chair are used interchangeably to represent that level of administration.

Figure 1. Graduate Degree Program Review Process.
A. GRADUATE PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

The program will be provided institutional data by the Center for Institutional Evaluation, Research and Planning regarding characteristics 1 through 21 listed below. Doctoral programs may notice that the first 18 items are identical to the 18 characteristics of doctoral programs developed by the THECB’s Graduate Education Advisory Committee to create a snapshot of all doctoral programs at public universities and health-related institutions. The 21 graduate program characteristics are:

1. **Student enrollment.** For the three most recent years, this is a headcount of students enrolled in the fall semester of each year. The program should discuss the current trend, describe its plan for increasing enrollment, and set a goal for the next seven years.

2. **Number of degrees per year.** For each of the three most recent years, this is the number of degrees awarded per academic year (fall, spring, and summer). The program should discuss the current trend and describe its plan for degree production with goals and anticipated outcomes for the next seven years.

3. **Average time to degree.** For each of the three most recent years, this is defined as the average of the graduate’s time to degree, beginning the year students matriculated with a graduate degree objective until the year they graduated. The program should discuss the current trend, describe its plan to reduce when appropriate average time to degree, setting goals and anticipated outcomes for the next seven years.

4. **Graduation rates.** For the two cohorts preceding the most recent, this is defined as the percent of a cohort of first-year students who graduated within five years for master programs and ten years for doctoral programs. The program should discuss the current trend and describe its plan for improving the graduation rate with goals and anticipated outcomes for the next seven years.

5. **Student retention/graduation rates.** For the three most recent years, this is the percentage of full-time, fall entering students in a given academic year who enroll or graduate in subsequent fall semesters. The program should discuss the current trend, describe its plan for improving retention of qualified students, and set a goal for the next seven years.

6. **Employment profile.** For each of the three most recent years combined, this is defined as the number and percent of graduates by year employed, still seeking employment, and unknown. The employment areas are academia, government, industry/professional, postdoctoral, and unknown. The program should describe the profile as well as career counseling and job placement assistance by professional staff and faculty, and discuss the success of these services. The program should discuss a plan to enhance the employment profile over the next seven years.

7. **Admissions criteria.** This is a description of admission factors described in the Graduate Catalog. The program should describe the alignment of these factors to House Bill 1641 and discuss if and how these factors have changed over time to ensure the selection of quality applicants. The program should also describe admission practices in accordance with and in support of the institution’s mission.

8. **Percentage of full-time students.** For the last three fall semesters, this is defined as the ratio of the number of full-time students and the number of students enrolled (headcount). The program should discuss the current trend, describe its plan for addressing the needs of full-time and part-time students, and set a goal and anticipated outcomes for the next seven years.

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9. **Average institutional financial support provided.** For those receiving financial support, this is the average monetary institutional support provided per full-time graduate student for the prior year from assistantships, scholarships, stipends, grants, and fellowships (does not include tuition or benefits). The program should indicate what type of support is available to its students and describe a plan to sustain or improve financial support with goals and anticipated outcomes for the next seven years.

10. **Percentage of full-time students with institutional financial support.** In the prior year, the number of full-time students with at least $1000 of annual support divided by the number of full-time students. The program should indicate current trends and describe a plan to expand and enhance support.

11. **Number of core faculty.** This is the number of full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty who teach 50 percent or more in the program or other individuals integral to the program who can direct research. The program should indicate plans for adjustments or growth and goals for the next seven years.

12. **Student-core faculty ratio.** For each of the three most recent years, this is the number of full-time student equivalent divided by the full-time faculty equivalent of core faculty. The program should indicate plans for adjustment and goals for the next seven years.

13. **Core faculty publications.** For each of the three most recent years, this is the average of the number of discipline-related refereed papers and publications, books and book chapters, juried creative/performance accomplishments, and notices of discoveries filed/patents issued per core faculty member. The program should demonstrate that core faculty members are making contributions to the field and community consistent with the program’s mission. The program should indicate plans for promoting and improving the publication of scholarly work.

14. **Core faculty external grants.** For each of the three most recent years, this is the average of the number of core faculty receiving external funds, average external funds per faculty, and total external funds per program per academic year. The program should discuss its role in assisting the institution in its goal of expanding its external funding portfolio.

15. **Faculty teaching load.** This refers to the total number of semester credit hours in organized teaching courses taught per academic year by core faculty divided by the number of core faculty. The program should discuss SCH production in terms of established and targeted faculty workloads.

16. **Faculty diversity.** This refers to the core faculty distribution by ethnicity and gender, updated when changed. The program should be able to demonstrate that it understands the importance of providing students access to faculty with diverse views and experience and should discuss recent efforts to diversify the faculty ranks.
   - **US citizens/Permanent residents:** White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, and Hawaiian/Pacific Island
   - **International:** Mexican National, Other international

17. **Student diversity.** This refers to the enrollment headcount by ethnicity/nationality and gender in program during the prior year. The program should indicate how it promotes diversity and a climate of inclusiveness through its recruitment and admissions practices and student support services.
   - **US citizens/Permanent residents:** White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, and
Hawaiian/Pacific Island

- International: Mexican National, Other international

18. Date of last external review. This is the date of the last formal external review, updated when changed. The program should briefly describe the outcomes of the last external review.

19. External program accreditation. This is the name of body and date of last program accreditation review and, if applicable, updated when changed. The program should describe the national role of the accrediting body.

20. Student publications/presentations. For the three most recent years, this refers to the number of discipline-related refereed papers/publications, juried creative/performance accomplishments, book chapters, books, and external presentations per year.

21. Graduate licensure rates (if applicable). For the three most recent years, this is the annual pass rates for programs whose graduates are required to pass a licensure exam to practice in the field.

Although these characteristics are of basic informational use, they do not fully represent the quality of graduate programs. Sections B through G provide additional information on the uniqueness of the graduate program.

B. ALIGNMENT OF PROGRAM WITH PROGRAM AND INSTITUTIONAL GOALS AND PURPOSES

Through accomplishing its mission and goals through continuous improvement, UTEP aspires to be an educational leader in a changing economic, technological, and social environment. Discuss the program’s mission alignment with UTEP’s mission and goals.

C. PROGRAM COMPARISON TO PEER PROGRAMS

Discuss the structure of the program curriculum and its duration. Compare the program’s curriculum and degree duration to those of peer programs and aspirational programs elsewhere in Texas and the nation.

D. PROGRAM FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT

Describe the quality of current instructional facilities and equipment available to the graduate program. Identify plans to enhance facilities in the next seven years.

E. PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

The program must have an administrative structure appropriate for its mission, goals and objectives. If available, provide the mission statement and describe how it influences decision-making. Describe the structure of the program’s administration indicating reporting lines up to the Dean level. Identify leadership and their qualifications. According to the Handbook of Operating Procedures, a committee of faculty members is required to accept primary responsibility for the professional graduate program. Indicate the role this body has in managing the program.
F. PROGRAM FINANCE AND RESOURCES

Discuss the budget for the program. Also describe additional major financial resources available to the program including but not limited to endowments and gift accounts.

G. FACULTY QUALIFICATIONS

Describe the expectations the program has for faculty in terms of research, scholarship, pedagogy, service and other contributions and how these expectations relate to program mission and quality. Provide a biographical sketch (of approximately 250 words) for each core faculty member, highlighting exemplary activities that have occurred in the last three academic years.

H. CONTINUED IMPROVEMENT

As part of the seven-year review cycle, a process must be followed to analyze information gathered on outcomes, which, upon assessment, would explain changes in goals and strategies to improve program quality. This process is essential because strategies for program improvement and increased degree production are the central priorities of the Coordinating Board. Describe the processes already in place and those to be implemented.

Contact Information

Questions and comments regarding these guidelines should be addressed to:

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Hyperlinks

This document contains a number of hyperlinks. For convenience, the most relevant hyperlinks for the preparation of the self-study are listed below.

- For general information regarding the THECB graduate degree program review mandate click here. For specific information regarding Rule 5.52 click here.
- For UTEP Graduate Program Characteristics click here.
- Note: Revisions to the characteristics or additional data may be requested through the Center for Institutional Evaluation, Research and Planning (CERP; Phone extension 5117).
- For House Bill 1641 describing admission factors click here.
- Programs are required to fill out an electronic template for the self-study report. To gain access to the template click here.

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