

WSU GRADUATE SCHOOL

2016 MASTER’S-ONLY PROGRAM REVIEW SUMMARY REPORT

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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|---|
| Introduction | 1 |
| Background | 1 |
| Graduate School Program Review Process | 2 |
| 2016 Master’s-Only Program Review Meetings | 3 |
| 2015-2016 Graduate and Professional Program Assessment Reports..... | 5 |
| Next Steps/Future Plans | 6 |
| Appendix A: Program Review Checklist | 7 |
| Appendix B: 2016 Graduate School Program Review Schedule | 9 |

Introduction

Systematic program review is essential for the development, growth, and sustainability of excellence in graduate degree programs. According to guidelines established by the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS), “a critical strength of reviewing graduate programs alone is the opportunity for a thorough, focused, in-depth review. With the narrower focus on graduate programs only, both the department in its self-study and the review committee in its report can give more attention to quality indicators unique to graduate education.” ([CGS Assessment and Review of Graduate Programs, 2011, p.6](#)) The review process offers a comprehensive look at the program in which faculty and academic leadership: (1) clearly state and then evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the program, (2) assess, share, and improve departmental practices, and (3) develop strategies for program growth and development.

Background

In Spring 2012, the Graduate School began its newly revised program review process with doctoral programs from all colleges in the university. The review process is an internal, objective process that involves a review of data provided by each program, a review of data provided by Institutional Research, and an evaluation of the program’s policies and practices that support graduate students. The goals of the review process are to (1) improve the training and education of graduate students; (2) ensure that graduate students are optimally prepared for careers in their field; and (3) assist in efforts to support the mission of the university. Following the review of doctoral programs, the Graduate School conducted its first review of master’s only programs in Spring 2013. Following this review, doctoral programs were

reviewed again in Spring 2015. As part of this continuing review and improvement cycle, a master's only program review was conducted by the Graduate School in Spring 2016.

Graduate School Program Review Process

In Fall 2015, the Dean of the Graduate School invited all master's-only programs to participate in the review process scheduled for Spring 2016. In preparation for program review, each graduate chair and/or program director was asked to submit the following information:

1. *Program Update* --A brief 1-2 page summary of program changes since the last program review in Spring 2013
2. *2015-16 Student Handbook* — or similar documents describing the program structure, curriculum, policies, and practices
3. *Student Annual Reviews* — for all master's-only students in the previous academic year (2014-15)
4. *List of All Current Students* — with indication of financial support (assistantships, fellowships, etc.)
5. *List of Recent Graduates* — with information describing each student's employment history since graduation from WSU

While this information was collected, the Senior Associate Dean and the Director of Graduate Assessment for the Graduate School, with assistance from Institutional Research, assembled and analyzed the following data:

1. *Programs of Study* — A sample of 10 programs of study for students in the program was reviewed for consistency, adherence to policy, use of conjoint and cooperative courses, and faculty committee composition. These documents were taken from the Graduate School's Imaging System.
2. *Catalog Courses* — Courses listed in the catalog were reviewed; conjoint and cooperative courses were noted for discussion during the review meeting.
3. *Program Profiles* — The 2015 Graduate Program Profile, compiled by Institutional Research, shows new enrollment and total enrollment from Fall 2010 through Fall 2015; degrees conferred over that time; average time to degree for full-time, part-time and overall; cohort performance (retention); and graduate assistantships by degree program and department.
4. *Fact Sheets* — Fact sheets are maintained by the program in the Graduate School's Fact Sheet database. Each fact sheet has a degree description, along with other information about admission and program requirements. On the back is a list of program faculty, along with their teaching and research interests. The database also contains additional information about faculty eligibility to participate on student committees.
5. *Graduate Committee Reports* – Reports showing program faculty chairing and serving as members of graduate student committees, generated from the Graduate School's new Graduate Research Management module in myWSU.
6. *Bylaws/List of Graduate Faculty* – Program bylaws approved by Faculty Senate and list of participating faculty were available for review and discussion.

7. *Graduate Student Survey Data* — In Spring 2014, the WSU Social and Economic Sciences Research Center (SESRC) conducted a comprehensive, university-wide survey of all graduate students regarding their perceptions of their program and faculty, mentoring, assistantships, and climate, both at the program and university level. Programs were given aggregate data for their program and average responses for the entire surveyed master's student population.

The review materials were summarized in a discussion guide ([based on the Master's Program Review Checklist – Appendix A](#)) used at the program review meeting. The discussion guide and review documents were posted on the Graduate School's [SharePoint site](#) so participants could access all of the materials prior to the review meeting.

2016 Master's-Only Program Review Meetings

Review meetings were scheduled for the Graduate School dean, associate deans, and director of graduate assessment to meet with the department chair, program director, and program coordinator, as well as interested program faculty, for each master's-only program. College and branch campus administrators were also invited to attend the meetings. See [Appendix B: Spring 2016 Graduate Program Review Schedule](#) for a list of the review meetings.

The reviews created an opportunity for program faculty and administrators to focus on key issues impacting graduate students and their experience in master's only programs. The review process stimulated discussions about questions such as: What are the unique features of our master's-only programs, and how are they meeting student needs? What changes were made by program leaders since the last review? Is the program teaching and training students effectively? Does the program meet institutional goals? Do the policies of the Graduate School provide enough flexibility for the program to be administered efficiently? Are faculty involved in creating and implementing the program's vision? In addition, the program reviews pointed out program strengths and weaknesses and helped faculty to identify strategies for program improvement and enhancement, particularly in assessment practices.

Several programs had made substantive changes to their curricula and/or graduate programs while other programs were restructuring or experiencing changes in key leadership and/or faculty positions. The review meetings followed the discussion guide prepared by the Graduate School including the following topics:

1. Recruitment and retention
 - a. Discussed low program enrollments, student admissions, and recruitment strategies
 - b. Discussed part-time vs. full-time program enrollments and possible retention and time-to-degree issues; recommended that programs consider using annual reviews and exit interviews to collect information from students who do not complete the program
2. Program quality and student outcomes
 - a. Examined programs of study, course loads, and program requirements
 - b. Discussed thesis and non-thesis options, degree concentrations, and availability of courses in master's-only programs
 - c. Reviewed student internships and preceptor processes and areas to improve student experience and learning throughout the curriculum
 - d. Discussed annual review process for students in fast-tracked master's programs; recommended that programs collect information from students with exit interviews,

- post-graduation surveys, and alumni/employer surveys; shared good practices and recommended improvements to student annual review process for two year programs
- e. Shared Spring 2014 Graduate Student Survey results with programs including: academic quality, availability of courses, writing and preparation to work collaboratively, professional development, mentoring and advising, and climate issues related to the program and the university; discussed changes for future surveys to accommodate the needs of master's only students
 - f. Discussed placement data collected by the program and shared results from the Graduate School's placement data project; recommended that programs use placement data for program assessment, recruitment, and planning.
3. Policies and procedures
- a. Confirmed with graduate chairs and directors that their program bylaws were working well and suggested updates as needed [\[Link\]](#)
 - b. Advised programs on the new Graduate School policy developed for professionally oriented programs; recommended that some programs consider whether they need the additional flexibility this new policy offers to programs with professionally developed curricula and capstone-type projects [\[Link\]](#)
 - c. Discussed exceptions to policy, and technological advances that are being developed to reduce departmental and Graduate School workloads
 - d. Reviewed program materials for students; recommended that programs develop and maintain comprehensive resources for master's students including: student handbooks, departmental websites, degree requirements, and student annual review forms
 - e. Recommended that programs without student handbooks either develop them or provide similar information on their website; information should be updated annually
 - f. Recommended that programs keep their fact sheets up-to-date including: program descriptions, degree requirements, faculty research interests, and lists of faculty associated with the program
4. Interdisciplinary, multi-campus, and online programs
- a. Discussed online teaching and learning and policies and procedures
 - b. Discussed need for academic rigor and consistency in curricula across campuses and programs
5. Program growth, development, and improvement
- a. Discussed changes in department chair/program director position
 - b. Discussed changes in faculty positions
 - c. Discussed opportunities for program growth
 - d. Discussed development of new degrees, online degrees, and/or degree concentrations
 - e. Highlighted improvements that programs made based on their assessment report and program update
6. Assessment planning, program practices, and use of assessment data for improvement:
- a. Recommended changes to assessment plan to reflect current assessment practices and use of assessment data by faculty
 - b. Recommended that student learning outcomes be published in graduate student handbooks and be provided to students on the program website to meet NWCCU accreditation requirements
 - c. Discussed use of data collection matrix to align student learning outcomes with data sources and review of assessment evidence

- d. Reviewed recent graduate program assessment reports and feedback from the Graduate School; recommended changes to improve the collection, management, analysis, and use of assessment data to improve student learning outcomes
- e. Discussed state and professional accreditation requirements for selected programs
- f. Discussed assessment requirements for online programs; recommended that programs collect, disaggregate, and review assessment evidence with faculty on a regular basis as these programs develop
- g. Discussed assessment reporting requirements and deadlines for graduate programs; explained relationship to NWCCU accreditation

2015-2016 Graduate and Professional Program Assessment Reports

As part of the review process, all master's-only degree programs were reminded to submit a 2015-2016 Graduate and Professional Program Assessment Report, in which faculty could report recent assessment activities including: changes to assessment plans, data collection and analysis, use of assessment data to improve student learning outcomes, and specific examples of program improvements. A template was created by the Graduate School to assist faculty and facilitate the reporting process. Graduate chairs and program directors were asked to submit their graduate assessment report and a current copy of the assessment plan to the Graduate School by June 1, 2016. The assessment reports and plans will be analyzed, and the results will be shared with graduate programs, collegiate deans, branch campuses, and academic leadership in Fall 2016.

Next Steps/Future Plans

The program reviews have facilitated new discussions and perspectives on graduate education and the quality of master's degree programs at WSU. Building on this experience, the Graduate School is considering the following next steps in the program review and assessment process:

1. Continue with the five-year schedule for graduate program review and assessment that is aligned with the academic year and NWCCU accreditation requirements; see schedule below

| | Graduate Program Reviews | Program Profiles | Graduate Student Survey | Graduate Assessment Reports (narrative) | Graduate Assessment Updates (PDF form) | Graduate Advisory Committee Meetings | NWCCU Accreditation Schedule (7 year cycle) |
|-------------|--------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------------|---|
| Spring 2013 | X | | | | | X | Year 3 |
| Fall 2013 | R | X | | | X,R | X | |
| Spring 2014 | X | | X | X | | X | |
| Fall 2014 | R | X | R | R | | X | |
| Spring 2015 | X | | | | X | X | Year 5 |
| Fall 2015 | R | X | | | R | X | |
| Spring 2016 | X | | | X | | X | |
| Fall 2016 | R | X | | R | | X | |
| Spring 2017 | X | | X | | X | X | Year 7 |
| Fall 2017 | R | X | R | | R | X | |

X = program review or assessment activity; R = Graduate School report

2. Conduct follow-up meetings with programs that need assistance with their assessment process and/or preparing their 2016 Graduate and Professional Program Assessment Report
3. Develop assessment resources for graduate and professional programs including the following:
 - a. Web tools, templates, guidelines, and resources for graduate and professional program assessment
 - b. Graduate School SharePoint site and WSU website
4. Provide guidance to assist faculty and staff in their assessment of online, multi-campus, and interdisciplinary degree programs
5. Analyze and disseminate results from the 2016 Graduate and Professional Program Assessment Reports and Assessment Plans to faculty, staff, and academic leadership
 - a. Compile assessment reports and plans submitted by graduate and professional programs
 - b. Write individual response letters for graduate and professional programs with feedback about their assessment reports and plans
 - c. Write summary report on the status of graduate and professional program assessment with university-level analysis
 - d. Distribute and provide access to graduate assessment materials on the Graduate School SharePoint site and WSU website
6. Continue to offer professional development workshops for faculty and staff on graduate program assessment and using assessment data for program improvement
7. Coordinate university-wide program review and assessment activities with collegiate deans and branch campus leadership through the Graduate Advisory Committee and other outreach

Appendix A: Program Review Checklist

PROGRAM REVIEW-Checklist: _____

- ☐ New and total enrollment numbers—Trend should be increasing for new and total enrollments (for programs that need to grow) or stable total enrollments (for programs that have reached saturation)
- ☐ Graduate School Recruitment Information
- ☐ Number of credits per semester (10-12 is the norm)
- ☐ Number of degrees conferred—Increase in degrees conferred per year as enrollments increase
- ☐ Time to degree—varies per discipline, but should be consistent with average time to degree for discipline
- ☐ Retention rate (cohort performance)—Decrease number of students who leave without the doctorate degree; for master's programs, numbers who leave without the master's degree
- ☐ Number of students funded by program—on assistantships, fellowships, and scholarships
- ☐ Number of program faculty chairing student committees
- ☐ Diversity of students in program—increase gender/race/ethnicity of students in program
- ☐ Access to program/courses/faculty (campus locations) based on resources
- ☐ Placement of graduates (departments need to tract this data to maintain contact with graduates)
- ☐ Graduate School placement data

Graduate School Policy—Bylaws, Factsheet, Handbook, Survey, Annual Reviews, Programs of Study, Exceptions

- ☐ Program Bylaws and Updated Graduate Faculty List
- ☐ Updated Program Fact Sheet
- ☐ Graduate Student Handbook for program
- ☐ Student Learning Outcomes in handbook and on program website
- ☐ Appropriately staffed student committees
- ☐ Minimal exceptions to policy
- ☐ Annual evaluation for graduate students
- ☐ Graduate Assistant Effort Certification
- ☐ Graduate Student Survey results

NWCCU Requirements

- ☐ Assessment plan—Every program must have a complete assessment plan implemented.
- ☐ Student learning outcomes are published and available to students (handbook, web, other)
- ☐ Assessment of student learning outcomes—program demonstrates use of assessment data to improve program results

Comments/Observations/Recommendations:

- ☐ ...

Appendix B: 2016 Graduate School Program Review Schedule

College of Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resource Sciences

- MS in Agriculture – March 3, 2016
- MA in Apparel, Merchandising, and Textiles – Mar. 10, 2016

College of Arts and Sciences

- Master's in Fine Arts (MFA) – Mar. 11, 2016
- MA in Foreign Languages and Cultures (Spanish Program) – Feb. 24, 2016
- MA in Music – Mar. 23, 2016
- Master's in Public Affairs (Vancouver) – April 1, 2016
- MS in Statistics – Mar. 30, 2016

College of Business

- Master's in Accounting (MAcc) – Mar. 25, 2016

College of Communication

- MA in Strategic Communication – May 25, 2016

College of Education

- MA in Sport Management – Mar. 9, 2016
- MIT in Elementary and Secondary Education programs – Mar. 31, 2016

College of Engineering

- MS in Computer Science (Vancouver) – April 1, 2016
- Master's in Engineering and Technology Management (METM) – Feb. 18, 2016
- MS in Mechanical Engineering (Vancouver) – April 1, 2016
- PSM in Electrical Power Engineering – Feb. 26, 2016

College of Medicine

- MS in Speech and Hearing Sciences – April 21, 2016

College of Nursing

- Master's in Health Policy and Administration (MHPA) – April 21, 2016

College of Veterinary Medicine

- PSM in Molecular Biosciences (PSM-MB) – Mar. 4, 2016

School of Design and Construction

- Master's in Architecture (MArch) – Feb. 25, 2016
- MA in Interior Design – Feb. 25, 2016
- MS in Landscape Architecture – Feb. 25, 2016

WSU Spokane

- MS in Coordinated Program in Dietetics, Nutrition, and Exercise Physiology – April 21, 2016