

Ohio Board of Regents
REGENTS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ON
GRADUATE STUDY
Guidelines and Procedures for Review and Approval
of
Graduate Degree Programs

Revised and Approved by RACGS

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INTRODUCTION

The Ohio Board of Regents (OBR) has been charged by the General Assembly with the responsibility to approve, approve with stipulations, or disapprove all new degrees and new degree programs to be offered by institutions of higher education in the State of Ohio. As a part of the process needed to fulfill this general charge, the Chancellor of the OBR has delegated the responsibility for the assessment of new graduate degree programs to the Regents' Advisory Committee on Graduate Study (RACGS), which is composed of the Graduate Deans of the Ohio public universities. Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) and the University of Dayton (UD), which have extensive doctoral programs, were invited to join and are included in RACGS. Graduate program evaluation by RACGS leads to a formal recommendation and report from RACGS to the Chancellor of the OBR. Responsibility for the final program decision, however, rests with the Chancellor of the OBR. Program assessment and evaluation are based on the criteria given in this document. Private institutions of higher learning that are not included in RACGS are encouraged to avail themselves of the very same processes outlined below.

Any institution of higher education utilizing this process for introducing a new degree program shall submit an institutional proposal for program development to RACGS with a copy to the Regent's staff following the procedures outlined in the *Program Development Plan* section. If the institution decides that a formal proposal for a new graduate program is appropriate, then the *Full Proposal* section shall be followed.

All new degree proposals shall provide information in reference to the criteria given in Part A. A single approval procedure shall be required of all institutions for all new graduate degree programs.

The purposes of this document are: 1) to establish procedures for the review and approval of new graduate degree program proposals (**Part A**); 2) to set forth guidelines for universities to gain approval to offer different types of graduate degree programs (**Part B**); 3) to establish regulations for suspending graduate programs (**Part C**) and 4) to provide guidelines for the review of graduate programs (**Part D**).

DEFINITIONS

1. **Graduate degree program** refers to any focused course of study that leads to recognition or an award for completion of a prescribed course of study beyond the baccalaureate degree in an institution of higher education evidenced by the receipt of a diploma as differentiated from a certificate. The degrees of Doctor of Medicine, Doctor of Dental Surgery, Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, Doctor of Optometry, and Doctor of Jurisprudence are not covered by these guidelines.
2. **Entry level graduate program** is defined as a program of advanced study which admits: a) post-baccalaureate students into a master's or doctoral degree program who do not possess undergraduate academic preparation in the specific area of advanced study or a closely related area, or b) postsecondary students directly into an extended master's or doctoral program where they first receive the customary baccalaureate experience in the given discipline or professional area. Standard graduate education in a discipline or professional area requires entry through a baccalaureate program. Therefore, if an initial knowledge base

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equivalent to the respective undergraduate degree is required for entry into a given graduate program, it cannot be considered entry level. Entry level graduate programs are expected to fully reflect the level of intellectual process and knowledge characteristic of standard high quality graduate programs. For this purpose specific additional program quality questions are posed under Part A, Section A.II.B.1.

3. **Minority student** refers to traditionally underrepresented American citizens including the following designations: African-American, a person not of Hispanic origin coming from any of the Black racial groups of Africa; Hispanic, a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race; American Indian or Alaskan Native, a person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition; and Asian or Pacific Islander, a person having origins in any of the original people of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, or the Pacific Islands, an area including, for example, China, Japan, Korea, the Philippine Islands, and Samoa. There are disciplines in which women should also be considered as an underrepresented group.
4. **Discipline** refers to a recognized body of knowledge such as chemistry, psychology, history, or sociology.
5. **Department** refers to the organizational unit for administering one or more disciplines.
6. **Field** refers to a major subdivision of a discipline and is characterized by a particular feature such as organic or analytical chemistry.
7. **Research graduate degree program** involves preparation to carry out significant research and to discover new knowledge, whether the particular field of learning is pure or applied. The recognized graduate degree titles which correspond with successful completion of a research graduate degree program include Master of Arts (M.A.), Master of Science (M.S.), and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) (see Example Table 1).
8. **Professional graduate degree program** implies preparation for professional and/or clinical practice. Generally, professional graduate degrees represent terminal degrees in their field. The resulting professional activity usually involves the giving of service to the public in the chosen field. The completion of preparation for professional practice is recognized by the award of the professional master's or doctoral degree. The following master's degree titles are representative: Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.), Master of Public Administration (M.P.A.), Master of Occupational Therapy (M.O.T.), Master of Public Health (M.P.H.), Master of Social Work (M.S.W.), and Master of Architecture (M.Arch). Representative professional doctoral degree titles include: Doctor of Audiology (Au.D), Doctor of Management (DM), Doctor of Education (Ed.D.), Doctor of Physical Therapy (D.P.T.), Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) and Doctor of Psychology (Psy.D.). "Intermediate" professional graduate degrees signifying work beyond the professional masters yet remaining short of the professional doctoral degree, such as the educational specialist degree (Ed.S) are

also appropriate professional credentials in certain fields. Professional graduate degree programs are expected to fully reflect the level of intellectual process and knowledge characteristic of standard high quality graduate programs. However, generally these are not research graduate degrees (see Example Table 1). For this purpose specific additional program quality questions relating to the admission criteria, field experience, faculty experience, faculty qualifications, accreditation, curriculum, time to degree, and research are posed under Part A, Section A.II.B.1.b (see Example Table 1).

9. **Subdisciplinary program** refers to a focused program based upon one or more fields within a discipline. (See Example Table 1)
10. **Interdisciplinary program** refers to two or more interrelated disciplines or fields combined to constitute a program; for example, American Studies, Geopolitics, Biomedical Engineering. (See Example Table 1)

TABLE 1: Examples Program Types and Program Names

	Disciplinary	Subdisciplinary	Interdisciplinary
Research:	Ph.D. in Psychology	Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology	Ph.D. in Psycholinguistics
Professional:	Doctor of Psychology	Doctor of Counseling Psychology	Doctor of Psychology Psycholinguistics

11. **Short Courses and Workshops:** Generally, courses that meet for less than a full term (i.e., short courses and workshops) limit the opportunity for student thinking and understanding to develop and mature over time. Courses that require too little work outside the classroom limit the opportunity for self-directed learning to occur. At the same time, however, for some types of subject matter, advantages can accrue from the intensity resulting from offering the instruction in a time-shortened format. In these circumstances, it is appropriate for graduate credit to be awarded for courses of less than a full term's duration.

However, graduate credit should only be awarded for courses in a time-shortened format when the amount of learning is at least equivalent to that which would occur if the courses were offered for the same number of credit hours over the course of a full term. It is the responsibility of each institution offering short courses and workshops for graduate credit to ensure that the limitations imposed on the opportunities for (i) student thinking and understanding to develop and mature over time and (ii) self-directed learning to occur are addressed in a way which ensures that the learning taking place is at least equivalent quantitatively and qualitatively to that which would occur if the course were offered for the same number of credit hours over the course of a full term.

GRADUATE CREDIT

Graduate education involves a greater depth of learning, increased specialization, and a more advanced level of instruction than undergraduate education. Selected faculty instruct carefully selected students in courses or clinical experiences that emphasize both student self-direction and dynamic interaction with the subject matter, the instructor, and other students. Interaction involves more than simply the transmission of what is known. It focuses on the generation of new knowledge through research and/or the application of knowledge to new areas of study.

All courses offered for graduate credit, regardless of whether they are offered on- or off-campus, should meet the following criteria:

1. Course Level

Graduate courses build upon an undergraduate knowledge base. The approval process for all graduate courses should require a clear indication of the knowledge base the course presupposes, and how the course goes beyond that base. In the event that a graduate course is co-listed with an advanced undergraduate course (as is appropriate in some cases), the approval process should require clearly defined expectations of graduate students that go well beyond the expectations of the undergraduates in the course.

2. Learning

Graduate courses involve dynamic interaction with the subject matter, the instructor and other students. Although this can be accomplished through a variety of instructional approaches, all graduate courses should involve learning both during and outside of classroom sessions, as well as dynamic interchanges with the instructor and other students. Offering a formula for graduate education is not appropriate; however the work expected at the graduate level should exceed that expected at the undergraduate level both qualitatively and quantitatively.

3. Faculty

Faculty teaching graduate courses should possess the terminal degree and contribute to the knowledge base of the discipline they teach through scholarship, as exemplified by creative activity and/or publication. It is the responsibility of each institution offering graduate courses to ensure that only fully qualified faculty teach graduate courses.

4. Students

Institutions offering graduate courses should have a formal admission process that selects only those post-baccalaureate students who have been highly successful as undergraduates for the pursuit of graduate work. It may be appropriate to allow qualified students who possess other attributes which suggest that they will be successful at graduate work to attempt a limited number of graduate courses on a trial basis.

GRADUATE PROGRAM CURRICULAR REVISIONS

Thoughtful revision of graduate program curricula can be an important part of the necessary evolutionary process of quality assurance, as well as an effective mechanism for maintaining program quality. Graduate program directors are encouraged to review their curricular offerings periodically to assess curricular relevance with respect to recent developments in the field or discipline. The revision of graduate program curricula, however, is of more general concern when its extent goes beyond that dictated by the development of new knowledge in a field or discipline; i.e., when a new degree program is created under the guise of curricular revision. If changes in the program curriculum (in contrast to the method of delivery) equal or exceed 50% based on the total number of credit hours in the degree program as published in the current graduate catalog or bulletin, the institution will need to use the new program approval process described in Part A, below.

The Graduate Dean (or equivalent administrative officer) at each institution is responsible for determining whether or not a new degree program is created when any existing graduate program undergoes a revision of its curriculum.

PART A.

PROCEDURES FOR THE REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF NEW GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAM PROPOSALS

Any institution of higher education desiring to introduce a new degree, a new degree program or a significant revision of an existing program as defined above, shall have the degree or program evaluated through the following peer-review process. The process is to be driven by the institution proposing the new degree, and involves the submission to and evaluation by RACGS member institutions, of a Program Development Plan (PDP) followed by a Full Proposal (FP), and culminating in the submission of a Response Document and formal presentation of the Full Proposal to RACGS members. Under certain circumstances institutions may be able to forego the preparation of a Response Document and the formal presentation of the Full Proposal to RACGS members (see Part A., Section C).

I. PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT PLAN

A. Preparation and Submission of the Program Development Plan

Any institution of higher education desiring to introduce a new degree or new degree program shall submit a *Program Development Plan* (PDP) to RACGS with a copy to the Regent's staff prior to formal application for degree authority. The Program Development Plan should be submitted at the earliest time consistent with the availability of the information requested below and as early as possible within the institutional approval processes. A separate PDP will be submitted for each new degree program proposed.

The PDP should address, in a summary narrative of no more than five pages (exclusive of appendices, which should be kept as brief as possible), the following concerns:

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1. Designation of the new degree program, rationale for that designation, definition of the focus of the program and a brief description of its disciplinary purpose and significance.
2. Description of the proposed curriculum.
3. Administrative arrangements for the proposed program: department and school or college involved.
4. Evidence of need for the new degree program, including the opportunities for employment of graduates. This section should also address other similar programs in the state addressing this need and potential duplication of programs in the state and region.
5. Prospective enrollment.
6. Special efforts to enroll and retain underrepresented groups in the given discipline.
7. Availability and adequacy of the faculty and facilities available for the new degree program.
8. Need for additional facilities and staff and the plans to meet this need.
9. Projected additional costs associated with the program and evidence of institutional commitment and capacity to meet these costs.

B. Review of the PDP by RACGS Member Institutions

Members of RACGS will review the PDP and seek the advice of campus experts in the program area. The RACGS member institutions shall review the PDP and provide a response on the following issues:

1. Market need for the proposed program and the distinctions or differences between the proposed program and other similar programs across the state;
2. Opportunities for collaboration with the RACGS member's own institution;
3. Concerns with substantive elements of the proposed degree program; and
4. Suggestions that might help the submitting institution strengthen the proposal or refine its focus.

The purpose of the review of the PDP is to provide the proposing institution with an assessment of the probability that the new degree or program would be approved by RACGS upon submission of a Full Proposal, and to highlight initial areas of concern that should be addressed in the Full Proposal should the proposing institution decide to move forward.

Each RACGS member will provide, via e-mail, written comments, both from the campus expert(s) as well as the RACGS member's own summary evaluation, to all RACGS members with a copy to the Regents' staff, within six weeks of receipt of the PDP.

Based on the RACGS reviews and their own assessment, the proposing institution will decide whether the PDP should be expanded to a Full Proposal and be submitted for RACGS review. Universities will employ institutionally approved processes for Full Proposal development and will submit such Full Proposals to RACGS, with a copy to Regents' staff for further consideration as outlined in Part A, Section II of this document. The transmittal of the Full Proposal to OBR is the formal application for degree authority.

II. FULL PROPOSALS

A. Preparation and Submission of the Full Proposal

A Full Proposal (FP) for new degree programs is an expanded version of the PDP. The expansion should include: 1) clarification and revisions based upon the reviews of the program development plan (PDP); 2) any additional information needed to address the review criteria for new programs (see Part A, Section II.B); and 3) appendices containing such items as faculty *vitae*, course descriptions, needs surveys, and consultants' reports.

A FP must be submitted to RACGS member institutions within two years of the submission of the PDP. If the FP is not prepared and submitted within this two-year limit, the proposing institution must re-initiate the process by submitting a new PDP.

B. Review of the FP by RACGS Member Institutions

FPS for new graduate programs will be sent by the initiating institution to all RACGS members with a copy provided to the Regents' staff. Evaluation of a FP for a new graduate program by RACGS involves the following elements: 1) consideration of written comments provided by each RACGS member, 2) preparation and assessment of the response to these comments by the institution submitting the proposal, 3) a formal presentation of the proposal by the initiating institution to RACGS followed by a full discussion of the proposal in the larger context of graduate education, and 4) a formal vote by RACGS, by written ballot, advising the Ohio Board of Regents whether the program should be approved.

Reviewing RACGS members will refer FPS to experts within their institutions, provided that the Graduate Dean (or equivalent administrative officer) of that institution is convinced, beyond reasonable doubt, that the person(s) to whom the proposal is referred is (are) genuinely expert in the program area which is addressed. The peer expert(s) will provide the Graduate Dean (or equivalent administrative officer) of their institution with written comments within six weeks of receipt of the FP reviewing the following points, which are expected to be addressed in the proposal:

1. Academic Quality

Competency, experience and number of faculty, and adequacy of students, curriculum, computational resources, library, laboratories, equipment, and other physical facilities, needed to mount the program.

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- a) In addition to this analysis, for **entry level graduate degree programs**, academic quality assessment will focus on the adequacy of the answers provided in response to the following questions:
- i. Is the program distinctly different, both conceptually and qualitatively, from the undergraduate degree programs in the same or related disciplines? If so, is there a detailed listing of the specific differences?
 - ii. Does the program emphasize the theoretical basis of the discipline as expressed in the methods of inquiry and ways of knowing in the discipline?
 - iii. Does the program place emphasis on professional decision making and teach the use of critical analysis in problem solving?
 - iv. Is the program designed to educate students broadly so that they have an understanding of the major issues and concerns in the discipline or professional area?
 - v. Is there an adequate description of the required culminating experience such as an exit project (which would not necessarily be a research experience)?
 - vi. Does the proposed program identify faculty resources appropriate for the research component of the program?
 - vii. Does the program curriculum offer what students need to know for competence at the expected level of professional expertise?
 - viii. What plans have been made to address standards and guidelines for professional accreditation, if applicable? What are the core courses required for the program?
- b) In addition to the analysis given in the first paragraph above under Part A, Section II.B. 1.a for **professional graduate degree programs**, academic quality assessment will also focus on the adequacy of the answers provided in response to the following questions:
- i. What admission criteria, in addition to the traditionally required transcripts, standardized test scores, letter of recommendation, and personal statements of purpose, are relevant to assess the potential for academic and professional success of prospective students? Will there be special consideration of student experience and extant practical skills within the admission process? If so, please elaborate.
 - ii. Is field/clinical experience subsumed within the academic experience? If so, how does that experience relate to the academic goals of the professional graduate degree program? Provide a description of the involvement of supervisory personnel. Describe the nature of the oversight of the field/clinical experience by the academic department. Provide an outline of the anticipated student activities as well as student requirements.

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- iii. Are the faculty qualifications associated with the professional graduate degree program appropriate for such faculty? Provide the specific qualifications for such faculty.
 - iv. How does accreditation by the appropriate professional organization relate to the academic curriculum and experience outlined in the program plan? Describe the specific aspects of the program plan, if any, that are necessary to achieve professional accreditation. Is completion of the degree program required for professional accreditation in the field?
 - v. How are theory and practice integrated within the curriculum?
 - vi. What is the national credit hour norm for this degree program in your field? How was this norm derived? Is the number of credit hours required for graduation influenced by mandated professional experiences? If so, how?
 - vii. Describe the required culminating academic experience and how it will contribute to the enhancement of the student's professional preparation.
- c) The Special Case of Professional Science Master's Programs (PSMs)
- i. There is a special category of professional graduate degree programs recognized by the Council of Graduate Schools and the National Professional Science Master's Association. Such programs can be granted the designation "Professional Science Master's" or, "PSMs."
 - ii. The criteria for obtaining such a designation can be found at: <http://www.sciencemasters.com/Default.aspx?tabid=116>
 - iii. For informational purposes only, do you contemplate seeking such recognition as a PSM from the National Professional Science Master's Association? Is the program going to be seeking such recognition?

2. Need

Examples of potential metrics of program need include:

- a) Student interest and demand
Potential enrollment;
Ability to maintain the critical mass of students.
- b) Institutional need
Plan for overall development of graduate programs at the proposing institutions.
- c) Societal demand
Intellectual development;
Advancement of the discipline;
Employment opportunities.

- d). Scope
Local, regional, and national needs;
International need.

3. Access and Retention of Underrepresented Groups

- a) Plan to ensure recruitment, retention and graduation of underrepresented groups within the discipline.
- b) Provide as background a general assessment of:
 - i. Institution and departmental profiles of total enrollment and graduate student enrollment of underrepresented groups within the discipline; and
 - ii. Compare underrepresented groups degree recipients from the department and university at all levels compared to **national norms**. Supply data by group where available.

4. Statewide Alternatives

- a) Programs available in other institutions;
- b) Appropriateness of specific locale for the program; and
- c) Opportunities for inter-institutional collaboration.
- d) Institutional Priority and Costs
 - i. Support and commitment of the proposing institution's central administration.
 - ii. Adequacy of available resources committed for the initiation of the program.

5. External Support

- a) Community, foundation, governmental, and other resources.

C. Preparation of Response Document and Formal Presentation

Written comments from each RACGS institution, consisting of the campus reviewers' comments along with the RACGS member's summary evaluation will be forwarded electronically to the Graduate Dean (or equivalent administrative officer) at the proposal-submitting institution with copies being forwarded to Regents' staff and other RACGS members within six weeks of the receipt of the FP.

When no review raises any questions about or objections to the proposed program, the proposing institution may request that the chair of RACGS, with the concurrence of the Regents' staff, conduct a mail ballot to approve the program, thereby waiving the preparation of the Response Document and the formal hearing. A Fiscal Impact Form must be prepared for circulation with the mail ballot. Any objection to the approval by mail will necessitate the preparation of a Response Document and a formal presentation at a future RACGS meeting.

If a review or reviews raise questions about but no serious objections to the proposed program, the proposing institution may request that the chair of RACGS, with the

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concurrence of the Regents' staff, conduct a mail ballot to approve the program by including a Response Document with the ballot. Any objection to the approval by mail will necessitate a formal presentation. A Fiscal Impact Form must also be prepared for circulation with the mail ballot. The FIS form can be accessed at:
<https://www.ohiohighered.org/racgs>

When reviews raise significant questions about or objections to the proposed program, the proposing institution will prepare a Response Document and plan to make a formal presentation to RACGS members.

1. After receipt of the review comments on the FP, the proposing institution will develop a written response to the reviewers' individual comments called a Response Document. Copies of the Response Document are to be sent to all RACGS members as well as to Regents Staff.
2. The Response Document must include an OBR Fiscal Impact Statement and should be used to demonstrate institutional plans for the judicious use of resources in terms of physical plant, personnel, and student support, and appropriate institutional commitment of resources to the new program.
3. The chair of RACGS, in concert with OBR and the proposal-submitting institution, will schedule a formal presentation of the proposal at a forthcoming RACGS meeting. The response document from the proposing institution must be received by the RACGS members at least ten (10) days advance of this meeting.
4. After presentation and discussion of the proposal with representatives of the proposal-submitting institution, RACGS will by written ballot vote on a motion as to the disposition of the program as a recommendation to the Ohio Board of Regents. Ballots shall include the name of the Institution and the vote of that institution ("yes" or "no") on the motion. Recommendations for approval will require an affirmative vote from two-thirds of all members of RACGS in attendance, with the stipulation that no program will be recommended for approval with less than 8 "yes" votes. No member in attendance may abstain from voting. Absentee or proxy votes cannot be utilized to constitute the two-thirds majority or the required one-half of all RACGS members voting in the affirmative. A summary of the vote and the RACGS discussion of the proposal will be presented to the Board by Regents' staff. Responsibility for the final decision rests with the Chancellor and the OBR.
5. Occasionally, RACGS may find that, even after the review and discussion with representatives of the proposal-submitting institution, substantive issues remain unresolved. In such unusual cases, and given a two-thirds affirmative vote, RACGS may recommend that, prior to the formal RACGS vote, the Chancellor convene a panel of nationally recognized experts to review the program proposal and to conduct a site visit. The charge to the panel of outside experts shall focus on the specific unresolved issues identified by RACGS but need not be restricted to those specific issues. After the written report of the consultants has been received and

distributed to RACGS members, RACGS will review the new information and forward a formal recommendation to the Chancellor.

6. The final decision of the Board will be accomplished as expeditiously as possible. If an unforeseen delay is encountered, the Chancellor's office will inform RACGS of the reason(s) for the delay as well as the probable duration of the delay.

III. TYPES OF PROGRAM APPROVAL

A. Full Approval

RACGS may recommend program approval without any associated conditions or provisions if adequate academic strength and quality are apparent.

B. Contingent Approval

Program approval may be recommended with the stipulation that certain institutional resources be secured prior to program initiation. The institution will notify RACGS and Regents' staff through its representative on RACGS that the required resources have been put in place. RACGS will determine if all contingencies have been satisfied prior to the formal recommendation for program initiation.

C. Provisional Approval

In the case of proposed programs that are academically unique because of novelty in structure, content or instructional delivery format, or because of other factors, RACGS may recommend *provisional approval*:

1. The recommendation for provisional approval will be for a specified period of time.
2. At the completion of the provisional period, Regents' staff will ask the institution to prepare a report for submission to RACGS and the Board of Regents. The report will address the following areas, as well as any others specified in the provisional approval resolution:
 - a) General effectiveness of the program in meeting its stated goals.
 - b) Effectiveness of academic control mechanisms.
 - c) Professional activities of the faculty associated with the program.
 - d) Continuing availability of various support services.
 - e) Overall academic productivity of the program.
3. All members of RACGS will receive and read this report. The reports may be referred to experts within their institutions for written comments in accordance with the criteria cited above.
4. Written reviewer's comments will be forwarded to the Graduate Dean (or equivalent administrative officer) at the report-submitting institution with copies to Regents' staff and other RACGS members. In most instances, the

report-submitting institution may wish to provide a written response to the reviewers' comments. Copies of these responses are to be sent to all RACGS members.

5. The Chair of RACGS, in concert with Regents' staff and the report-submitting institution, will schedule a formal review of the proposal at a regular monthly meeting. Written responses to reviewers' comments must be presented well in advance of this meeting.
6. After review and discussion of the report with representatives of the report-submitting institution, RACGS will forward to the Board a recommendation for one of the following actions:
 - a) Full approval of the program, with or without modifications.
 - b) Continuation of the provisional status of the program for a finite period, not to exceed five (5) years.
 - c) Withdrawal of program approval, provided that motions for full approval or continuation of the provisional status for the program, under Section III.C.6 a. and b. above, do not receive the necessary recommendation for approval.

IV. GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES FOR CHANGING DEGREE NAMES, TITLES AND DESIGNATIONS

Definitions

- A. **Degree name** refers to the name of the degree awarded (i.e., Ph.D., Doctor of, Master of Arts, Master of Science, and Master of ...) and requires a full proposal and full review to RACGS and Chancellor's staff.
- B. **Degree title** indicates the field in which the degree is awarded (e.g., Physics, Education, Public Administration, etc.) and requires the completion of a change request form for a 'Degree Title Change.' The form will be circulated to RACGS and Chancellor's staff.
- C. **Degree designation** is given by the combined name and title of the degree (e.g., Ph.D. in History, Master of Public Health, Master of Science in Computer Science, etc.) and requires a full proposal and a full review to RACGS and Chancellor's staff.

A. Degree Name Change

When an institution wishes to replace a single degree name with another at the same level (e.g., Master of Arts with Master of Science or a professional degree), the RACGS Guidelines and Procedures for Review and Approval of Graduate Degree Programs must be followed. Generally speaking, replacing a professional degree with a research degree requires more extensive documentation and justification than does replacing a research degree with a professional degree. When an institution seeks to change a research degree to a professional degree name, and the desired change requires neither curricular modifications nor additional staff, and will not affect enrollments significantly, a full proposal may be submitted to RACGS without undergoing the preliminary

Program Development Plan review process as given in the Guidelines and Procedures for Review and Approval of Graduate Degree Programs.

B. Degree Title Change

When an institution desires to replace a single obsolescent degree title with a more appropriate one, the completion of a change request form for a 'Degree Title Change' is required and can be accessed at: <https://www.ohiohighered.org/racgs>. The form will state why the title change is being proposed and contain sufficient information to justify the change. The request is reviewed by the Chancellor's Office and the members of RACGS. Although replacing a disciplinary degree (e.g., Ph.D. in Psychology) with a subdisciplinary degree (e.g., Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology) may constitute a title change, replacing a subdisciplinary degree with a disciplinary degree does not. The latter situation requires appropriate review as a new program proposal under the *RACGS Guidelines and Procedures for Review and Approval of Graduate Degree Programs*. In unclear cases, the Chancellor's Office makes the final determination of what constitutes a title change.

C. Degree Designation Change

When an institution seeks to *create* a separate degree designation for a specialization currently offered within an *existing degree without eliminating the original degree designation*, and the desired change requires no additional staff and will not affect enrollments significantly but may involve minor curricular modifications from the original specialization, a full proposal may be submitted to RACGS without undergoing the preliminary Program Development Plan review process as given in the *Guidelines and Procedures for Review and Approval of Graduate Degree Programs*.

V. GUIDELINES FOR RACGS OVERSIGHT OF OFF-CAMPUS GRADUATE PROGRAMS: 'OFF-SITE' (FACE-TO-FACE), DISTANCE/ELECTRONIC MEDIA, AND 'BLENDED' (ON-SITE/VIA DISTANCE/ELECTRONIC MEDIA) DELIVERY MODELS

The following guidelines will be used by the RACGS in overseeing currently approved graduate degree programs that are provided at specific off-campus sites or via various delivery models including the use of teleconferencing, web-based or other electronic means, as well as a mixture of on-site/off-site delivery. The intent of these conditions is to permit flexibility in adapting degree requirements to alternative audiences, while not permitting institutions to design and deliver essentially new degrees within the format of a previously approved degree. The completion of a change request form for 'Online or Blended/Hybrid Delivery' is required. The form can be accessed at: <https://www.ohiohighered.org/racgs>.

A. Programs Requiring Notification Only

RACGS will be notified in writing on those occasions when **a previously approved degree program** will be offered at an off-campus site, or extended to a different audience via electronic or blended means. Under these guidelines, a degree program will be considered “*previously approved*” when less than 50% of the credit hour requirements for a degree previously given approval has been changed (see Introduction: Graduate Program Curricular Revisions, page 5.) A program will be considered to have been “*extended to a different audience via electronic or blended means*” when 50% or more of the course delivery is off-site or via alternative delivery models. The completion of the appropriate ‘change request’ form is required and can be accessed at: <https://www.ohiohighered.org/racgs>.

1. Universities desiring to provide **a previously approved degree program** under the conditions above must inform the Chancellor’s staff and RACGS members via email at least six weeks prior to the initiation of the degree program. A brief, concise description of the program that addresses the conditions noted above and describes the general nature of the program and its delivery mechanism or site location and that assures that all participating faculty are permitted to teach at the graduate level will suffice in informing Chancellor’s staff and RACGS members.
2. If a RACGS member does not respond with an objection within 30 days of notification, it will be assumed that the RACGS member has no objection to the proposal. If there is no substantive objection, the program will be included as an information item on the agenda of the next RACGS meeting and entered into the minutes of the meeting.
3. In the event that a member objects to an informational item, the proposer will be notified and asked to respond to the objection; if no resolution is reached via email, a discussion at the next RACGS meeting will ensue and a formal vote for approval must be taken, with majority approval, at that meeting before the program’s acceptance is entered into the record.

B. Program Standards

To ensure that off-site and alternative delivery models adhere to the same standards as on-campus programs, RACGS member institutions will be responsible for utilizing the following guidelines and shall use the same guidelines in those cases where new degree programs using alternative delivery models are being brought forward for approval (these may supercede new degree program criteria as outlined earlier in these guidelines).

1. The program is consistent with the institution’s role and mission.
2. The institution’s accreditation standards are not appreciably affected by offering the program, especially via alternative delivery mechanisms.
3. The institution’s budget priorities are sufficient to sustain the program in order for a selected cohort to complete the program in a reasonable amount of time.

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4. The institution has in place sufficient technical infrastructure and staff to support offering the program, especially via alternative delivery mechanisms.
5. The institution has in place sufficient protocols for ensuring instructional commitments are met, including instructor/staff training, compliance with copyright law, and quality instruction among other variables.
6. The institution has in place a relevant and tested method of assessing learning outcomes, especially in the case of alternative delivery mechanisms.
7. As new delivery mechanisms are brought into course instruction, students and faculty are presented with sufficient training and support to make appropriate use of new approaches.
8. The institution assures that the off-site/alternatively delivered program meets the same quality standards for coherence, completeness and academic integrity as for its on-campus programs.
9. The institution assures that the faculty delivering the program meet the same standards and qualifications as for on-campus programs.
10. The institution assures that, for all off-site and alternative programs, students will have access to necessary services for registration, appeals, and other functions associated with on-campus programs.
11. In those instances where program elements are supplied by consortia partners or outsourced to other organizations, the university accepts responsibility for the overall content and academic integrity of the program.
12. In those instances where asynchronous interaction between instructor and student is a necessary part of the course, the design of the course, and the technical support available to both instructor and student are sufficient to enable timely and efficient communication.
13. Faculty are assured that appropriate workload, compensation, and ownership of resource materials have been determined in advance of offering the off-site or alternatively delivered course.
14. Program development resources are sufficient to create, execute, and assess the quality of the program being offered, irrespective of site and delivery mechanism employed.
15. Procedures are in place to accept qualified students for entry in the program—it is imperative that students accepted be qualified for entry into the on-campus program. In addition, program costs, timeline for completion of the cohort program and other associated information is made clear to prospective students in advance of the program's initiation.
16. Assessment mechanisms appropriate to the delivery approach are in place to competently compare learning outcomes to learning objectives.
17. Overall program effectiveness is clearly assessed, via attention to measures of student satisfaction, retention rates, faculty satisfaction, etc.

VI. APPROVAL PROCESS FOR GRADUATE CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS AND GRADUATE PROGRAMS THAT LEAD TO EDUCATIONAL LICENSURE

There are many types of certificate programs at the graduate level, ranging from a diploma attesting to satisfactory completion of a short course or workshop to the equivalent of a graduate degree program. The award of the certificate may accompany receipt of a graduate degree, or it may take place upon completion of a specified number of credit hours, independent of receipt of a graduate degree. There are already agreed-upon review procedures for programs leading to regular graduate degrees. The question is: Under what conditions and according to what criteria should graduate programs leading to a certificate be reviewed?

A. Classification of Graduate Certificates

Three classes of graduate certificates can be distinguished as given below:

1. A certificate awarded with a master's or doctoral degree, indicating that a specific program of course work has been followed within regular program options. For example, upon completion of the M.A. degree in Political Science, candidates who have taken a specified series of courses in public administration within the accredited degree program may be awarded an appropriate certificate upon completing their degree requirements. As all new graduate degree programs are subject to review by other procedures, certificates of this type, descriptive of a concentration within a degree program only, not requiring any additional credits beyond those for the degree, *do not* require further review.
2. A certificate awarded for completing a specified program of post-baccalaureate or post-master's work, not constituting a regular graduate degree program, and awarded independently of a regular degree. Certificates awarded for completion of a program of graduate level study involving fewer than 21 semester credit hours or 31 quarter credit hours where all courses have been approved for graduate credit according to institutional mechanisms *do not* require further review.
3. Certificates awarded for completion of a substantial program of graduate study in a discipline(s)/professional area(s) where the university already has graduate degree authorization *require further review*. A substantial certification program is defined as one requiring the successful completion of 21 or more semester credit hours, or 31 or more quarter credit hours of graduate-level courses.

Graduate programs that lead to educational licensure and that involve earning 21 credits or more or, degree programs that include licensure or, stand-alone "certificates" for licensure must seek approval through both the OBR Office of Program Development and Approval, *and* RACGS. The form for teacher licensure, 'Form A,' can be accessed at:

<https://www.ohiohighered.org/racgs>. For detailed information about the review and approval process of teacher licensure programs (that is separate

from the RACGS approval process for new graduate education degrees), go to: <https://www.ohiohighered.org/offering-education-programs>.

B. Review and Program Approval Procedures for Graduate Certificates

Certificate programs requiring review (A.3 above) must submit a written request to the Chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents. Requests must be submitted three (3) months prior to the intended implementation date. The request to offer a certificate program must include a narrative statement that addresses the following issues:

- i. Approved graduate program(s) sponsoring the certificate program.
- ii. Need and demand for the certificate program.
- iii. Statement of educational objectives of the certificate program.
- iv. Curriculum for the certificate program.
- v. Justification for the number of credit hours for the certificate program.
- vi. Entrance, performance, and exit standards for the certificate program.
- vii. Faculty expertise contributing to the certificate program.
- viii. New resources, courses, etc., if any, necessary to support certificate program.

A brief, concise description of the certificate program that addresses the above points will assist RACGS by allowing review by mail or email. The narrative statement will be circulated to RACGS members for review and a recommendation for approval, disapproval, or for formal review and vote at a RACGS meeting. RACGS members should respond by mail or email within 45 days of receipt of the proposal. If a RACGS member does not respond by that date, it will be assumed that the RACGS member has no objection to the proposal.

Part B.

Guidelines for Seeking Approval for Innovative and Nontraditional Graduate Degree Programs

As new fields of study and new disciplines emerge, research and educational demands in these developing areas will increase. To meet these demands new, innovative graduate degree programs will need to be developed. These programs may differ significantly from more traditional graduate programs in structure, mode of instructional delivery, and the ways research is conducted. Whether the structure calls for interdisciplinary integration, inter-university cooperation, business/industry collaboration, or novel modes of instruction and research, this section provides guidelines and procedures for the development of new graduate programs that may not fall within traditionally defined fields or disciplines.

Academic quality is a primary consideration in the development of these different types of graduate programs. In addition, the other major criteria that must be considered are program need, statewide alternatives, institutional priority and costs, and external program support. A proposal for such a new degree program is initiated by the submission of a *Program Development Plan* (PDP) to Regents staff and RACGS members. Based upon review of the PDP, Regents staff will determine the extent to which additional approval will be necessary for new graduate programs as outlined in Part A of this document.

I. New Degree Programs Derived from Sub-disciplines

Approval of a new graduate degree program in a sub-discipline requires instructional capabilities across the full range of the discipline, but research capability only in the sub-discipline. For example, approval of a graduate degree program in bioorganic chemistry does not extend the need for doctoral-level research capability in environmental chemistry. Such limitation does not preclude a university from providing enrichment and breadth drawn from related fields within the discipline.

A. Review and Approval Process

A PDP must be submitted to the Regents staff and to RACGS members for review. Based upon this review, Regents staff will determine whether or not the proposed degree program is a more appropriate designation than the existing sub-disciplinary option under the current degree authority, and whether or not additional approvals are required.

II. Interdisciplinary Programs

Interdisciplinary degree programs are the primary means by which newly emerging fields of study can organize and support a focused research agenda and academic experience for faculty and graduate students. Such degree programs also allow universities to focus their resources more effectively and promote coherent research activities in areas where new bodies of knowledge are evolving.

A. Review and Approval Process

Interdisciplinary programs can be configured in a variety of ways. Normally, the institution must present a PDP to Regents staff and RACGS for evaluation and review. Regents' staff, upon advice of RACGS, will notify the institution whether or not further levels of approval are necessary.

III. Inter-Institutional Degree Programs

Graduate degree programs may sometimes be offered in the form of joint programs between RACGS institutions, as joint programs between a RACGS institution and a non-RACGS Ohio institution, as joint programs with a RACGS institution and an out-of-state or international institution, as a joint program between multiple Universities or with non-university institutions, or as a cooperative degree program as described below. When submitting a PDP for an inter-institutional degree program, the following definitions and distinction should be taken into account:

A. Joint Degree Programs

In a joint degree program, two or more universities share the administrative, supervisory, and academic responsibility for the proposed program. Degree authority resides jointly in all participating institutions. Individual institutions do not have independent authority to offer the degree.

B. Cooperative Degree Programs

Institutions participating in a cooperative degree program must obtain RACGS approval. The primary administrative and academic responsibilities fall to one of the participating institutions.

C. University and Non-University Degree Program Collaboration

Graduate programs can, in some instances, be strengthened through cooperation between a university and a non-university agency or laboratory. Examples include: governmental research units, private research organizations, and other public and private institutions such as museums, art galleries, libraries and industrial organizations.

D. Review and Approval Process

In all cases when an inter-institutional degree program is proposed, the principal concern is academic quality. All institutions participating in the degree program must be identified and the roles of each institution in the degree program must be fully described. Approval of new degree programs which entail joint, cooperative or collaborative inter-institutional arrangements require, in addition to the PDP a statement of policies and procedures for ensuring:

- 1) The provision of complementary *educational* experiences for students;

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- 2) Supervision of students by qualified scientists or scholars at all institutions;
- 3) Mechanisms for advising and evaluation of students;
- 4) Mechanisms and procedures for program administration;
- 5) Mechanisms to maintain academic quality (this should include a description of how faculty members/collaborators at each institution are qualified and how quality is maintained);
- 6) Procedures for covering the costs involved in shared administration;
- 7) Compliance with policies on such essential matters as academic freedom, intellectual property rights, and affirmative action;
- 8) Safeguards against possible exploitation of the time and talents of students;
- 9) Official confirmation that ultimate academic responsibility rests with a RACGS university; and
- 10) In instances when inter-institutional arrangements involve non-RACGS institutions, a RACGS institution must be designated as the primary institution for the purpose of functioning as the prime contact with the Ohio Board of Regents and for assuring compliance with academic and administrative standards.

Changes to the curriculum and/or mode of delivery for programs already approved under criteria described in Part B above are subject to the same rules for review specified in Part A.

V. Ad hoc Interdisciplinary Program for an Individual Student.

If a university offers approved graduate degree programs in two or more departments at the appropriate degree level, the institution may initiate and develop an ad hoc interdisciplinary program of study for an individual student with the understanding that additional resources are not required, a new administrative unit is not created, and the degree will be awarded by the appropriate degree-granting authority. No RACGS approval is required for this type of program.

PART C.

GUIDELINES FOR SUSPENDING A GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAM

I. SUSPENSION OF A GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAM

When a university has decided to suspend admission to a graduate degree program, the university will inform the Chancellor's staff and members of RACGS. A 'Program Inactivation' form must be completed and circulated to the RACGS listserv. The form can be accessed at:

<https://www.ohiohighered.org/racgs>. A university may suspend a graduate degree program if the institution plans to reactivate the program at some future date. At any time within seven years of the initial suspension, the university may reactivate the program simply by informing OBR and the other RACGS members that the program will be admitting students once again. It is the responsibility of the university's Graduate Dean to determine whether or not changes in the specific field of study, since the degree program was suspended, warrant the submission of a full planning proposal to OBR and RACGS.

II DISCONTINUATION OF A GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAM

- A. If a suspended graduate degree program is not reactivated within the specified seven-year period, the program will be declared discontinued. If at a subsequent date after the seven-year period the university plans to reactivate a discontinued graduate degree program, the university must seek formal approval from OBR through RACGS in the same manner as required for approval of a new graduate degree program. In the view of RACGS, disciplinary changes in a specific area of study during a seven-year period may be significant enough that a new, or substantially revised, program may need to be developed.
- B. When a university has no plans to reactivate a suspended graduate degree program, the Graduate Dean should inform OBR and RACGS that the degree program has been discontinued. It is understood that if the university ever plans to reactivate the suspended graduate degree program, it will be necessary to seek the approval of OBR and RACGS through the established procedures for development of a new graduate degree program.

PART D.

REVIEW OF GRADUATE PROGRAMS

I. GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE PROGRAM REVIEW

The periodic review of graduate programs is necessary to ensure that graduate programs maintain quality and currency. The Chancellor and members of RACGS view graduate program review as an institutional responsibility. The process is designed to provide information to faculty and administrators at the local level, so that necessary changes can be made to maintain program quality. The process is not meant to be used to compare programs across the University System of Ohio or to determine state funding of graduate programs.

Although graduate program review is considered an institutional responsibility and will necessarily vary slightly from one university to another, all universities must employ graduate program review procedures that are consistent with the key features and elements outlined in the Council of Graduate Schools 2011 publication, *Assessment and Review of Graduate Programs*¹, and must include a review of each element listed among RACGS “quality standards.”

A. Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) Key Features and Elements of Program Review

The CGS publication recommends that graduate programs be reviewed every five to ten years according to a published timetable. The document also outlines a number of important features of program review:

- the reviews should be evaluative and forward looking;
- the reviews should be fair and transparent as well as distinct from other reviews; and
- the reviews must result in action.

The CGS publication also provides guidelines regarding the elements that should be present in all graduate program reviews. The “key elements” are discussed fully in the CGS publication and include components such as:

- developing and disseminating clear and consistent guidelines;
- obtaining adequate staffing and administrative support;
- conducting a candid program self-study;
- incorporating appropriate surveys and questionnaires;
- including graduate students in the review;
- using both internal and external reviewers;
- obtaining a response from program faculty;
- delivering a final report with recommendations;
- implementing the recommendations; and
- following up over time.

¹ Baker, M.J., Carter, M.P., Larick, D.K., & King, M.F. (2011). *Assessment and Review of Graduate Programs*. Washington, DC: Council of Graduate Schools

B. Quality Standards

Members of RACGS have developed the quality standards listed below. Assessment of continued compliance with these standards must be included in the graduate program review process.

1. Program Faculty

A level of faculty productivity and commitment shall be required commensurate with expectations of graduate program faculty as indicated by the following:

- The number and qualifications of graduate faculty members are judged to be adequate for offering the graduate degrees in the specified areas, and faculty supervise an appropriate number of students.
- The preparation and experience of the faculty are appropriate for offering the graduate degree in an intellectually challenging academic environment as demonstrated by active scholarship and creative activity judged by accepted national standards for the discipline.
 - Faculty members have achieved professional recognition (nationally, internationally).
 - The faculty garners significant external funding, as defined by disciplinary norms, which enhance the graduate program.
 - Directors of dissertations and a majority of committee members generate new knowledge and scholarly and creative activity as determined by disciplinary norms.

2. Program Graduates Since the Most Recent Review

A level of student satisfaction, student accomplishment, and graduate accomplishment exists as evidenced by the following:

- Students express satisfaction with advisement, teaching, and program support services.
- The structure and conduct of the program lead to an appropriate degree completion rate and time-to-degree.
- The predominant employment of graduates within three to five years after graduation is in fields consistent with the mission of the program.

- Graduates demonstrate preparation for career-long learning and success as indicated by periodic surveys of career changes, job satisfaction, and relevance of doctoral training to various career opportunities.
- Accomplishment and potential of program graduates to generate new knowledge or new initiatives in teaching, public service, and/or other practice.

3. Program Vitality

A vital graduate program is dynamic and should possess the following indicators:

- The environment of the doctoral program promotes a high level of intellectual interaction among students, graduate faculty, and the larger academic community;
- The curriculum has been updated during the period under review with disciplinary developments;
- Essential resources are provided (e.g., library materials, computer support, laboratory facilities and equipment, student financial support, etc.); and
- Requirements for completion of the degree are deemed appropriate to the degree.

4. Program Demand

A graduate program should be able to demonstrate that there is demand on the part of prospective students and that it is fulfilling a clear need through the following:

- Student demand/enrollment during the period under review: application ratio, student GPA and GRE scores, or other indicators as appropriate; and
- The extent to which the program meets community, region and state needs and occupational societal demands.

5. Program Interactions

Graduate programs do not exist in isolation but rather in relation to and in comparison to similar programs in the discipline at other institutions and to cognate areas in the same institution. Information regarding appropriate interactions should include:

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- Centrality of the program to advanced study in the specific discipline(s) regionally or nationally;
- The ability of the faculty and students to make a particular contribution in this field;
- Interactions, including interdisciplinary, among graduate, undergraduate, and professional programs, as appropriate;
- Interactions with and in collaboration with similar programs at other universities and organizations; and
- Programmatic access to special leveraging assets such as unique on-campus or off-campus facilities, non-university experts or collaborative institutions in the discipline, industrial or other support, endowments, as well as special funding opportunities.

6. Program Access

There should be evidence that the program has established or seeks to establish an appropriate level of diversity among its faculty and its graduate student body, as evidenced by:

- Trends and expectations in student demographics; and
- Proven efforts to sustain and enhance diversity of faculty and students.

7. Assessment Mechanisms Used in Program Review

Since quality indicators are increasingly becoming an integral part of ongoing program review, an enhanced recognition of the uses of outcomes assessment in the review process provides a useful tool for program improvement, as demonstrated by:

- A summary of the appropriate outcome measures used to assess program quality; and
- Procedures must be in place to ensure the use of assessment data for continuous quality improvement of the program.

II. REPORTS TO THE CHANCELLOR OF THE OHIO BOARD OF REGENTS

A. Institutional Process

Each RACGS member must provide the Chancellor with a written document outlining the institution's policies and procedures for conducting graduate program reviews. The document must describe the institutional process for

graduate program review and must indicate the cycle under which such reviews are conducted. When institutional policies and procedures for graduate program review are revised, the RACGS member must provide an updated document to the Chancellor.

B. Annual Report

By September 1 of each year, each RACGS member will provide the Chancellor and RACGS with an annual report of their existing graduate programs that were reviewed in the previous academic year. An 'Annual Report' form must be completed and circulated to Regents staff and RACGS via the RACGS listserv. The form can be accessed at:

<https://www.ohiohighered.org/racgs>. The report must include:

- A list of the graduate programs reviewed;
- For each program reviewed, a summary of the findings related to program demand (i.e., student demand and the extent to which the program meets regional, state, national and societal needs);
- A list of graduate programs that have not been reviewed in the past 10 years with an explanation for the lack of review.