

Graduate Program Review Overview and Purpose

Revised and Approved by Graduate Council March 19, 2025

In accordance with [Texas Administrative Code - Rule 2.181](#) and requirements of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, each public university is required by the [Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board](#) to have a process of review and continuous improvement of degree programs. This process requires a self-study document, external review, and actions the institution will take to improve the program.

Guidelines for Graduate Program Self-Study

For your self-study document, include the following information using the given structure. Any readable font is acceptable. Please number your pages and include a cover page with the name of your program, as well as a Table of Contents (see sections below). The chair and/or program director of the program being reviewed is responsible for the content, accuracy and completeness of the self-study. The chair may designate another faculty member or team of faculty to carry out the self-study, but should be actively involved in supervision the preparation of the study. All full-time faculty members should be involved in the preparation of the study. The self-study should assess the program's strengths, weaknesses and immediate and long-term actions.

Sections for Table of Contents

I. Program

- A. Program mission and measurable student learning outcomes:
- B. Alignment of program with stated program and institutional goals and purposes
- C. Program curriculum and duration in comparison to peer programs
- D. Program facilities and equipment
- E. Program finance and resources
- F. Program administration

II. Faculty

- A. Faculty qualifications
- B. Faculty publications
- C. Faculty other scholarly/creative activities (optional)
- D. Faculty external grants
- E. Faculty internal grants (optional)
- F. Faculty responsibilities and leadership in professional societies (optional)
- G. Faculty teaching load
- H. Faculty/student ratio

III. **Graduate Students**

- A. Student enrollment
- B. Student demographics
- C. Student retention rates
- D. Number of degrees conferred annually
- E. Student graduation rates
- F. Student time to degree
- G. Student publications and awards
- H. Graduate licensure rates (if applicable):
- I. Graduate placement

IV. **Analysis**

Note: Some data can be found from certain departments [e.g., Academic Assessment, Graduate School's web page, Institutional Research and Data Management (IRDM), University Advancement, SQL reports, HR, Dean's Office, Scholarship Office, and Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP)], which are indicated in the document. IRDM will send their data in September. When applicable, IRDM tables may be used exactly as sent or recreated, if programs so choose.

Guidelines about Each Section

I. Program

- A. **Program mission and measurable student learning outcomes:**
Detail the mission and measurable student learning outcomes of the program.
- B. **Alignment of program with stated program and institutional goals and purposes ([Academic Assessment data](#)):** Summarize the SLO assessment data from the past 10 years and modifications that have been made based on the data.
- C. **Program curriculum and duration in comparison to peer programs:** Provide information about the program course offerings and program length. Compare the program to peer institutions. For online distance education programs, the review of the program should include an evaluation of the program's adherence to Principles of Good Practice (See attached document.). For online programs, the program should indicate that it has appropriately planned for the following distance learning components: students are provided accurate information about the program and requirements; there are adequate support services for distance learning (student services, library resources, and faculty training); and there are robust evaluation and assessment measures.
- D. **Program facilities and equipment:** Detail the facilities and equipment that the program utilizes, as well as any future plans for improvement of facilities and equipment.
- E. **Program finance and resources (SQL reports, ORSP data, HR, University Advancement, Scholarship Office, Dean's Office):**
Provide information regarding the budget for the program, which should include the following: HEF support ([Higher Education Fund](#)—specify this for outside reviewers), financial support for graduate students (this is mainly assistantships), scholarships (University Advancement/Scholarship Office), endowments (University Advancement), as well as future funding opportunities. Information pertaining to faculty salaries (SQL reports) is optional data that can be included.
- F. **Program administration:** Describe the administrative structure, as well as the administrative faculty of the program, which should include their qualifications to lead the graduate programs.

II. Faculty

- A. **Faculty qualifications (IRDM and Graduate School website):** Provide the data about the rank, gender, race, tenure status, full/part-time, rank (IRDM data) and graduate faculty status (see the [Graduate School's Graduate Faculty webpage](#) for graduate faculty status) of all faculty in the program. Include pertinent context, as needed. The IRDM data may be included as the exact table from IRDM, while the graduate faculty status information may be given as a table or counts.
- B. **Faculty publications (Watermark):** List faculty publications in table form or as counts. Provide context, as needed. Faculty CVs will need to be updated in Watermark to use this as a resource for faculty publications.
- C. **Faculty other scholarly/creative activities (optional-Watermark):** List faculty's other scholarly/creative activities in table form or as counts. Provide context, as needed.
- D. **Faculty external grants (ORSP data):** Provide the ORSP data regarding funded faculty external grants information. Programs may include unfunded external grants, if they so choose. Include pertinent context, as needed, including any future efforts to seek funding.
- E. **Faculty internal grants (optional-ORSP data):** Provide the ORSP data regarding funded and/or unfunded internal grants information. Include pertinent content, as needed, including future efforts to seek funding.
- F. **Faculty responsibilities and leadership in professional societies (optional section):** Provide information about faculty achievements in professional organizations.
- G. **Faculty teaching load (SQL reports):** Include SQL report data in a table regarding faculty teaching loads and any relevant information about trends in the data.
- H. **Faculty/student ratio (IRDM data):** Provide the faculty/student ratio IRDM data and describe any trends in the data.

III. Graduate Students

- A. **Student enrollment (IRDM data):** Include IRDM data in a table about student enrollment data with details about trends.
- B. **Student demographics (IRDM data):** Provide IRDM data in a table and detail trends in student data, including gender, race, test scores (GRE, GMAT, and/or language proficiency exam), and GPAs. Information about previous degrees is optional data that can be included.
- C. **Student retention rates (IRDM data):** Provide IRDM data in a table and summarize the graduate student retention rates, as well as any efforts to retain students.
- D. **Number of degrees conferred annually (IRDM data):** Provide IRDM data in a table and detail trends in number of degrees, as well as strategies to increase the number of degrees conferred annually.
- E. **Student graduation rates (IRDM data):** Provide IRDM data in a table and detail trends in student data, as well as strategies to increase graduation rates.
- F. **Student time to degree (IRDM data):** Provide IRDM data in a table and detail trends in the data, as well as strategies to decrease time to degree.
- G. **Student publications and awards:** Describe student publications, fellowships, and scholarships graduate students may have received from the program and/or professional organizations, as well as ways in which to increase involvement in publishing and professional organizations.
- H. **Graduate licensure rates (if applicable):** Include licensure rate data and provide context and detail trends, as needed.
- I. **Graduate placement:** Provide data about students' employment and further education/training after graduation.

IV. Analysis

Prepare a 1-2 page summary of the observed strengths and weaknesses identified by the program review. Include a prioritized list of program needs and actions to be taken over the next 10 years. This can function as the executive summary of the self-study.

Timeline for Graduate Program Review

Summer prior to review being completed: College deans, ACAs, and program representatives meet with the Dean of the Graduate School about upcoming reviews. (Note: Programs with external accreditation may submit reviews performed for reasons of programmatic licensure or accreditation in satisfaction of the review and reporting requirements.)

By Late September: Programs receive data from Institutional Research and Data Management (IRDM).

By October 15: ACA's will submit 3-4 potential external reviewer names per program to the Graduate School.

By January 15: The final draft of the self-study should be forwarded to the Graduate School. The Dean of the Graduate School will review the self-study document for content, completeness, and accuracy, and if necessary, request that revisions be made by the program. The Graduate School will forward one copy of the self-study to the dean of the college and a copy to the external reviewer(s).

By April 1: The external reviewers will meet via Zoom or in-person with the program under review.

By April 30: The external reviewer(s) will submit their report(s) to the Dean of the Graduate School.

By May 15: The ACA, college dean, and designated program representative(s) will meet with the Dean of the Graduate School to discuss the external reviewer report.

Within 15 Days of the external review report meeting: The program being reviewed will submit a statement outlining follow-up steps to be taken based on the program review.

By July 15: The Graduate School will submit the report of the outcome of the review, including an executive summary (Section IV of the Self-Study) of the external review, the evaluation of the external reviewer(s), and actions the institution has taken or will take to improve the program to the Workforce, Academic Affairs and Research Division of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

One year after completion of the program review: The Graduate School will check-in with the ACA about program updates based on the review.

The Task of the Reviewers

The task of the reviewers is to formulate objective judgments of the quality and effectiveness of graduate programs. The following are important considerations:

- Curriculum and Program of Study,
- Facilities and Resources
- Faculty and Resources
- Faculty Productivity
- Quality and Quantity of Graduate Students and Graduates

The reviewers are encouraged to focus attention on questions regarding the relationship of programs to the goals of the university. It is the task of the reviewers to single out those features of the program that merit special commendation and to make recommendations where there is room for improvement.

The Executive Report

The findings and recommendations of the reviewers should take the format of a concise one to two-page executive summary. The report should include what type of review (desk review or site visit) was performed. Names of reviewers and institution affiliations need to be included on the review.

Overall observations, reputation, strengths/commendations, deficiencies/recommendations, and value of the program to the mission of the university should be included in this report. Specific recommendations should be made regarding what is needed to strengthen programs. Specific recommendations should also be made for each program in the event that additional resources are not available. Recommendations that are resource neutral are especially helpful.

Reviewers should rate the program under review and provide a graded assessment similar to the following:

- Commendable
- Satisfactory
- Less than satisfactory

Guidance for Reviewers

During the review of each graduate degree program, reviewers are encouraged to evaluate the program with respect to the areas listed below. Reviewers are encouraged to give a rating of less than satisfactory, satisfactory, or commendable for each area. Ratings of commendable should be reserved for areas of exceptional merit. Reviewers should not feel confined to the areas specified and can examine and comment on other areas that they deem important to the review process.

Program Overview and Mission

Reviewers should examine the mission and organization of the academic unit, paying special attention to program planning, goals, and program size.

Student Learning Outcomes

Reviewers should examine the program's evidence that students have achieved the learning outcomes set by the program. In addition, the program should indicate how its monitoring and measuring efforts have resulted in program improvements.

Curriculum and Programs of Study

Factors that should be considered are the following: degree requirements, alignment of degree requirements with student learning outcomes, course offerings, frequency, areas of specialization, nature and type of qualifying/final exams, connection of curriculum with current developments in the discipline, and mechanisms that foster independent learning enabling the graduate to contribute to the profession and field of study. Reviewers should determine if the program is compatible with similar programs elsewhere.

Facilities and Resources

Determine if existing space, library resources, information technology, and support staff are adequate to support the program.

Faculty Productivity

Factors to be considered are: faculty profile, faculty scholarship/awards, faculty teaching load, and faculty service.

Quality and Quantity of Graduate Students and Graduates

Factors to be considered are: student profile, student recruitment, student retention, placement of graduates, career success of former students, student productivity, and teaching/research assistant preparation and support.