

UW Academic Affairs
Graduate Degree Revision and Formation Processes
Date: 5/1/2015

Effective graduate education requires the ability to address emerging research and professional trends in response to societal needs. Academic Affairs, in consultation with the Graduate Council has revised the process for proposing and creating new graduate degree programs to more effectively balance creation of new degrees with sustainability, teaching capacity and enrollment projections. Academic Affairs, Graduate Education aspires to have proposals of new or revised graduate programs moved through the approval process in a timely fashion. In this interest, we have revised the review process to allow critical assessment and documentation of program comments via [university-wide electronic commentary](#). The process should help us more flexibly respond to the changing landscapes of graduate education.

In the Fall 2014 and spring 2015 semesters, the Graduate Council met to review and provide recommendations on the processes for proposing new or revised graduate degree programs. The Graduate Council's discerning document provides the conceptual context for insuring campus awareness of emerging graduate offerings and insures that proposers consider the complex impacts of new graduate degree offerings. The Council's document outlines a two-stage process to refine proposal preparation and approval. **All new graduate program proposals, (graduate majors, minors, concentrations, interdisciplinary degrees and any major modifications to existing graduate programs (including name changes) will follow this process.**

The guidelines below should insure that only fully vetted, strongly supported proposals are approved. **An electronic review process will occur via WyoGroups to reduce legwork for proposers and allow all reviewers to see and provide visible commentary on each proposal.** Academic Affairs will manage the group formation and upload files for comment as soon as they are received. After departmental and College comments are registered, Academic Affairs will add campus-wide members (Library, Outreach, Grad Council, etc.) as appropriate to continue the review. Proposing faculty will be able to view commentary throughout the process.

Meetings and comments documented on the electronic site are immediately available to **the Graduate Council** and Academic Affairs. Once all comments are received and reasonably addressed, the proposal should be placed before the **Deans and Directors** for support.

After that online discussion, working with all commentary and with approval from the Graduate Council, Academic Affairs will determine whether the proposal 1) is well supported, 2) has addressed all comments and questions, 3) creates a program that is sustainable (has clearly documented resources from the Dean) and 4) creates a program that contributes to the mission, goals and trajectory of the University. Proposals may be accepted, deferred to a later time or declined by Academic Affairs. Accepted proposals will be forwarded to the President and Board of Trustees annually. Approval of the "Master List of Degrees" which identifies all new and eliminated degrees is presented to the Board of Trustees at their May meeting.

The two-stage process for approval of new or altered graduate programs and degrees is outlined below.

HOW TO PROVIDE COMMENTS ON A PROPOSAL: *Academic Affairs will provide instructions for the electronic site to record discussion and provide access to the comments as proposals move through the process.*

During Stage ONE Comments are required from:

Affected Department/Program head and faculty

Outreach Director (if involved in proposed program)

Dean(s) and Faculty of affected Colleges should indicate: the need, the resource support and the intended fit with University of Wyoming mission and goals. (Intent to sustain new programs requires College commitment of resources that ensures the sustainability of new programs that target areas of distinction.)

Associate VP for Graduate Education: Comments and suggestions will be provided directly to proposers.

Stage ONE completion is based on the conceptual merit and approval.

Approval of Stage One does not suggest final program approval. Documents and comments derived from Stage One will remain in The Office of Academic Affairs during stage two.

Stage Two, Detailed Full Proposal

Prepare a full program proposal to address 1) Program Structure, 2) Resources 3) Student admission, enrollment, and 4) Assessment and 5) Departmental and College cooperation, as described in the document from the Graduate Council 3/2015 (attached below). Whenever feasible, departments should suggest the **elimination of programs** that are under-used or to allow re-allocation of teaching capacity. UW Regulation 6-43 describes Academic Program Elimination at: <http://www.uwyo.edu/generalcounsel/files/docs/uw-reg-6-43.pdf>

The full proposal is shared for comment within participating departments/programs and appropriate Deans simultaneously online to obtain comments. **Academic Affairs will make the electronic comment site available to all Deans and to affected Directors once it is submitted directly to the Associate VP of Graduate Studies following a meeting with the proposers.** Comments on the full proposal documented from all levels, will be available on WyoWeb. Following campus-wide review, the proposal and comments will be assessed by the Associate VP of Graduate Education and the Graduate Council. Academic Affairs, in consultation with the Graduate Council may choose to forward or decline the proposal, or to suggest further revision. Academic Affairs will forward proposals to the President and Board of Trustees for final approval and addition to the Master List of Degrees at their May meeting.

Comments on the full proposal should be provided by:

Affected Department Faculty and Head(s)

Dean(s) all Colleges:

Outreach Director

Dean, Libraries

Registrar and Admissions for program admittance and degree check criteria

Other(s) as fitting (i.e Community College Collaborators)

Graduate Council, (standing committee of the Faculty Senate)

Guidance for this procedure and the questions that should be addressed in all proposals was provided by the Graduate Council in spring 2015. Their guidance appears below.

Proposal for Updating Approval Process for New or Revised Graduate Programs

A number of new graduate programs have been brought to Academic Affairs and the Graduate Council over the course of this academic year. Some of the reviews associated with these programs have raised important questions about the conceptual underpinnings or logistical execution associated with their implementation. In order to ensure that departments seeking to build new graduate programs at the University have addressed the common questions raised during this process, the Graduate Council proposes a revision of the current structure, including a suggested timeline of meetings that will guide departments in navigating the design and approval of programs.

Summary of Action

The Graduate Council proposes a two-stage process for program approval in which departments first demonstrate the rationale and conceptual viability of a new program before designing the program structure and logistics. The process is estimated to take up to a year to complete – approximately four months for the first stage and eight months for the second stage. Installing a longer time frame for program approval will ensure that all parties involved in reviewing programs have ample time to comment on the proposal before final approval is sought.

The Graduate Council proposes that existing regulations be updated to reflect this timeline and the new approval process.

Stage One: Conceptual Foundations

At the initial stage of new or updated program design, the proposing faculty and/or department(s) must document the rationale and conceptual validity of the proposed program. Key questions that must be answered are:

- Are you submitting a new graduate program, or a revision to an existing program?
- In what way will this program serve a documented/recognized need among students or potential students?
- What is the expected career trajectory of students completing this degree program?
- Is this degree program novel, or is it a program that has been implemented at other universities?
- How does this proposed degree program address the changing landscape of the existing field/profession?
- What are the benefits that the University of Wyoming will gain by adding this program? How will this program serve Wyoming and/or national needs?
- Will the outreach program be involved and how?

After crafting a proposal that addresses these questions, departmental representatives must meet with their college's dean (in the case of cooperating departments in different colleges, each college dean must be consulted). At this meeting, the deans will be informed of the intention to create a new program; if deans have feedback or suggestions at this time, they will share it with the faculty before the process continues. If the Outreach School will be involved, Outreach administrators will also be consulted at this time.

Following consultation with college deans, the proposal must be separately presented to the Dean or Vice President for Graduate Studies and then the Graduate Council. The Dean/VP for Graduate Studies will meet with the Graduate Council after these presentations to solicit input and render a decision whether the

proposed program, with any suggested changes, should proceed to the next stage of the process. Input from affected college deans will be welcomed at this time.

Based on the perceived merit of the proposed program, the proposing faculty will be informed that they may proceed to Stage Two and complete a full program proposal. It is important to emphasize that approval at Stage One does not constitute or indicate final program approval.

Stage Two: Program Development and Approval

After receiving approval to present a full proposal, departments may proceed with program development. At this stage, the logistical questions concerning program implementation must be answered. Areas that we propose to especially emphasize in this proposal are:

Program structure

- What are the program requirements? What timeline do you anticipate for students proceeding through the program? A two/three-year course rotation map must be included.
- Will any new courses be added in order to implement this program?
- What kind of oversight will this program have? What are your benchmarks for short- and long-term program success?
- If your proposal requires external educators, how will you ensure academic rigor in these courses?

Resources

- What new resources (GAs, administrative support, staff, etc.) will be required to implement this program? How do you propose to supply these resources?
- Which faculty will be required to serve the teaching duties proposed? Are the identified faculty currently teaching on-load? If faculty sabbaticals or retirements are anticipated within the next 5 years, what are the plans for accommodating them? What modifications in current instruction will be required?
- If your proposal requires external educators, what funding will support these hires?
- Does Outreach play a role in your proposal? If so, what are the financial break-even points for enrollment?
- What Library resources will be necessary for the implementation of your proposal?

Student admission, enrollment, and assessment

- What is the anticipated enrollment in this program, and what data provide the basis for this estimate?
- What will your admissions process and criteria be? If you anticipated a significant need for this program in your conceptual proposal, do you have a plan in place to address potential high demand (e.g. enrollment caps)?
- How do you plan to monitor student success throughout the duration of the their studies? Do you have an assessment plan in place?

Departmental and College cooperation

- Have you formed Memoranda of Understanding between cooperating departments and programs?
- Will you be altering the structure of existing programs, or eliminating programs, in order to accommodate this new program?

Once a full proposal addressing these questions has been prepared, it will first be shared for comment within participating departments/programs, and then brought to the appropriate college dean(s). Once it has received comments at both levels, the proposal proceeds to the Graduate VP/Dean and the Graduate Council for discussion and final approval. Academic Affairs must approve the proposal before it travels to the President and Trustees (if appropriate). The final proposal presented to the President and Trustees must include the proposal elements from Stage One and Stage Two.