

# **University of Saskatchewan**

## **College of Graduate Studies and Research**

Ph.D. Committee  
Graduate Program Review Sub-Committee

### **Graduate Program Review Process**

**1998**

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[Update January 2001: Portions of this process have been superseded by Systematic Program Review. See the Systematic Program Review *Policy and Procedures* approved by University Council February 1999.]

## Graduate Program Review Process

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### Objective

The primary purpose of Graduate Program Review is to assess the current quality of graduate programs. The process is intended to ensure the quality of the graduate program and to recognize excellence while providing a basis for change and future planning.

### Motivation

Departments are accountable to society for their activities and for the quality of their programs. The information gathered in the review process, and the assessment of program strengths and needs, provide strong and compelling evidence of the quality of the graduate programs, the areas of greatest need and the foundation on which future improvements should be built. In view of the many external and internal pressures on the university, the stronger and more careful the program review process, the more persuasive the results.

The Graduate Program Review Process at the University of Saskatchewan is based upon concepts discussed in "A Policy Statement: Academic Review of Graduate Programs" by the Council of Graduate Schools Task Force on Academic Review of Graduate Programs (Summer, 1990). As well Graduate program material from the following Canadian universities was used:

- University of Victoria
- University of British Columbia
- Simon Fraser University
- University of Alberta
- University of Calgary
- University of Regina
- University of Manitoba

Some characteristics of the Graduate Program Review are as follows:

- Graduate Program Review is evaluative as well as descriptive. It requires academic judgements and is based upon the concept of peer review. It views the program under review as being connected both to other programs in the university and to intellectual issues of the discipline at large.
- Graduate programs are reviewed carefully when established. Subsequent graduate program review ensures that the program has lived up to its original goals. While constant scrutiny is unhealthy, periodic thorough review is desirable.
- Graduate programs are dynamic. Faculty membership changes, technology changes, student availability changes. Graduate Program Review is directed toward improvement of the program. It seeks to define questions whose answers will increase the understanding of the program. Specific recommendations are made to improve the program.
- Departments are reviewed using academic criteria, not financial or political ones.
- Graduate Program Review is an objective process. Self-Study documents and questionnaires are crucial in this process.
- Graduate Program Review is an independent process, separate from other reviews. While the Graduate Program Review Process may share common data with other review processes, it must be a unique identifiable process and the interpretation of the data must be done with respect to graduate program quality indicators.
- Graduate Program Review must result in an outcome decision; otherwise large amounts of time and money are wasted. Good Departments should be recognized and encouraged to excel. One way of accomplishing this is to require fewer reviews.

While Graduate Program Review is concerned only with graduate programs in Departments, the Colleges and Deans associated with the Department in question must be informed and participate in certain aspects of the review process. In addition, the Graduate Program Review is coordinated with the University Systematic Program Review Process, which also reviews undergraduate programs.

Graduate Program Review is also a mechanism for change. Examples at various levels of processes that are affected by Graduate Program Review are:

University:

- Long-range planning.
- Setting institutional priorities.
- Information on size and stability.

College of Graduate Studies and Research

- Scholarship budget allocations.
- College priorities.
- Faculty membership.
- Administrative decisions.

Departmental College:

- College priorities.
- Resource priorities.
- Hiring priorities.

Departmental:

- Scholarship allocations.
- Hiring Priorities.
- Departmental research priorities.
- Student admissions.

### **Terms of Reference**

All aspects of the Graduate Program Review will conform to principles contained in the University of Saskatchewan Mission Statement (May 1993).

Specifically (from “A Framework for the Evaluation of Academic Programs”, April 29, 1996):

“In continuing its commitment to a rich array of challenging liberal, scientific, professional and artistic educational programs, the University of Saskatchewan wants to ensure that its undergraduate, graduate and certificate programs are of high quality. To maintain quality, the University, as well as its Colleges and Departments, must make choices to change, combine, or delete existing programs and specializations, and to introduce new initiatives.”

Evaluation of the Graduate Program uses criteria and measures contained in “A Background Paper and Proposal for a Systematic Programme Review Process at the University of Saskatchewan” (March 9, 1994) and “A Framework for the Evaluation of Academic Programs” (April 29, 1996). The criteria to be evaluated in the context of the goals and objectives of the Graduate Program are:

- Curriculum.
- Faculty.
- Learning Environment.
- Infrastructure.
- Outcome.
- Student Demand, Market Demand, and/or Societal Need.
- Resource Usage.
- Unique.
- Relevance.

It should be noted that graduate programs have different goals and values than undergraduate programs and that the measures indicated in the “A Framework for the Evaluation of Academic Programs” (April 29, 1996) document have to be interpreted with this in mind. Appropriate measures may include the quality of the faculty, the students, available resources, curriculum, facilities and academic reputation of the program. Additional information may have to be reviewed to do this properly. For example, while some graduate programs will exhibit uniqueness or relevance this is considered a positive to these programs. More mainstream Graduate Programs would not be assessed deficient because of their inability to evaluate highly in these areas. The Graduate Program Review will be coordinated with the University Systematic Review of all programs (undergraduate and graduate).

### **Procedure**

The Graduate Program Review will be carried out on a nominal 5-7 year cycle. This means that 10-12 programs must be reviewed yearly (exact schedule still to be determined). Depending on the results of the reviews it may be possible to standardize the review cycle on 5 years. Where possible graduate programs will be coordinated and integrated with undergraduate program review and/or review in discipline related departments. This procedure should be encouraged since it will lead to a substantial reduction in the work necessary to produce the required information (due to common information that must be prepared for the different reviews).

Administration of the Graduate Program Review Process will be the responsibility of the Vice-President (Academic).

Coordination of the Graduate Program Review process will be the responsibility of the Dean, College of Graduate Studies and Research.

Graduate Program Review will be, in the first instance, by an internal Graduate Program Review Committee. This Graduate Program Review Committee will report to the M.Sc. and Ph.D. committees of the College of Graduate Studies and Research as well as the V.P. Academic. Graduate Program Review will be, in the second instance, by Graduate Program Review external reviewer(s). Information required on the Graduate Program under review will be the responsibility of the individual Department(s) and, where possible, be derived from historical data obtained from the College of Graduate Studies and Research and/or the University Studies Group. Based upon the experiences obtained in the Graduate Program Review Process, the guidelines for subsequent Graduate Program Reviews will be updated as required. It may be necessary, in exceptional circumstances and where appropriate, to conduct special Graduate Program Reviews. These review(s) must be made by special request to the M.Sc. and/or Ph.D. committees of the College of Graduate Studies and Research. The request must be approved by the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research.

## Process

The review process will follow the sequence defined for the University-wide Systematic Program Review Process. The Graduate Program Review at the College level will be based upon the following process, which is coordinated with the University-wide review sequence.

1. The Head of the Department under review will be informed by the Graduate Program Review Committee that the Graduate Program is to be reviewed. This will be the formal request for information since, due to the cyclic nature of the Graduate Program Review Process, the Department will know in advance that it is scheduled for a review.
2. The Department will prepare a Self-Study document to be submitted to the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research.
3. The Department will submit a list of up to three possible external reviewers to the Graduate Program Review Committee.
4. Two external reviewers will be chosen by the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research.
5. The Dean of the College of Graduate Studies will forward the Department Self-Study document to the external reviewers.
6. The external reviewers will come to the university for a two-day on-site visit. A coordinated visit will be encouraged in order to minimize the disruption to the Department under review. The two external reviewers may make independent visits however.

The Department under review will prepare the itinerary. The external reviewers will need to see the following:

- Head of the Department under review.
  - Faculty of the Department under review.
  - Graduate/Research Committee of the Department under review.
  - Graduate students in the Department under review.
  - Dean of the College containing the Department under review.
  - Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research.
  - The Graduate Program Review Committee.
7. The external reviewers will submit a coordinated report to the Graduate Program Review Committee and to the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research. The use of a combined report will be encouraged, however the external reviewers may choose to submit independent reports.
  8. The Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research will forward a summary copy of the External Reviewer's Report to the Department under review. This will allow the Department to review the document and, if appropriate, to correct any factual errors and to respond directly to the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research with regard to specific criticisms or conclusions.
  9. The Graduate Program Review Committee will discuss its recommendation with the Ph.D./Academic Committees.
  10. The Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research will discuss the Ph.D./Academic Committees' recommendation with the Dean of the College containing the Department under review and the Head of the Department under review. A decision will be forwarded to the Vice-President (Academic).
  11. The outcome of the discussions and recommendations will be conveyed to the Department under review by the Vice-President (Academic).

A summary of the Graduate Review Process in tabular form is shown in Table 1. A graphical representation is shown in Figure 1.

Table 1: Graduate Program Review Procedure.

	<b>Information Sources</b>	<b>Deliverable</b>
Vice-President (Academic)	Dean, CGSR, Decision Self-Study Document CGSR Report Faculty CV's External Reviewer's Report	Outcome
Dean, College of Graduate Studies and Research	Ph.D./Academic Recommendation Self-Study Document CGSR Report Faculty CV's External Reviewer's Report Discussion, Department under review	Dean, CGSR, Decision
Ph.D./Academic Committees	GPRC Recommendation	Ph.D./Academic Recommendation
Graduate Program Review Committee	Self-Study Document CGSR Report Faculty CV's External Reviewer's Report	GPRC Recommendation
Department under Graduate Program Review	Department Information Internal Survey(s) Supplementary Documentation CGSR Report Faculty CV's	Self-Study Document
External Reviewer	Self-Study Document CGSR Report Faculty CV's External Reviewer's Visit	External Reviewer's Report

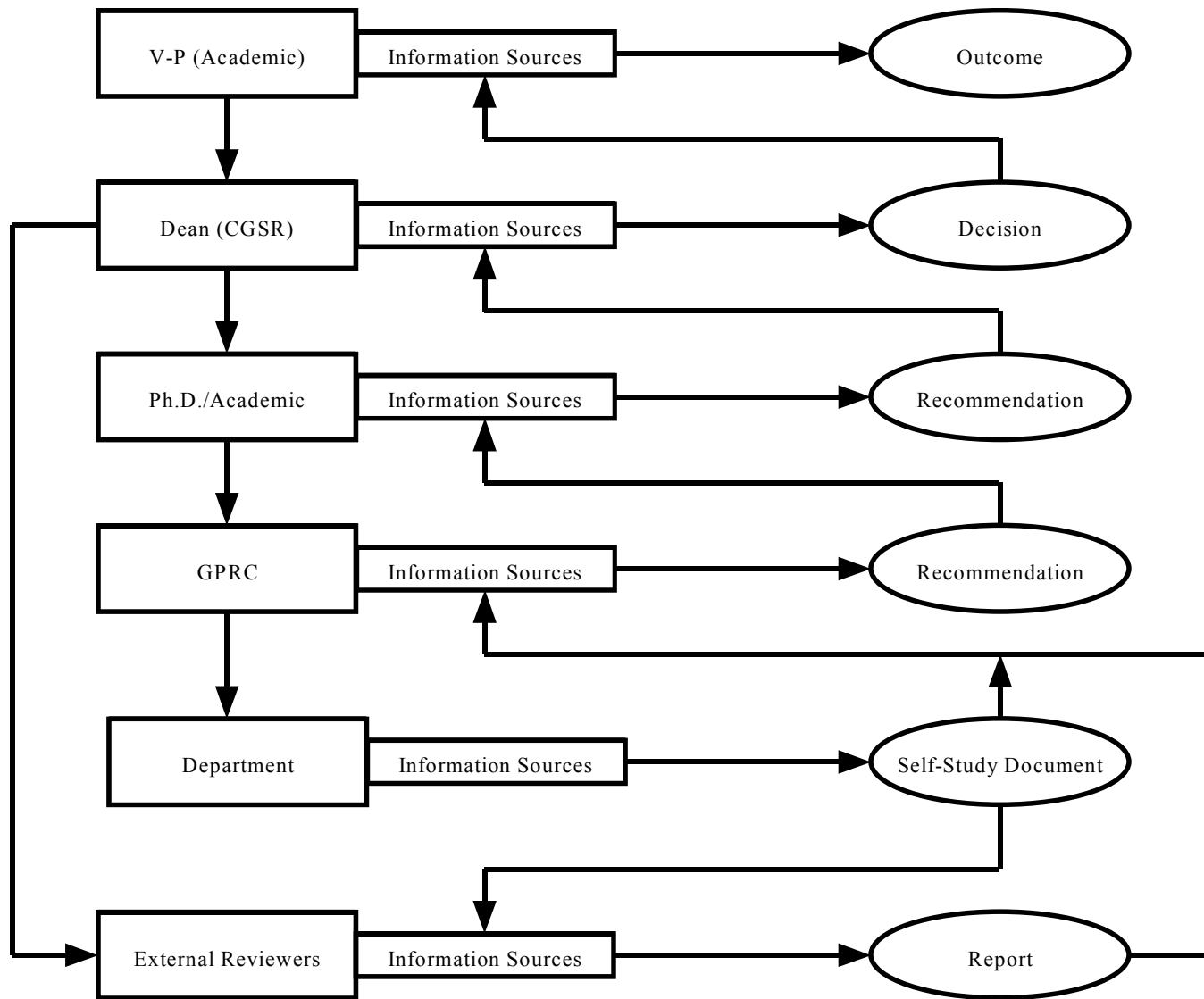


Figure 1. Graduate Program Review Procedure.



















**Timetable**

The timetable for review corresponds to the following schedule for the Graduate Program Review Process (a number of the processes are to occur in parallel):

- Vice-President (Academic): Start week 0
- Dean, College of Graduate Studies: Start week 1 - end week 3
- Ph.D./Academic Committee: Start week 2 - end week 4
- Graduate Program Review Committee: Start week 2 - end week 5
- Department under review Self-Study document preparation: Start week 1 – end week 12
- External Reviewer Preliminary Review: Start week 12 – end week 16
- External Reviewer Site Visit: Start week 16 – end week 17
- External Reviewers' Reports: Start week 17 – end week 21
- Graduate Program Review Committee: Start week 12 - end week 23
- Ph.D./Academic Committee: Start week 12 - end week 24
- Dean, College of Graduate Studies: Start week 12 - end week 26
- Vice-President (Academic): Start week 12 – end week 28

It should be noted that the elapsed time from initiation of the Graduate Program Review Process is shown. Thus the Graduate Program Review Process could be initiated at any time during the year. It is intended, however, to be done in parallel with other review processes (i.e., College reviews, undergraduate reviews, professional accreditation reviews, etc.) and as such would normally start at or near the start of these other review processes.

## Outcome

The Graduate Program Review Committee will make a recommendation to the Ph.D./Academic Committees. The Ph.D./Academic Committees will decide on the recommendation. The recommendation of the Graduate Program Review Process will be delivered to the Head of the Department under review, the Dean of the College containing the Department under review, the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and to the Associate Vice-President (Academic).

The Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research will reach a decision based upon the recommendation of the Ph.D./Academic Committees. This decision will be conveyed to the Vice-President (Academic) for a determination of the outcome of the Graduate Program Review Process.

Consequences of the Graduate Program Review Process will be:

<u>University Category</u>	<u>Graduate Program Subcategory</u>	
Category 1.	(A):	<u>Graduate Program receives superior rating.</u> Graduate Program will be allowed considerable autonomy with respect to all aspects of graduate degree programs. Next review: 7-10 years.
Category 2.	(B):	<u>Graduate Program receives acceptable rating.</u> No changes (or minor changes) are necessary. Next Review: 5-7 years (cycle dependant).
Category 3.	(C):	<u>Graduate Program put on probation (Level II).</u> Required to address deficiency within 3 years. Subsequent re-evaluation review will be held in 2 years from probation date. Next review: 2 years (intermediate). When successful, the next review will be in 5 years.
Category 3.	(D):	<u>Graduate Program put on probation (Level I).</u> Required to address deficiencies within 1 year. If appropriate, graduate student admissions may be put on hold. Unless Graduate Program is restructured within 1 year, Graduate Program will be terminated. Next review: 1 year.
Category 4.	(E):	<u>Graduate Program terminated.</u> Graduate student admissions stopped immediately. Once a program has been terminated, a new application to the appropriate College of Graduate Studies committee must be made before consideration for re-instatement. Next review: Application dependant.

In order to be assessed and rated into the above categories, the following considerations will be used:

1. The individual criteria as outlined in the "A Framework for the Evaluation of Academic Programs" (April 29, 1996) will be ranked into the following two types:

### Type I Criteria

- B: Curriculum
- C: Faculty
- D: Learning Environment
- E: Infrastructure
- F: Outcome

Type II Criteria

- G: Student Demand, Market Demand, and/or Societal Need
  - H: Uses Resources Efficiently
  - I: Unique
  - J: Relevance to the Province
2. Individual criteria will be measured and evaluated and ranked on the following scale:
    - Superior
    - Adequate
    - Deficient
  3. The following table will be used in applying the evaluations of the Graduate Program obtained above (requirements shown are minimums):

Table 3: Graduate Program Review Process Outcome Matrix.

<b>Review Outcome</b>	<b>Type I</b>	<b>Type II</b>
Superior Rating	3 superior No deficiencies	No deficiencies
Acceptable Rating	No deficiencies	No deficiencies
Probation (Level II)	1 deficient	1 deficient
Probation (Level I)	2 deficient	1 deficient
Terminated	3 deficient	1 deficient

**Note with respect to Type II Criteria, I. Unique:**

While some graduate programs will exhibit uniqueness, this is considered as a positive to these programs. More mainstream graduate programs would not be assessed deficient because of their inability to evaluate highly in this area.

**Note with respect to Type II Criteria, J. Relevance to the Province:**

While some graduate programs will exhibit relevance to the province, this is considered as a positive to these programs. More mainstream graduate programs would not be assessed deficient because of their inability to evaluate highly in this area.