

## Criteria for Evaluation of Program Proposals at the University of Saskatchewan

Based on procedural and policy documents as reported to or approved by Council  
from 1996 to 2007

### 1. Overall Framework for Program Evaluation

Of primary importance to the University of Saskatchewan is that academic programs:

- be of **high quality**
- be in **demand** by students and the public
- **use resources efficiently**

In addition to the three primary characteristics related to quality, demand and resources, for some programs it is also important to consider:

- the **unique** features of a program, and
- the **relevance** of the program to Saskatchewan

We must also keep in mind other of the *University of Saskatchewan Objectives* including our commitment to fair and equitable **access** to our programs, to **equity**, to **environmental responsibility**, and to an **international perspective** in our endeavours.

The University is committed to developing programs which exhibit the three primary characteristics above, recognizing that our present program strengths lie with the programs which exhibit those characteristics. Programs should be assessed so as to direct change both in terms of programming and resource allocation; i.e., to determine how/why they do not meet criteria and whether changes to remedy the situation are feasible.

The unique features of a program and its relevance to the province should be viewed as characteristics of secondary importance, having first established the quality of, demand for, and costs associated with a program. Certain core disciplines/programs represented within any university are not expected to be unique. However, it is still possible that instructional methods or particular sub-specializations might be described as unique within the province or region. On the other hand, being 'unique' assumes greater importance where the cost of delivering a program is high or demand for the program is low. The importance or relevance of a program to the province may relate to building on economic or other strengths which already exist. On the other hand, a program may serve as a nucleus contributing expertise and services which would otherwise be unavailable to the community.

The Table which follows identifies essential components for each of the primary characteristics and general criteria associated with them. The components are not necessarily independent and therefore similar criteria may appear for different components; e.g., both curriculum and learning environment have a criterion related to education equity. The relative importance of criteria for different types of programs can vary.

## A Framework for Evaluation of Academic Programs

Characteristics	Components	Criteria
High quality	Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• curriculum is designed to meet the objectives for the program (e.g. array and sequence of courses, modes of instruction and evaluation, development of skills, acquisition of knowledge, synthesis of information).</li> <li>• program provides students with the elements of a liberal education by encouraging the development of broadly informed, reflective and literate minds capable of independent and critical thinking.</li> <li>• program includes opportunities for synthesis, application and integration of knowledge within and between disciplines.</li> <li>• program is current, both in content and modes of instructional delivery, and reflects a responsiveness to changes in the discipline.</li> <li>• curriculum reflects the goals of education equity.</li> <li>• curriculum provides sufficient flexibility to individual students to choose courses according to their own interests within and outside their major discipline (e.g. electives).</li> <li>• program meets or exceeds accreditation and/or national standards (if they exist).</li> </ul>
	Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• faculty responsible for/involved in program are well-qualified; i.e., have the appropriate academic and/or professional qualifications to support and develop the program. In the case of graduate programs, this includes active involvement in scholarly work.</li> <li>• faculty maintain and update the skills and knowledge appropriate to their discipline through involvement with academic, professional and/or scientific organizations.</li> <li>• faculty are nationally/internationally recognized for their scholarly and/or professional work; e.g., have obtained awards and/or local/national/international invitations to present their work to colleagues in their discipline.</li> <li>• scholarly work of faculty has made a significant contribution to the discipline. faculty are committed to developing their teaching skills.</li> <li>• faculty are successful in obtaining external research support.</li> </ul>
	Learning Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• students are involved in evaluating instruction and perceive instruction is effective.</li> <li>• program incorporates a variety of modes of instruction, accommodates different learning styles and, where possible, allows flexibility in scheduling.</li> <li>• teaching within the program demonstrates responsiveness to new developments in the field, including incorporating practical experiences, where appropriate.</li> <li>• program integrates teaching and scholarship.</li> <li>• approaches to instruction and students reflect a commitment to the goals of education equity.</li> <li>• instructional methods and philosophies are consistent with program objectives.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• scholarly work of faculty enhances the learning environment.</li> </ul>
	Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• adequate numbers of appropriately trained staff are available to support the program.</li> <li>• necessary facilities and equipment are provided.</li> <li>• appropriate library resources are available.</li> <li>• the organization and administration of the program and the academic unit(s) delivering the program are effective and supportive of the program.</li> </ul>
	Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• program achieves its educational objectives.</li> <li>• students are satisfied that the program has helped them achieve their personal and/or professional goals.</li> <li>• students completing graduate programs are 'successful' in that they find employment or pursue endeavours which utilize the advanced training in their field of study.</li> <li>• the academic load does not impose undue barriers to completion such that students can complete the program in the regular allotted time.</li> <li>• qualifications/education of students graduating from specific 'professional' programs are acceptable to licensing bodies and/or employers.</li> <li>• students are successful in national/international examinations or competitions.</li> <li>• employers or subsequent graduate supervisors are satisfied with the performance and academic preparation of students.</li> </ul>
In demand	Student demand, Market demand and/or societal need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interest by students of the Province is sufficient to establish or to maintain a program and to allocate resources to it.</li> <li>• market demand (provincial, national) for graduates justifies the size of the program which is offered by the University.</li> <li>• the program attracts outstanding students from within and outside the Province, while still providing general access to other applicants.</li> <li>• high demand for junior 'service' courses is sufficient to maintain some programs within an academic area.</li> </ul>
Uses resources efficiently		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• program is delivered in a cost-effective manner, relative to other similar programs.</li> <li>• where student demand for a program is low, high demand for 'service' courses justifies maintenance of the area of study and the incremental cost of offering the program is low.</li> <li>• major areas of research, scholarly or artistic work are associated with opportunities for graduate education.</li> </ul>
Unique  Relevant to the province		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• program is unique in content (e.g. specialization) and/or approach - nationally, regionally (Western Canada), provincially [in descending order of priority].</li> <li>• program builds on and contributes to the cultural and economic strengths of Saskatchewan.</li> <li>• faculty and other personnel associated with the program provide services and expertise otherwise unavailable.</li> </ul>

## **2. Agreement with the College of Graduate Studies and Research regarding procedures for review of graduate program proposals**

With the goal of reducing duplication of effort, the Academic Programs Committee and the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research have agreed to follow this procedure:

- **College of Graduate Studies and Research (CGSR)** will conduct a comprehensive and thorough review of the nature of the program, particularly the curriculum, the program requirements, the program rationale, the faculty credentials associated with the program delivery and a judgment of the faculty's ability to deliver the program, the program content, the relationships with other units who may be involved in program delivery, the budgetary requirements for program delivery, and the general "fit" of the proposed program with other similar programs (in a provincial and national context) and with the requirements of the College. The process followed by the review, the nature of the discussions at college committees, interactions of the CGSR with the college or department making the proposal, committee and college observations and conclusions, and the general assessment should be documented in a comprehensive report which will be forwarded to the APC for its review. That report should include the following:

- a recommendation from the CGSR;
- a description of the process followed by the college in arriving at the recommendation;
- a description of the issues noted in the paragraph above;
- a description of the relationship of the proposal to recommendations arising from Systematic Program Review (if applicable); (where applicable, the acceptability of the response<sup>1</sup>, particularly the action response for 'C-rated' programs, from the CGSR will be provided, including the feasibility of continued admissions);
- a description of any concerns/issues arising at the CGSR committees reviewing the program and the responses provided (if any);
- a statement by the Dean on the relationship of the proposed program to other programs offered by the sponsoring unit, the track record of the sponsoring unit, a descriptive account of where and how the program fits, supports and/or enhances the initiatives identified in the CGSR and sponsoring college plan, and a statement on the relative priority attached to the proposal within the overall structure of graduate programs offered by the University of Saskatchewan.

**Academic Programs Committee** will review the program proposal to determine its general "fit" with the University's *Strategic Directions, Foundational Documents, Integrated Plan*, Systematic Program Review recommendations, any other Council-approved policies that might arise from time to time, and on its relationship and fit with the College of Graduate Studies and Research plan as well as the sponsoring unit's plan. In particular, the APC will focus its discussions on the program rationale and its relationship to the University's and college's stated priorities. In other words, the APC will rely heavily on the CGSR to conduct a thorough review of the program from the viewpoint of objective assessment, not advocacy. The APC will act primarily as a "review and assessment" body; APC will, however, reserve the right to review a proposal thoroughly should continued questions arise from the initial CGSR review

*This Summary is based on the following reference documents:*

*Framework – April, 1996; APC review guide -- March, 1997; Graduate program review guide – June, 2004; Planning review guide – January, 1999; Dissolution of Budget Committee, creation of Planning & Priorities Committee, changes to Academic Programs Committee terms of reference - May, 2007*