CGHS Program Review Guide

Overview:

Per TN Higher Education Commission standards (THEC Meeting January 26, 2012, Information item II.A http://tn.gov/thec/Divisions/Commission/commissionmeetings/Archives/2012/pdf/II.A.%20Academic%20Program%20Review.pdf), every graduate program should be reviewed according to established accreditation review cycles, or where none are applicable, at least once every five to seven years. Programs not eligible for accreditation are to undergo evaluation by external consultants or a trained team of auditors “to ensure that standards of the discipline are being met and that adequate financial support is evident.” All reviews must begin with an institutional self-evaluation of the programs followed by an external peer review process.

Purpose and Primary Components of an Academic Program Self-Study:

The primary purpose of an academic program self-study is to ensure the program is functioning at the highest levels of academic quality, is consistent with the mission and standards of the UTHSC and the College of Graduate Health Sciences, and is continuing to represent a needed area of study. The self-study should also serve the function of identifying strengths of the programs, potential areas of weakness, and recommendations for consideration by college and university administration. Finally, the Self-study will serve as the basis for a review by a team of external evaluators from peer institutions (outside the UT System).

Components of the Self-Study should include, but not be limited to, the following:

- **Program Overview:** To include the mission, goals and objectives of the program; description of the relationship between these to the mission and goals of College of Graduate Health Sciences and of UTHSC; the current need and demand for the program; and an overview of any interdisciplinary activities or external relationships associated with the program. The administrative responsibility and oversight for the program must be clearly defined and documented in the program overview (including an organizational chart for program oversight and administration).

- **Curriculum:** The curriculum must be adequately structured to meet the stated objectives of the program and reflect the breadth, depth, theory, and practice appropriate to the discipline and level of the degree (per THEC standards for academic degree programs). This section must include degree requirements; identified student learning outcomes; course descriptions and course sequences; description of culminating experiences and assessment of mastery of the material; and, the process for approving and assuring the completion of a course of study.

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1 Review criteria are based primarily on requirements as outlined by THEC and SACS for academic degree programs.
• **Academic Standards:** Information provided in this section must demonstrate that all admission, retention, and graduation standards are clearly stated, publically available, consistent with institutional and governing board policy, and foster high quality.

• **Faculty:** Current faculty should reflect the basis of a high quality program. Information provided must include a list of all graduate faculty members, complete with information regarding title, tenure status, courses taught, academic credentials and relevance for courses taught and projects overseen; also to include demographic information about the graduate faculty supporting the program, process for selecting faculty to participate in the graduate program, and process for routine evaluation of all graduate faculty members.

• **Facilities and Resources:** The college and institution must demonstrate that there are sufficient facilities and resources to support the program and related academic activities (i.e., research). At a minimum, information provided must demonstrate that the available space (classrooms, laboratories, study space), library resources, and other support resources (e.g., clerical support, scientific equipment), are adequate to support a high quality program.

• **Students:** All student admissions, recruitment, enrollment, and evaluation practices must be presented and sufficiently documented. Student data for the preceding seven years (or since the time of the last evaluation) must include admissions, enrollment, retention, and graduation rates by sex and ethnicity as well as information on financial support (i.e., the number of assistantships provided to students each year for the preceding seven years or since the last evaluation by race and sex). Student support services must be clearly outlined and documented (including information on access to financial aid and financial counseling, student advising and counseling resources). Finally, information must be provided summarizing graduate placement for the prior seven years (or since the last evaluation).

• **Budget and Financial Support:** Summary of the budgets, sources of funds (both internal and external to UTHSC), and expenditures for the preceding seven years (or since the time of the last evaluation will be presented to demonstrate sufficient financial resources to support and sustain a high quality program.

• **Assessment and Evaluation:** The program must demonstrate and document that careful and systematic evaluation of the program occurs on a routine basis with sufficient consideration and utilization of the information gathered to maintain or improve the quality of the program. Information provided must indicate the schedule for program assessments or evaluations, the kinds of data gathered and used during the evaluation, the results from such assessments from the prior four years, examples of actions taken as a result of the data gathered during this period of time, and the office or individuals responsible for overseeing the systematic review of the program.
• **Costs/benefits of the Program:** The benefits to the state and scientific community must outweigh the costs of maintaining such a program. This section should present a detailed assessment of the identified strengths and weaknesses of the program and benefits achieved for the state and scientific community as a result of the program and graduates. Based on the identified strengths and weaknesses, a set of recommended actions should be included in the final section of the self-study that could contribute to strengthening the quality of the program.

**Purpose and Primary Components of the External Peer Review:**

As stated previously, the primary purpose of an academic program review is to ensure the program is functioning at the highest levels of academic quality. The TN Higher Education Commission requires a routine (every 5 to 7 years) evaluation of all graduate programs to consist of both a self-study by the institution as well as a peer review, conducted by a team of external evaluators from peer institutions. The self-study outlined above serves as the basis for the external review. The peer review is comprised of an off-site review of the documentation provided (i.e., the self-study and all accompanying documentation) and a site visit designed to verify the information provided and to gather additional information to be included in their final report to the CEO of the institution (i.e., the Chancellor). The purpose of the external evaluation is to verify that the standards of the discipline are being met and that adequate resources and institutional support are evident.

**Components of the final external peer review report should include, but not be limited to, the following:**

- Confirmation of the information provided for each of the criteria presented above;
- Observed strengths and potential weaknesses for each of the areas (criteria) presented above;
- Overall strengths and potential weaknesses of the program under review;
- A statement of confirmation or concern regarding whether or not the program is meeting the standards of the discipline and has access to sufficient resources and institutional support to maintain a high quality program; and,
- Recommendations to the CEO to strengthen the quality of the program.