

Overview of Graduate School Council Role in Academic Program Reviews (Revised March 31, 2010)

The Graduate Council provides advice to the Dean and Vice Provost of the Graduate School to inform his or her recommendations to the Provost regarding the results of an academic program review. This important work is done in the following way:

- The Graduate School, taking into consideration Council members' preferences, assigns two Council members to each program review. Assignments occur in the autumn term for reviews scheduled the following academic year.
- These two Council members organize their work to ensure that at least one attends the charge meeting (at the beginning of a unit's review process, prior to the writing of the self-study) and the final exit meeting (at the end of the unit's site visit, prior to the writing of the review committee's formal report).

For charge meeting:

You are a full participant in the meeting. This means you should feel free to contribute in the process in any way, including helping to shape the kinds of questions the unit should consider as it develops its self-study.

As representatives of the Council, you should read the previous program review materials and come prepared with any questions that arose in the previous review you believe should be addressed in the upcoming review.

As there is ample time between the close of the charge meeting and the date when the unit must submit its self-study, you are free to forward additional thoughts/ideas/questions to the Chair of the review committee as they occur to you.

During site visit:

You will be in attendance at the exit meeting. You are a full participant in the meeting and should feel free to raise any questions you might have upon hearing the preliminary report of the review committee.

You are also a full participant in the executive session of the exit meeting and may choose to raise questions at that time, which can help the review committee shape its report.

Council responsibilities at end of review:

The two Council members will make a report of the findings to the Council as a whole. To prepare for this report you will need to examine all documents, including the self-study, the review committee's report, and the unit's response to the report. Determine whether there is sufficient information in these documents so that you are able to craft overall recommendations for the Dean.

Your report should, minimally, attest to the quality/validity of the review, present the strengths and weaknesses found by the review, and highlight the overall recommendations made by the review committee. You should also come prepared to present additional topics that may have arisen as part of the review that have broad-based implications for graduate education at the university.

You deliver a brief presentation before the Council that outlines the highlights of the review, its major findings, and overall recommendation for the Dean. The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs of the Graduate School moderates the discussion.

The Council should make two core recommendations to the Dean: should the unit's program(s) be continued? And when is the next review?

- In a few cases, some clarification may be needed on issues before ready to present before the Council. *If this is the case, then the two Council members will work with the Office of Academic Affairs and Planning of the Graduate School to prepare an email communication to the appropriate party (e.g., the chair of the unit, the Dean, the chair of the review committee, etc.), with a request that responses be provided within a two-week period. After receiving clarification to its questions, the two Council members will then prepare their presentation for delivery before the Council.*
- Occasionally, the two Council members may deem a review as having raised issues that are problematic and worthy of deeper conversation by the Council as a whole. In these cases, the two Council members should work with the Graduate School to determine next steps (which may include the unit chair/director, the relevant dean(s), and the chair of the review committee being scheduled for a discussion with the Council as a whole). The goal in this instance is to better understand the challenges and to allow the Council to ask more specific questions before making a formal recommendation to the Dean and Vice Provost of the Graduate School. This conversation is moderated by the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Planning of the Graduate School, in consultation with the two Council members assigned to that unit's review.

Here are some additional thoughts...

Assuming the review committee and the two Council members believe the unit's program(s) should be continued, then the issue of when the next review should occur needs to be addressed. The default is 10 years. But if the Council believes a review should occur sooner, then it should provide the Dean with reasoning (rooted in evidence within the review) as to why, along with the concrete steps the unit should complete before the next review.