

GRADUATE PROGRAM ASSESSMENT STANDARDS

June 2005
With revisions to December 2011

1. Faculty and staff

The program, whether disciplinary or interdisciplinary in nature, is supported by suitably qualified academic faculty and instructional staff to develop and deliver the graduate degree program and to supervise students. Faculty will have an appropriate level of scholarly output and/or research or creative activity for the graduate program involved. The institution will have a critical mass of scholars/researchers, not only in the program area but in related areas, with a range of expertise to allow for intellectual leadership and challenge. The program will be anchored by a designated complement of faculty who are primarily responsible for its delivery and continuity.

2. Commitment to research and scholarship

The institution and the program being proposed have a research culture (the scholarly context within which graduate study will occur) which is fundamental to maintaining and enhancing high quality graduate programs. The institution is clearly committed to research which promotes the depth and breadth of knowledge, both within the field/discipline, and in a cognate field/discipline when necessary.

3. Academic and program policies and procedures

The program is governed by academic policies appropriate to the administration of a full-time or part-time graduate program including, but not limited to, those dealing with admissions, placement, applicable residency requirements, maximum time limits for completion, assessment, progression and graduation requirements, supervisory committee requirements, comprehensive/candidacy examination requirements, thesis oral examination committee and procedures, credit transfer and prior learning assessment, appeals, academic dishonesty, intellectual property rights, and ethical guidelines for research.

4. Graduate supervision plans

The institution has a detailed graduate supervision plan in place to organize the advising, supervision and monitoring of graduate students. The proposed program has criteria for the appointment of faculty who will supervise graduate students, and for the appointment of supporting or adjunct faculty and mentoring practices to enhance the supervisory skills of faculty. The proposed program specifies graduate supervisory loads for faculty, advising and monitoring practices for graduate students, and procedures for the monitoring and evaluation of students that will provide adequate feedback to the program administrators and to the student.

5. Quality of students

Admission to master's or doctoral programs will normally require either a recognized undergraduate or graduate degree with an appropriate specialization or relevant bridging studies. Institutions will expect those admitted to graduate programs to have achieved an academic standing in the previous degree (or equivalent) to enable success in the program and will require that students maintain standards appropriate to graduate study in order to progress and graduate from the program. The

proposed program will have a systematic and effective process for recruiting high quality graduate students. The extent and nature of financial support available to students and the financial resources dedicated to support the proposed size, scope and nature of the program and a critical mass of students will be described.

6. Resource capacity

The program is supported by the physical resources, both start-up and continuing, needed to assure its quality. These include, where applicable, space for graduate students, equipment, library and learning resources (physical and electronic), laboratories, computing facilities, shops, specialized equipment and work placements. There is an institutional commitment to maintaining and supplementing resources and equipment as needed to meet standards applicable to the field.

7. Recognition of the degree

The credential should align with Canadian standards and be recognized and accepted by other post-secondary institutions, by employers, and by professional and licensing bodies, where applicable. The nomenclature of the degree should reflect its content. The program type and degree level should be consistent with Canadian practice in graduate education, as exemplified by the Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework (CDQF), and it should have learning outcomes as defined by the CDQF that are consistent with national and international standards of quality.

8. Graduate program design, content, and delivery

The program offers education of sufficient breadth and rigour to meet relevant national and international standards, and the content of the program, in both subject matter and outcome standards, is appropriate to the level of the graduate degree program and the field of study. The program's design and content structure assures that the student will achieve the objectives of the program. Its curriculum must be current and reflect the state of knowledge in the field, or fields in the case of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary programs. Learning methodologies are the methods of delivery that will be used to achieve the desired learning outcomes at an acceptable level of quality; the institution must have the expertise and resources to support the proposed method(s) of delivery and ensure its effectiveness.

9. Graduate program evaluation

The institution must have a process to maintain the currency of the program and the quality of its learning outcomes. The program is subject to a formal, approved policy and procedure requiring a cyclical review and improvement process, and includes assessment of the program against published standards (including the institution's own learning outcome standards for the program), and assessment of individual student work in the terminal stage of the program against program outcomes. Such assessments must include the advice of independent academic experts.¹

10. Credentialing

Learning outcomes and other requirements for graduation in programs leading to professions (such as entry to practice programs) are designed to prepare students to meet the requirements of the relevant regulatory, accrediting, quality assurance or professional body. If the proposed program is a professional or clinical practice program, it has sufficient empirical and theoretical foundations so that study can be integrated with and informed by original research in the unit.

¹ In engaging external experts, institutions should be guided by Council's guideline on Independent Academic Experts (CAQC Handbook, Appendix I).