Process and Procedures for Changing USU Graduate Programs
Subsequent to the 2012 Graduate Program Review

from Larry Smith, Chair, Educational Policies Committee

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One of the outcomes of the Graduate Program Review in your department may be the identification of desirable changes to existing graduate programs intended to improve graduate education. These changes may include, for example, the discontinuation of a graduate program or specialization, restructuring or consolidation of existing graduate programs, or perhaps the offering of an entirely new degree. Many changes or revisions to graduate programs will require the submission of an R401 form (there are two versions of the R401; a “long” template and a “short” or abbreviated template). The information below is provided to clarify the procedures for graduate program changes and to suggest an approach to graduate program revision that may simplify the process to some extent.

1. Program Discontinuation, Restructuring, Consolidation, Program Name Change

The process for graduate program discontinuation, restructuring, consolidation, or name change requires the abbreviated template of the R401. R401 templates are available on the website for the Educational Policies Committee (EPC) at http://www.usu.edu/provost/forms/program_proposals.cfm. R401 proposals for graduate program changes will follow an approval pathway that includes the Graduate Council, the Curriculum Subcommittee and EPC, the Faculty Senate, the USU Board of Trustees, and the USHE Commissioner’s office and likely the Board of Regents.

The abbreviated template consists of only four principal sections: Action, Need, Institutional Impact, and Financial Impact. It is critical that all four areas be addressed thoroughly and that the case for the graduate program change is fully justified. In some cases, this may be done in brief and “to the point” language: in others, greater explanation may be needed. The “rule of thumb” should be that the content and length of the proposal be appropriate to make a defensible case.

An exception to the above is when a program is restructured such that greater than 50% of the program is changed. In this case, the resulting program would be considered a new program and would require the long template of the R401 also available on the EPC website.

2. Changes to the Number of Required Credits for Doctoral Programs

One possible change that may result from the Graduate Program Review is the reduction in the number of credits earned for a doctoral degree program(s) in your department. This change is of such a nature that it does not need to go beyond the boundaries of Utah State University approval. We suggest that departments interested in making this kind of program change conveniently use the R401 abbreviated template. Again, departments should make a clear and defensible case for why a USU doctoral program can be earned with fewer credits. To achieve this, various kinds of benchmarking data, comparisons with peer degree programs, and detailed comparison of the current and proposed curricula, would be very helpful. The proposal will follow the path through Graduate Council, Curriculum Subcommittee and EPC, and the Faculty Senate.
3. **New Graduate Degree Programs**

Proposals for new graduate degrees require the R401 long template available on the EPC website.

4. **Tips and Timing for Proposing Graduate Program Changes**

As stated above, significant changes to graduate programs require an approval process at several levels including the USHE Commissioner’s Office or the state Board of Regents and thereby requires the use of R401 forms. Some departments may seek multiple changes to their graduate programs in light of findings from their Graduate Program Review, some may propose one change, some none.

As stewards of educational program changes at Utah State University, the EPC recommends the following to help with graduate program changes:

- A department should wait until it has a comprehensive picture of all types of program changes it wishes to make before submitting proposals. In short, a department should wait to propose graduate program changes until the department is ready to make all changes and this might not be until sometime in AY 12-13 or later.

- One possible exception to this could be the changes in the number of doctoral degree program credits. Because a proposal for that specific change would be internal to Utah State only, that proposal (using an abbreviated R401 template) could be submitted before those for other changes.

- Once a department is ready to propose multiple changes to graduate programs and prepares multiple short or long R401 templates, consider the creation of a single proposal “package.” The package would be a one-time submission consisting of several R401’s with a single Executive Summary as a cover sheet describing, in general terms, the sought for changes to a department’s graduate programs. This would greatly reduce the flow of paperwork between the department and levels of review. A proposal package would also allow reviewers to understand the context of the totality of the changes.

- All R401 proposals for graduate program changes are to be submitted electronically to the chair of the EPC, Larry Smith (larry.smith@usu.edu) with cc’s to Cathy Gerber (cathy.gerber@usu.edu) and Michele Hillard (Michele.hillard@usu.edu) for tracking purposes. **DO NOT** submit proposals to the School of Graduate Studies.

- Any questions about the R401 submission process should be directed to Larry Smith, Ed Reeve (chair of the Curriculum Subcommittee of the EPC), Cathy Gerber, or Michele Hillard.

This document is available on the EPC website at:
[http://www.usu.edu/epc/R401proposals/pdf/Graduate Program Changes.pdf](http://www.usu.edu/epc/R401proposals/pdf/Graduate Program Changes.pdf)