



CGS Agenda Item: 22-48
Effective Summer 2022

EIU Graduate Program of Excellence

An EIU Graduate Program of Excellence indicates that a graduate program has met the highest standards of achievement at Eastern Illinois University as evidenced by sustained achievements in the criteria below. Because of the diversity of EIU graduate programs, the criteria are intended as guidelines that allow for a variety of ways and applications to achieve and demonstrate excellence as appropriate. In that respect, the process offers flexibility in documentation of the established criteria. In completing an application, programs should address as many elements of the criteria that have direct relevancy to the program. Additional evidence of excellence and distinction may be included at the program's discretion.

Four criteria have been established that provide a set of metrics for programs to demonstrate excellence. Graduate Programs of Excellence must be able to provide strong, compelling data and examples to demonstrate achievement, innovation and identifiable successes in their graduate programs across the criteria over the last three years, at minimum, as evidence of sustained excellence. In addition, Graduate Programs of Excellence must demonstrate how they will use Excellence in Graduate Education resources to build upon and enhance their graduate programs.

Graduate Program of Excellence

Criterion 1: Superior Graduate Education: Program Rigor and Excellence

Reflecting the University's mission to provide a superior education, the program must demonstrate its high quality, currency, and academic rigor. As such, the program documents sustained achievements in academic rigor and excellence in the following ways as appropriate:

A demonstration that the program's curriculum is informed by current disciplinary practices and has appropriate graduate program rigor, addresses current industry standards or may be informed by alumni advisory boards, and provides evidence of external accreditation and licensure as appropriate.

Student success as demonstrated by graduation placement rates.

Student success as evidenced by student achievements, including research publications, external conference participation, external creative activities, student awards (i.e., Hamand Society of Graduate Scholars, Williams Travel Grants, Research and Creative Activity Grants, Thesis awards, King-Mertz Awards, among others).

Faculty excellence in graduate related activities: research publications, service activities that relate directly to graduate education, external professional engagements and activities and achievements that bring distinction to the graduate program.

Intentional and Impactful Assessment: Assessment efforts that produce curricular revisions and innovations, which also demonstrate responsiveness to suggestions for future improvements.

Criterion 2: Program Accessibility and Flexibility in Program Delivery

Reflecting the University's mission of being accessible to a range of student learners, graduate programs may demonstrate accessibility and flexibility in the following ways:

Courses are offered in a modality(ies) that meet student needs and demands.

Admission standards are appropriate for the academic discipline, including start dates that foster accessibility to the program.

Support for non-traditional and part-time students exists, with flexible course offerings in appropriate modalities.

As appropriate, programs demonstrate flexibility in curricular offerings, which may be evidenced by utilization of Accelerated Graduate programs, second graduate degree options, or creative curriculum pathways that meet graduate students' different and varying professional and academic interests.

Criterion 3: Enrollment Management and Recruitment

Reflecting on the University's commitment to growth, a Graduate Program of Excellence must demonstrate success in their enrollment management efforts, which may be documented in the following ways:

At minimum, the program must have stable enrollments or growing enrollments over the last three years.

Evidence of an established recruitment plan.

Evidence of initiatives aimed at promoting and supporting a diverse group of graduate students.

Evidence of a diverse and inclusive graduate student enrollment.

Updated and engaging program/faculty websites and promotional materials as appropriate.

Criterion 4: Student Success and Support: Health and Wellness Initiatives

Reflecting on the University's commitment to student wellness and success, the program documents a sustained commitment to student success, focusing especially on student health and wellness activities, which may be documented in the following ways:

A meaningful and intentional orientation for incoming graduate students.

Active student participation in departmental/program student organizations or the Graduate Student Advisory Council (GSAC), among other student groups on campus.

Activities and pedagogies aimed at increasing relational learning among peers and faculty.

Engagement in the Graduate School's Alumni-Student Mentoring Program or related efforts that support graduate student professional development.

Activities that promote inclusivity within the graduate student community.

Mental health promotion and awareness activities that encourage social support networks.

Support for graduate students with disabilities as appropriate and relevant.

Graduate faculty participation in student mental health and wellness training.

Utilization of campus resources to foster student success (i.e. participation in Career Services activities, utilization of Library Resources and Training Activities).

Budget Proposal: Effective Utilization of the Excellence in Graduate Education Fund

Reflecting on the University's need for fiscal accountability, programs must articulate how they will use Graduate Program of Excellence resources provided in the Excellence in Graduate Education Fund to successfully promote and enhance their graduate program.

All Graduate Programs of Excellence will receive \$7,500 from the Excellence in Graduate Education Fund to use over the course of four years. Graduate Program leaders will have discretion in proposing how to use these resources, though they must be devoted primarily to initiatives related to graduate student professional development. Programs may use these additional resources in the following ways:

Increase graduate assistant stipend levels within the program

Support Graduate Student Research and Creative Activity Agendas

Use as a research start-up package to support graduate education and graduate student research and activities.

Bring invited guest speakers to your programs who enhance graduate learning and/or health and wellness or further inclusivity.

Use for support of initiatives that require further funding and bring additional distinction to the graduate program that support graduate students.

Other initiatives, as appropriate, may be proposed in consultation with the L.M. Hamand Dean of the Graduate School.

Guidelines for Preparing a Review

In consultation with the Graduate Coordinator, the Department Chair makes the decision to pursue a consultation, review, or renewal.

The Initial Consultation

- **Purpose:** The purpose of an initial consultation is to provide the graduate program leaders with feedback regarding the program's potential for being designated a "Graduate Program of Excellence."
- **Report and Presentation:** The program presents a preliminary oral report to the L. M. Hamand Dean of the Graduate School. The consultation is an informal discussion between the Program Team and the Dean. Programs may provide written documentation to assist in the consultation.
- **Outcome:** The outcome of the consultation is to provide a summary to the graduate program leaders that identifies which criteria appear to have good prospects for approval, as well as a summary of which criterion are or may be in question before continuing with a full review to a CGS Review Board. The Graduate Dean will also provide guidance regarding a timeline before turning to the Council on Graduate Studies for a full review. The CGS Review Board consists of three CGS faculty members designated by the Graduate Dean. The CGS Review Board provides advice to the Dean regarding the program's achievement of the criteria following a full review, or renewal request.

The First Full Review

- **Purpose:** The Purpose of a Full Review is to achieve the Graduate Program of Excellence designation after completing a Consultation.
- **Report and Presentation:** A formal report providing succinct evidence regarding how the program meets the criteria is provided one month in advance of the presentation, which occurs at a meeting of the Council on Graduate Studies. The report length should

be approximately 10 or fewer pages submitted to the Graduate School. A Full Review requires a 20-minute oral presentation to CGS.

- **Outcome:** Following the presentation to the Council on Graduate Studies, the Review Board will provide recommendations to the L.M. Hamand Dean of the Graduate School regarding achievement of the Graduate Program of Excellence designation. If the Board recommends the Graduate Program of Excellence and the Dean concurs, the Graduate School Dean will share the results with the program applicants, including any recommendations provided by the Review Team. If the Board or the Dean do not approve the application, the Graduate School Dean will meet with the Program Team to review the outcome and assist the program with making improvements in order to consider a future application.
- **Period of Designation:** Programs earning the Graduate Program of Excellence designation are approved for a four-year period specified by the L.M. Hamand Dean of the Graduate School. During the last year of designation, programs are invited to reapply.

The Renewal Process

- **Purpose:** The purpose of a Graduate Program of Excellence designation renewal is to achieve continued recognition at the conclusion of a four-year designation period. The L.M. Hamand Dean of the Graduate School will alert the program when a renewal is required and provide the program with an opportunity to formally update the Council on Graduate Studies on changes that have occurred during the four-year designation period.
- **Report and Presentation:** The Renewal Report provides evidence that the program has sustained achievement of the criteria and is eligible for an additional four-year designation period. A Renewal Review is a 20-minute presentation made to the entire Council on Graduate Studies. Program leaders must also request a consultation with the Graduate Dean prior to the oral presentation.
- **Outcome:** Following the presentation, the Review Board make recommendations to the Dean regarding continued achievement of the Graduate Program of Excellence criteria and the Dean will summarize the findings in a report.
- **Period of Designation:** Programs achieving renewal are approved for a four-year period specified by the Dean of the Graduate School.

Existing First Choice Graduate Programs

Graduate programs who currently have First Choice status will maintain their existing additional graduate assistantship for two additional academic years, concluding June 30,

2024. In order to maintain the additional existing graduate assistantship, these programs must seek “Graduate Program of Excellence” status prior to June 30, 2025.

Beginning in the 2023-2024 academic year, summer first choice assistantships will no longer exist. Summer first choice assistantships will end on June 30, 2023. These resources will be used to supplement graduate student professional development, including additional resources for Williams Travel Grants, Research and Creative Activity Grants, and supplement the Excellence in Graduate Education Fund as needed.