

Determining Areas of Distinction in Graduate and Professional Programs¹

All graduate and professional programs at Portland State University are expected to be of high quality, efficiently managed, and achieving their stated program goals. In selected areas, graduate and professional programs should strive to be nationally and internationally recognized. The following are offered as suggested characteristics or criteria that should be employed when determining areas of distinction in graduate and professional programs. These criteria are clustered around strategic perspectives of “quality”, “fit/synergy” and “feasibility”.

There is no *a priori* rank order to these criteria, nor would each criterion receive the same weight of importance when applied to a particular graduate or professional program. These criteria are intended to be equally applicable for graduate and professional program decisions that result in bold new investments or incremental investments of institutional resources, and for disinvestment decisions in existing programs that are no longer viewed as areas of distinction. The Graduate Council offers this list of decision-making criteria as a first step in a process to engage the larger University community and yield a consensus to facilitate strategic development of graduate and professional programs of distinction.

Quality: The ability of a program to achieve prominence.

Reputation Building. Is likely to produce a graduate or professional program of high caliber, garnering national or international reputation within its field. Typically, this directly reflects the ongoing collective scholarly accomplishments of the faculty directly involved in the program and the subsequent demand for and success of the program’s graduates.

Creates Visibility for PSU as a Leader in Graduate Education. Is likely to create high *visibility and recognition for the University as a leader in graduate education. Typically, this would be accomplished either by (1) launching new professional and graduate programs that are non-traditional, cross-disciplinary, or part of an emerging development in graduate education, or by (2) delivering traditional or mainstream professional or graduate programs that are widely regarded as leading programs.*

Fit/Synergy: The ability of a program to address an important need within the University’s graduate offerings.

Advances PSU Mission. Advances the University’s unique urban mission, including the potential problem-solving application of the new knowledge created by the program, and the opportunity for the program to foster new and strengthen existing community partnerships.

Creates Program Synergy. Complements and/or enhances existing core disciplines and programs, creating synergy across programs, faculty interests and/or facilities.

Addresses Deficiencies. Addresses a deficiency in graduate offerings that is inconsistent with PSU’s urban mission, as suggested by the “benchmarking” of current graduate offerings against comparator institutions.

¹ Approved by Graduate Council 04/25/01

Feasibility: The University's capability to launch and sustain a program of distinction in this area.

Financial Viability. Potential for external funding and/or financial self-sufficiency; takes into consideration the initial and continuing investment requirements to maintain a program of distinction.

Leverages Resources. Builds on and reinforces existing expertise, facilities, and faculty interests, particularly where a marginal increase in institutional resources would likely produce the necessary critical mass to generate higher proportional financial and programmatic returns.

Is Market Responsive. Possesses a coherent curriculum and delivery structure that responds to a specified market demand for graduate education and that meets or exceeds existing national standards. This is particularly important for professional programs of distinction.