

To: Faculty in Arts & Sciences  
From: Graduate Program Task Force  
Re: Suggested guidelines and evaluation criteria for new graduate programs. (For discussion at the April 2, 2002 faculty meeting.)  
Date: March 25, 2002

Dear Colleagues:

Please find below our suggested guidelines and evaluation criteria for new graduate programs. These will be discussed at the April faculty meeting, and voted upon after we have reworked them based upon faculty and administration input. Please feel free to direct comments or suggestions to any member of the committee.

The primary innovation in these guidelines is the creation of a review process that should reveal weaknesses in the proposal early enough so changes can be made, as well as making sure that all relevant constituencies are consulted. The resulting document trail should also help later proposers to learn from the experience of previous successful proposals.

The guidelines provide a framework for focussed internal discussions by departments or programs that are considering a new graduate program. In addition, they provide a roadmap for the department or program and the administration to work with. The guidelines given here *do not replace* the SCHEV guidelines, which can be found on the SCHEV homepage. However, a proposal that addresses all issues raised by the proposed Arts & Sciences guidelines should present a very strong case for SCHEV's consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

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## **Guidelines for the Proposal of New Graduate Programs in Arts & Sciences**

### **Preamble**

William & Mary is a research university, with serious scholarly expectations in all of its departments and programs. History has shown that this focus on research often leads faculty members to want to educate research students beyond the level possible with undergraduates. It is therefore important that William & Mary not only nurture existing graduate programs, but that it has procedures and criteria that foster the creation of new graduate programs. High quality graduate programs can also enrich the undergraduate program by providing more research opportunities and advanced courses for our undergraduates, and by providing role models for them. The creation of new graduate programs, when and where appropriate, is an important outlet for faculty creativity and is one important way in which each generation of faculty can contribute to the growth of William & Mary as a living and dynamic institution.

The creation of any new graduate program entails a major commitment on the part of the department or program, and can have a significant impact on neighboring departments and programs. The creation of a new graduate program also implies a significant long-term commitment on the part of the administration. Hence, such proposals must demonstrate that any new program has an excellent chance of becoming competitive on the national level within a reasonable time frame, typically five to ten years. 'Competitive on a national level' is understood to mean competitive with respect to a selected set of 'peer' programs, a concept developed in the guidelines below. This requires any proposal to demonstrate that not only are the relevant faculty committed to the new program, but it must also demonstrate how students will benefit from the proposed program, how faculty will benefit from the proposed program, how the necessary resources will be found, what safeguards have been taken to ensure that no negative impacts will occur to existing programs, and how the proposed program is consistent with the mission of the university.

Normally, new graduate programs will be justified on the basis of contributions to the research activities of the faculty, hence the Ph.D. should be the standard model (perhaps with an initial master's program as a transitional stage). Stand-alone master's programs will be considered only under special circumstances.

In what follows, the term 'department' can refer to an existing department or program within Arts & Sciences, or to an interdisciplinary group of faculty which has organized with the goal of creating a new graduate program. There are two distinct stages to the successful proposal of a new graduate program: 1] An informal stage involving discussions and a brief white paper outlining the proposed program. This stage promotes a dialog among the department, the Dean of the Faculty, the Dean of Research and Graduate Studies and COGS. 2] A formal proposal with external and internal review that includes the SCHEV proposal and additional material. The additional material should provide sufficient detail for external and internal review committees to make an informed assessment regarding the likelihood that the proposed program will be competitive with its peers. Each of these stages is described more fully below.

## 1. **Informal discussions/white paper.**

After initial discussions with the Dean of the Faculty and the Dean of Research and Graduate Studies, a brief white paper describing the proposed new graduate program should be developed and distributed to the Deans and to COGS for feedback. The white paper will typically be no more than five to ten pages (double spaced) in length. Multiple iterations at this informal stage can be performed without prejudice. A full proposal should only be developed after successfully addressing major concerns raised at this informal stage. The white paper should document that the proposed program has strong support within the department, that there is a 'niche' for the program within W&M, Virginia and the nation, and that there is an excellent chance that W&M can build a high quality program with national visibility. The white paper should provide the following information:

### Program description

- How does the program build upon existing strengths at W&M?
- Provide a brief description of the proposed program, giving an outline of the proposed curriculum, degree requirements, and the course of study of a 'typical student' including the projected time to degree.
- Report the outcome of any departmental votes regarding this program. Proposed programs receiving less than a 2/3 majority of the relevant faculty will generally not be considered.
- For interdisciplinary programs, robust departmental endorsement from related departments that will be expected to provide any significant support or resources (such as faculty release time or graduate student support) must be documented. These departmental endorsements should document the fact that the proposed program can adequately accommodate changes as individual faculty come and go.

### Profile of students

- Where will your students come from? Where will they go?
- Will the graduate students have instructional responsibilities? If so, of what type (*e.g.*, grading, TA duties in laboratories, Teaching Fellowships, *etc.*)?

### Impact of the proposed program

- Will the proposed program enhance the undergraduate program in any way? (Give concrete examples, such as increased undergraduate research opportunities, more advanced course offerings, *etc.*)
- What is the likely impact of the proposed program upon the existing graduate programs?
- Given that starting a new program entails a significant modification in your department or program's mission, will your merit evaluation procedure need to be modified? If so, how? Is there a clear consensus within your department, or across departments, that supports these changes?
- How important are interdisciplinary activities to the success of the proposed program? If these are anticipated to be significant, what types of 'merit treaties' and other Memoranda of Understanding will need to be negotiated in order to insure, for example, that participating faculty are properly rewarded or that resources (such as overhead recoveries) are shared in an equitable manner?

### National visibility and funding

- What evidence can you give that this will be a nationally visible and competitive program given a reasonable estimate of available resources? What additional resources (if any) will be needed to make the program competitive (including support staff, faculty start-up packages, *etc.*)? Who will be responsible for finding those resources?
- Present a preliminary model of short-term and long-term financial sustainability of this program? (The financial planning for any proposed program must be consistent with the national model for such programs.)

### Peer programs

- Provide a list of at least five peer graduate programs that you feel W&M will compete with and provide a rationale for this list. If the proposed program is so innovative that it is not possible to identify five peer programs, provide justification for this argument. The final list of peers will be negotiated with the Dean of the Faculty and the Dean of Research and Graduate Studies. The selection of peer institutions should be guided by nationally recognized evaluation criteria, such as those used by the National Research Council, to rank existing programs.

## 2. Full proposal:

This contains the SCHEV proposal (forms are available on the SCHEV home page) and should be ready for transmittal to SCHEV when, and if, final W&M approvals are given. As addenda to the SCHEV proposal, the full proposal shall include 1] all items requested for the white paper, with any updated information requested there, such as copies of merit treaties and Memoranda of Understanding, and 2] the following additional items:

- Provide a *full* draft of the proposed graduate curriculum and degree requirements, similar to those presently found in the W&M graduate catalog.
- Provide a *full* draft of any additional graduate regulations that will not be found in the catalog, such as qualifying exam schedules. (Recall that these will need to be posted on the departmental web site if the program is approved.)
- Provide a timetable for how, and in what order, a ‘typical student’ will satisfy all degree requirements, including which courses should be taken and when, dates of exams, *etc.* Compare this with national norms and typical time to degree for similar programs.
- Provide a description of how the graduate program will be governed, the nature of anticipated recruitment efforts, admissions procedures, *etc.* Provide evidence that there are sufficient numbers of faculty and staff who are committed to the new program to insure these administrative duties can be covered.
- Where will your students come from? Where will they go? Evidence at this stage should be more formal, and reflect a study of relevant national databases that are available and a comparison with the peer programs.
- Provide a full list of participating faculty, including full CVs (*i.e.*, including summaries of their recent grant activity, fellowships, honors and awards, *etc.*).
- Are there any similar programs in the Commonwealth? If so, what is the justification for starting a new program? (*N.B.* this information is required by SCHEV.)
- What is your estimate of a ‘critical mass’ of graduate students? This estimate should be based upon the estimated time to degree, and the minimum number of students required to have reasonable class sizes and to cover research commitments.
- How much funding is needed to support such a critical mass of competitive stipends relative to the peer group (*e.g.*, 50% or higher relative to peers). Recall that the financial planning for any proposed program must be consistent with the national model for such programs. How will this funding be found (*e.g.*, state support, grant funding, private money)?

### **3. Review of the full proposal and evaluation criteria:**

This full proposal shall be transmitted to the Deans and to COGS. The Deans will form an external and an internal review committee, modeled on the existing format of graduate program reviews. The external committee will consist of three or more scholars selected from the peer institutions who, in addition to evaluating the written proposal, will be expected to visit campus and interview the relevant faculty and administrators. The external committee will submit a written report to the proposing department, the Deans, and to COGS on the viability of the proposal.

The external committee will not be asked to recommend ‘approval’ or ‘disapproval’ of the proposed graduate program, but to instead focus on whether the proposed program has an excellent chance of success given existing financial and human resources or, if not, what additional resources are needed. The following evaluation criteria will be applied:

- 1) **Scholarly Strength of the Faculty:** Does the existing scholarly strength of the department or program proposing the new graduate program compare favorably with the scholarly strength of the peer departments identified by the Dean? This needs to be discussed at length by external and internal reviewers. Detailed comparisons must be made to justify the comparisons, in terms of scholarly publications, external support, national visibility of the faculty members as represented by national prizes won, invited talks at national and international meetings, *etc.*
- 2) **Resources for the proposed program:** Are the resources described for the proposed program adequate when compared to resources available in peer departments identified by the Dean? Has the university made an adequate commitment to provide those resources in the very near-term?
- 4) **Strength of the proposed academic program:** Is the proposed academic program intellectually viable, given the current state of the discipline in which the program is proposed? Will the proposed course structure adequately prepare students for research? Is the proposed research experience credible, when compared with what peer departments offer?
- 5) **Jobs for graduates:** What is the state of the current, and projected future, job market for graduates of this kind of program, given its proposed content?
- 6) **The local context:** What special reason is there that William and Mary should offer this particular program? This must include a comparison between the proposed William & Mary program and similar existing programs in the Commonwealth.

The internal committee will consist of one member of the department proposing the new graduate program, one member from another (related) graduate program, and a third member chosen to represent the broader interests of the University (*e.g.* possibly from an undergraduate-only department). In addition to taking part in the external review committee’s visit, the internal committee will receive a copy of the external committee report, and write a response for transmittal to the proposing department, the Deans and COGS.

The department will respond to the external and internal reports, either by endorsing their findings and resubmitting an updated proposal, or by disagreeing with the review and by writing a detailed rebuttal. The proposing department can also request another round of review after it

has reworked the proposal in response to the committee reports. COGS will be asked to endorse the final proposal before the Dean forwards it to the Faculty for its consideration.