



**First Choice Graduate Programs
Criteria, Consultation, Review and Renewal Processes
July 1, 2012**

Introduction

President Perry's 2012 Strategic Plan calls for programs to achieve academic excellence by linking rigor to program identity and for programs to identify their own unique and distinctive hallmarks of rigor within the context of integrative learning, student-faculty research/creative activity, study abroad, and practicum internships. The First Choice Program criteria have been recognized as a continuing process for framing academic excellence across the mission of graduate education and will continue to serve as the Graduate School's guide to academic excellence.

The Mission of Graduate Education

The mission of graduate education at Eastern Illinois University is to provide superior graduate degree, certificate, and post-baccalaureate options designed for career specialization and advancement, certification and credentialing, professional and leadership development, and preparation for advanced scholarship. The mission includes:

1. strengthening the quality, diversity, and internationalization of the University's student body by attracting candidates who have the potential for academic and professional achievement;
2. fostering advanced scholarship through a depth of knowledge, critical thinking, problem solving, oral and written communication, application of technology, research/creative activity, and commitment to professional ethics;
3. expanding the curriculum with rigorous advanced courses and options offered through lectures, laboratories, seminars, forums, practicum field experiences, internships, and partnerships with education, business, and industry;
4. building and enhancing the excellence of the University's undergraduate majors and options through mutual and reciprocal research/creative activity with graduate students and faculty; and
5. developing opportunities for the discovery and application of knowledge with graduate faculty members who reflect the University's teaching and mentoring priority and who have a record of research/creative activity and professional service.

First Choice Definition and Criteria

The *First Choice Graduate Program Designation* means that a graduate program meets the highest standards of graduate study at Eastern as evidenced by sustained achievements of all of the criteria that are based on the *Mission of Graduate Education*. The criteria are intended to be guidelines that allow for a variety of ways to achieve excellence based on the diversity among Eastern's graduate programs. Sustained achievement means three or more years of evidence.

Criterion 1: The program documents sustained achievements in strengthening the quality, diversity, and internationalization of the University's student body by attracting candidates who have the potential for academic and professional achievement and who complete degrees and succeed as alumni.

a. Enrollment Management

- o Recruitment Plan: The program provides a clear recruitment plan and evidence that it meets its intended application, enrollment and diversity goals.
- o Selection Criteria: The program documents a rationale for its admission selection decisions in order to show that it is fulfilling its expectations for candidate quality.

- Acceptance Rate: The program documents that desired applicants accept admission offers.
- b. Assistantship/Scholarship Management:
 - Annual Awards: The program documents that its annually allocated assistantships enhance program quality by attracting desired applicants and by showing that the teaching, research, or service experiences add value to the degree.
 - Competitive Awards: The program documents that it competitively acquires additional assistantships that further enhance quality by attracting additional desired applicants and by showing that the teaching, research, or service experiences add value to the degree.
- c. Matriculation Management: The program has a targeted graduation rate and documents that degree candidates consistently meet the program's degree completion expectations.
- d. Graduate Placement: The program documents sustained placement achievements of graduates. Programs with Professional Emphasis document that candidates enter and advance in the professions and earn required credentials. Programs with Content Emphasis document placements or contributions to society that are important in-and-of themselves and provide evidence of the breadth of opportunity associated with mastery of the content in the program. Programs with Advanced Degree Preparation Emphasis document that candidates successfully enter and matriculate in advanced degree programs.

Criterion 2: The program documents sustained achievements in fostering advanced scholarship through a depth of knowledge, critical thinking, problem solving, oral and written communication, application of technology, research/creative activity, and commitment to professional ethics.

- a. Assessment Results Documented by the Center for Academic Support and Achievement: Review of the program's Assessment Plan by the Center for Academic Support and Achievement (CASA) documents that the program uses its assessment data to improve student learning, to guide improvements to the curriculum, and to achieve academic excellence.
- b. Assessment Results Documented by the Graduate School: Review of the program's plan by the Graduate School documents that the program uses its assessment data to improve student learning in areas identified by the Council on Graduate Studies. These include advancing scholarship through a depth of knowledge, critical thinking, problem solving, oral and written communication, application of technology, research/creative activity, and commitment to professional ethics.

Criterion 3: The program documents sustained achievements in expanding the curriculum with rigorous advanced courses and options offered through lectures, laboratories, seminars, forums, practicum field experiences, internships, and partnerships with education, business, and industry.

- a. Sustained Mission and Planning Leadership: The program articulates a clear mission that is aligned with current and future trends in the discipline and that states the program's strengths.
- b. Sustained Curricular Leadership by Program Administration and Faculty: The program documents that its administrative structure and graduate faculty advance the curriculum.
 - Administrative Leadership: The program documents how its administrative structure and leadership advance the quality of its curriculum. For example the program documents how the Graduate Coordinator (leadership) implements her/his duties in collaboration with the Chair and Graduate Committee (structure) to publish documents (handbooks, web resources), manage processes (orientations, capstones), ensure rigor (curriculum review), etc. in order to advance the quality of graduate study.
 - Graduate Faculty Leadership: The program documents the significant role of the graduate faculty with advancing the curriculum through curriculum committees or appropriate curriculum processes. Examples of improvements include changes in the courses, capstones, practicum programs, internships, study abroad opportunities, options, concentrations, and related learning and curricular experiences that advance the quality, currency, and rigor of the curriculum.
- c. Sustained Curricular Leadership by External Review: The program documents how it has advanced the quality of the curriculum and sustained excellence based on external reviews as appropriate to the mission/discipline. Examples of external review include accreditation reviews, program invited external reviews, or program advisory group reviews.

- d. Sustained Capstone Leadership: The program requires a rigorous capstone appropriate to the mission of its degree and certificate options and documents the impact of each of its capstones on the quality of learning in the degree program. Capstones include research capstones (thesis, the research paper, action research projects, or business research projects), performance capstones (recitals and exhibits), examinations, internships, and study abroad.
- e. Sustained Student Leadership: The Program documents how it fosters the participation of its graduate candidates on the Graduate Student Advisory Council and/or the Black Graduate Student Association to ensure that students advance the quality of graduate study and achievements of graduate students through leadership and advice on policies, programs, curriculum, seminars, forums and related programs.
- f. Sustained Alumni Leadership: The program documents how it fosters participation in alumni programs sponsored by the Graduate School Alumni Advisory Board to ensure that alumni advance the quality of graduate study and achievements of alumni. Documentation includes nomination and/or selection of program alumni for alumni awards, alumni representation on the Board, participation in alumni events hosted by the Board, or other activities affiliated with the Board.
- g. Sustained External Partnerships: The program sustains external partnerships appropriate to its mission and documents assets that partners contribute to advance the quality of the curriculum. Assets may include financial resources, professional expertise, consultation, or related contributions. External partners include entities external to the University or University entities that are not fiscally managed by the academic program.

Criterion 4: The program documents sustained achievements in research/creative activity with graduate students and faculty.

- a. Sustained Student Research Leadership: The Program has a sustained record of scholarship by offering a research/creative activity option appropriate to the discipline.
 - o Research Productivity: The program has an annual research productivity goal and documents that its candidates meet or exceed the completion of those products.
 - o Research Engagement: The program's graduate candidates achieve a sustained record of scholarship through presentations, performances, or exhibits as appropriate to the discipline and mission or through attendance at conferences, workshops, in-services as appropriate to the discipline/profession.
- b. Sustained Commitment to Research and Travel Grants: Graduate School Programs: The program has a record of sustained participation in the annual Graduate School research and travel grants that includes both applications for awards and a record of earning awards. The program may include additional documentation that its students access awards provided by the department, college, discipline, or related sources to foster engagement in research, travel to conferences, and assistance with publishing or presenting scholarly work or with attending conferences in order to advance scholarship and networking.
- c. Sustained Commitment to Showcasing Graduate Scholarship/Creative Activity: The program showcases graduate research and scholarship through a sustained commitment to the Graduate Exposition by requiring students and faculty members to participate. Participation includes but is not limited to annual student presentations, faculty monitored panels, poster displays, exhibits, recitals, performances, and related venues that showcase student research/creative activity. Programs may include additional documentation regarding other programs that showcase graduate research/creative activity through department, college, or other venues.
- d. Sustained Record of Award Program Participation: The program demonstrates participation in the Graduate School's Distinguished Awards Program with evidence of nominations, applications, and achievements. Programs may include additional documentation regarding other award programs offered by the college, department, discipline, school district, business, or other agencies with evidence of nominations, applications, and achievements.

Criterion 5: The program documents a sustained record of developing opportunities for the discovery and application of knowledge with graduate faculty members who reflect the University's teaching and mentoring priority and who have a record of research/creative activity and professional service.

- a. Sustained Record of Coordinator Leadership: The Graduate Coordinator has a sustained record of leadership. The Graduate Coordinator has established a sustained service record that may include service to the Council on Graduate Studies, Graduate Student Advisory Council, Graduate School Alumni Advisory Board, International Programs Advisory Committee, and Council on Faculty Research or through presentations, seminars or forums presented through the Graduate School's boards, councils, or committees. A sustained record of achievement may include awards such as the Graduate School Leadership Award, a Faculty Mentor Award, an Assessment Award, Research Award, or college or department awards recognizing leadership for the graduate program.
- b. Sustained Graduate Faculty Scholarship: Graduate faculty are active scholars in the discipline and can document a sustained a record of scholarship and extra-mural funding. Examples of scholarship include but are not limited to publications, presentations, or exhibits as appropriate to the discipline. Examples of funding include but are not limited to internal grants through the Office of Research & Sponsored Programs, Graduate School and International Program Awards for Initiatives, College awards for grants and research, and external grants for research and sponsored projects.

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 chair selects the Program Team, the Program Leader and the Team Consultants. The Graduate Coordinator provides leadership for graduate programs as outlined in the *Handbook for Organizing and Administering Graduate Programs* and as assigned by the Chair. The Program Team will include 3 graduate faculty members who guide completion of the program's consultation, review, and renewal report. The Team Leader leads the initiative. The Team Consultants who may be other graduate faculty, current graduate candidates, graduate alumni, internship site supervisors, adjunct graduate faculty, or other external agents, provide guidance to the program team for preparation of the report. Three faculty members from the Council on Graduate Studies designated by the Graduate Dean serve on the CGS Review Board. The CGS Review Board provides advice to the Dean regarding the program's achievement of the criteria following a consultation, review, or renewal.

The Initial Consultation

- Purpose: The purpose of an initial consultation is to provide the Program Team with feedback regarding the program's potential for achieving the First Choice Designation.
- Report and Presentation: There is no requirement that a report be submitted in conjunction with a consultation. The program conducts an informal self-assessment and presents its findings to the Review Board in the form of a preliminary report and/or power-point presentation. The consultation is an informal discussion between the Program Team and the Review Board.
- Outcome: The outcome of the consultation is to provide an summary to the Program Team that identifies which of the criteria have been achieved and which are in question before continuing with a full review.

The First Full Review

- Purpose: The Purpose of a Full Review is to achieve the First Choice 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. The report length is 15 or fewer pages in standard 12 point font submitted electronically to the Graduate School. The report may reference support documents such as the Recruitment Plan, Orientation Handbook, Research Handbook, Assessment Reports, or other related evidence. A Full Review requires a formal 30-minute presentation made to the entire Council on Graduate Studies.
- Outcome: Following the presentation, the Review Board will provide recommendations to the Dean of the Graduate School regarding achievement of the First Choice Criteria and the will summarize the findings in a formal report. If the Board recommends the First Choice Designation and the Dean concurs and approves the application, the Graduate School Dean will meet with the Program Team to outline the report results and recommendations. 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 First Choice Designation are approved for a five-year period specified by the Dean of the Graduate School. During the last year of First Choice Designation, programs are invited to reapply as outlined by the Dean.

The Renewal Process

- **Purpose:** The purpose of a First Choice Renewal is to achieve continued recognition as a First Choice Program at the conclusion of a five-year designation period. The 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 five-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 five-year designation period. A Renewal Review is a formal 30-minute presentation made to the entire Council on Graduate Studies.
- **Outcome:** Following the presentation, the Review Board make recommendations to the Dean regarding continued achievement of the First Choice criteria and the Dean will summarize the findings in a report.
- **Period of Designation:** Programs achieving renewal are approved for a five-year period specified by the Dean of the Graduate School.

Benefits

- **Presidential Assistantships:** One Presidential Assistantship will be reserved for each approved program.
- **Provost's Research Assistantships:** First Choice Programs may compete for the Provost's Research Assistantships.
- **Summer Research Assistantships:** Two Summer Research Assistantships will be reserved for each approved program. Programs may request Summer Research Assistantships in addition to those that are reserved.
- **Williams Travel Awards:** Two Williams Travel Awards will be reserved for each approved program.
- **Graduate School Initiative Awards:** One Graduate School Initiative Award will be reserved for each approved program to be applied to the Program's highest priorities. Initiatives may be approved up to \$500.
- **Marketing Tools:** The First Choice Designation will be used to market and advertise the program by the Department, College, and the Graduate School.