

Online Masters Graduate Degree Program – Approval and Review Process Approved – April 19, 2018

Graduate Council recognizes the changing landscape of educational delivery systems, and the growing interest by administration and faculty at UC Davis to develop exclusive online graduate programs for students seeking to obtain professional Masters degrees. This policy is to outline general guidelines and expectations for such programs. Proposals for online PhD Programs are not covered by this policy.

The policy aims to ensure that any online Professional Masters Program offered by UC Davis is developed based on the same principles as traditional in-class graduate program offerings. Namely that they deliver a high-quality, cost-effective education of value and benefit to the students, and that the program enhances the reputation of our University.

Application for approval of an online graduate program covered by this policy must follow the same procedures and forms outlined for approval requests of in-class graduate programs at UC Davis. This includes the need to obtain approval for degree requirements and bylaws as well as the overall program from Graduate Council, and approval for all related courses by the campus Graduate Council Course Committee and the Committee on Courses and Instructions. Once Graduate Council approval is given, approval from CCGA must have been obtained before students can be admitted to the program. As for other new graduate programs, initial review of a new online graduate program should occur after 4 years with regular reviews thereafter, following the regular GC review schedule (currently reviewing programs every 7 -8 years).

Should a program seek to change an existing Masters program from in-class to exclusively online, or duplicate an existing in-class Masters to an online Masters degree program, Graduate Council will regard this as an application for a new program, due to the significant departure from an existing program such a change would represent.

When an online program is offered simultaneously with a traditional in-class degree program seeking the same degree objectives, the program must explain under which conditions students can “mix-and-match” existing online and in-class courses to obtain their degree objectives.

A meeting between representatives of COCI and GC with the department or graduate group proposing a new online program should precede review of a new online program proposal by both committees, to facilitate the review process and in order to holistically evaluate the quality of the program offerings. The representative of the Program should be present at such a meeting to provide an overview of the program and address specific questions.

In addition to the information sought from all new programs, the documents for new online program proposals should contain information that addresses the following issues in helping to guide the evaluation of the program’s quality:

- 1) Outline clear program learning objectives and outline of the program structure that facilitates learning.
- 2) Outline how well learning objectives are met and how they will be evaluated
- 3) Identification of the delivery options used in the curriculum: synchronous/asynchronous or hybrid.
- 4) Plan for any on-site visits by students
- 5) Plan for student mentoring by program faculty including assignment of a Graduate Advisor
- 6) Individual student course and program monitoring and feedback
- 7) Efforts to facilitate peer-to-peer contact and development of a student cohort
- 8) Presence of proctored examination or other means to verify identify of test-takers
- 9) Identify any use of vendors in online delivery of courses.

- 10) Hard and software requirements for course taking
- 11) Plans for data collection for program success evaluation, including student demographics, total enrollment and completion rates and times, student course and program evaluations.
- 12) Tracking of alumni
- 13) Plans for facilitating regular program reviews by Graduate Council, including access to enrolled students and faculty involved in the program
- 14) Fulfillment of current in-residency requirements for obtaining a MS degree
- 15) Plans for accreditation