Working Guidelines for Developing New Certificate and Degree Programs

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I. Purpose of the Guidelines

The purpose of this simple guideline is to help faculty develop a clear and concise proposal for a new graduate degree program, a new certificate program or changes to the title of an existing degree. The guidelines presented below rely heavily on 5 NMAC 5.2 and are intended to help faculty understand this mandated document of the state of New Mexico.

The guideline must be used with 5 NMAC 5.2 to develop new graduate certificate and degree proposals. Web site: http://www.nmcpr.state.nm.us/nmac/parts/title05/05.005.0002.htm

II. Helpful Hints to Develop a Success Proposal

- Obtain letters of support from institutions within the state as soon as you have a rough draft to informally share with faculty at other institutions
- Develop collaborations to ensure success of obtaining approval
- Develop a proposal that follows the requirements of the governing bodies
- Indicate the quality of the faculty, facilities and student services
- Show financial support, which can include institutional and research grants

III. When Do New Mexico Universities Need to Submit a Proposal?

A proposal and review process is required when the following conditions exist.

a) A program wishes to add a doctoral degree, a master’s degree or a certificate program.

b) A program wishes to change the title of a degree awarded. First check with the NM Higher Education Department to see if a proposal is required.

IV. Proposals are not required by the New Mexico Higher Education Department if a program wishes to do the following:

a) Add a concentration or specialization to an existing approved program that doesn’t change the title of the degree awarded does not have to go through a review process.

b) Change the name of an existing program that does not result in changing the names of the graduate degrees. The new department title needs to be reported to the New Mexico Higher Education Department.

c) Deletion of a concentration or specialization within an existing graduate program.

d) Reconfiguration of an existing program that retains its title.
e) Consolidation of two or more programs into a single program. Please note that the deleted program must be reported to the NM Higher Education Department.

f) Change in the department responsible for the graduate degree program without a substantial change in the curriculum of the program and without a change in the title of the degree awarded.

V. Basic Criteria for New Graduate Program Proposals

The New Mexico Higher Education Department has developed a detailed list of requirements and questions to guide the development of proposals. Below, I summarize the major proposal components (the entire summary is based on 5 NMAC 5.2):

a) Purpose of the proposed program as it relates to the mission of the proposing institution.

b) Justification for the Proposed Program. What needs does it meet within the state or region? Evidence is required to demonstrate need. This could include employer surveys, current labor market analyses and projections, summaries of student interests, to mention a few.

c) Duplication. A proposal must indicate through evidence that it does not duplicate an existing program in the state. A proposal for a program similar to one that already exists must show that the demand for the proposed program cannot be met by an existing program. If existing programs are present, the proposal must indicate how it will work collaboratively with another institution to share resources.

d) Clientele and Projected Enrollment. The proposal must clearly describe the population of students that will be recruited as well as projected enrollment for the first 5 years. It must also include a discussion of admissions criteria and strategies to recruit a diverse student body.

e) Institutional Readiness. Are resources available to implement a new program? Is there adequate faculty with the necessary skills and qualifications for the new program? Is there support of graduate assistants? Are the library, equipment, technological resources and physical facilities of the institution adequate for the first 5 years?

f) Projected Costs of the Program. Start-up costs as well as costs for a five-year period. This should include the costs of additional faculty, graduate assistants, library resources, additional facilities such as equipment and technological resources. The proposal must indicate state operational formula funding that will flow to the program, based on the projected student credit hours. Other support should also be included such as research grants, contracts or other sources.

g) Quality of the Program. The proposal should discuss how it meets high standards of academic quality---quality of the faculty, admissions standards,
instructional curriculum, provisions for continual review and improvement of
the program.

h) Assessment of Operations and Impact. The proposal must include a plan for
learning outcome assessment and impact.

i) Administrative Responsibility and Institutional Commitment. This includes
assures that institutional resources will be committed to the program for the
first 5 years.

VI. Stages of the Approval Process, Internally and within the State

Stage 1: The proposal must be approved internally by the proposing institution---by the college,
academic deans, faculty senate and Board of Regents (individuals who sign-off on the proposal.
The sign-off or approval sheet must be attached to the proposal)

Stage 2: Concurrent submission to the New Mexico Higher Education Department and the New
Mexico Council of Graduate Deans nine months prior to the anticipated date of implementation.
Graduate deans may solicit input on the proposal from members of their faculty, for inclusion in
the council’s consideration.

Stage 3: Faculty members are invited to present the proposal to the New Mexico Council of
Graduate Deans. The Council may suggest modifications to the proposal. Once the council
approves of the proposal, it is submitted to the Academic Council on Higher Education (which
consists of the provosts of the institutions of the state).

Stage 4: Faculty members are invited to present their proposal the Academic Council on Higher
Education. The Academic Council can ask for modifications as well. The Council submits
approved proposals to the staff of the New Mexico Higher Education Department.

Stage 5: Once staff of the New Mexico Higher Education Department completes its review and
recommends approval, the proposal is presented as an information item at a regularly scheduled
meeting of the New Mexico Higher Education Department. Faculty members accompanied by
the graduate dean should be prepared to respond to questions and/or make a formal presentation.

Stage 6: If the proposal is approved by the New Mexico Higher Education Department, then it is
submitted to the State Board of Finance for approval.

Approval by Accreditation Body

All institutions of higher learning within the state are also governed by an accreditation body.
Usually the Provost’s office has the guidelines from the regional accreditation body. It is
suggested that the Graduate Dean check with the Provost’s office to see what is required by the
accreditation bodies.