

Nomination and Selection of External Consultants for Graduate Program Reviews

Graduate Programs

External Consultants are required for the review of all new programs (with the exception of new collaborative programs, new diplomas, and new fields in existing programs), and for the periodic review of existing programs. On behalf of the Senate Subcommittee on Program Review-Graduate (SUPR-G), the Internal Reviewers and the Chair of SUPR-G, in consultation with the Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies) select the External Consultants from a list of nominated consultants provided by the program.

Two (2) External Consultants will normally be appointed for all graduate program reviews requiring External Consultants (new program reviews and periodic reviews). Only one (1) External Consultant will normally be from Ontario.

Criteria for Nomination of External Consultants by the Program:

The Program is required to submit a nomination list of proposed consultants with the program brief that is submitted to SUPR-G. Proposed consultants must be at “arm’s length” from the program. Proposed consultants must **not** be:

- A friend of a faculty member in the program,
- A regular or current collaborator of a faculty member in the program,
- A recent graduate of the program,
- A recent supervisee of a faculty member in the program,
- A former member of the program, or
- A recent visiting professor in the program.

The program is required to disclose any past affiliation or relationship that each proposed consultant has had with the program.

Requirements for the List of Nominated External Consultants:

For all graduate program reviews (periodic appraisals and new programs), programs are required to provide a nomination list, including:

- A minimum of eight (8) proposed consultants
- No more than four (4) of the proposed consultants can be from Ontario
- Multiple nominations from the same university are not acceptable.

If necessary, the Internal Reviewers may request additional names and corresponding information from the program.

For programs with fields, the list of proposed External Consultants should be grouped in correspondence to the fields. Programs must provide the following information for each proposed External Consultant:

- Name
- Rank / Position / Title
- Institution, including:
 - Name of the institution
 - Mailing address
 - Telephone number
 - Fax number
 - Email address
- Degrees, including:
 - Designation
 - University
 - Discipline
 - Date
- Area(s) of specialization
 - If the graduate program has, or is proposed to have, fields, indicate to which field(s) the individual's expertise is most relevant
- Professional experience or expertise relevant to service as an External Consultant for a graduate program. Include, for example:
 - Membership on editorial boards
 - Membership on grant or scholarship review committees
 - Administrative role(s), particularly administration of graduate programs
 - Experience in evaluating programs
 - Academic honors and recognition
- Recent scholarly activity, providing citations for 3 to 5 recent publications or scholarly works/activities
- Previous affiliation or relationship with the University and program (e.g., any invited talks/lectures given at the University, contribution to any previous reviews of the program, department, or Faculty, any student-supervisor/advisor relationship, any participation in a graduate thesis examination).

Criteria for the Selection of the External Consultants by the Internal Reviewers:

The Internal Reviewers and the Chair of SUPR-G, in consultation with the Vice-Provost (Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies), will normally select one (1) External Consultant from Ontario, and one (1) External Consultant from outside Ontario. In selecting the External Consultants, priority will be given to individuals who have:

- Experience in administration of graduate programs
- Significant experience supervising / advising graduate students
- A clear record of scholarly activity
- A sustained record of involvement in and contribution to a graduate program (e.g., graduate teaching, service on graduate program committees)

Efforts will be made to select External Consultants with expertise across the existing or proposed fields within the program.

Process for External Consultants:

Each External Consultant is provided with an electronic copy of the program's brief, the Guidelines for External Consultants, and any specific questions posed by SUPR-G and/or the Internal Reviewers. Upon arrival for the site visit, the External Consultants should be provided with a written update summarizing any significant developments or changes in the program since the submission of the brief (e.g., new faculty hires and/or searches, major revisions to curriculum and/or requirements, etc.). Any update or additional documentation provided to the External Consultants must also be given to the Internal Reviewers for inclusion with the complete brief documentation submitted to SUPR-G.

Prior to visiting Western, the External Consultants are expected to have studied the brief, reviewed their responsibilities (see below), given consideration to any specific issues or questions identified by SUPR-G and/or the Internal Reviewers, and identified any additional issues or questions that they may have. When reviewing the brief, the External Consultants are advised to consider the following:

- Are the objectives of the program appropriate and clearly stated?
- Is the faculty complement appropriate for the level and scope of the program? Is the distribution of fields (if any are identified) appropriate and is the core faculty actively engaged in research in the disciplinary area(s) of the program?
- Is supervisory activity well distributed among the core faculty?
- Is the curriculum design appropriate and do the program requirements provide the appropriate depth and breadth for a graduate student experience?
- Does the curriculum address the current state of the discipline or area of study?
- Is there evidence that the program fosters the intellectual and professional developments of students?
- Are the students completing the program in a timely fashion? If not, what adjustments could be made to the program or to supervisory practices to improve the time to degree?
- Are the library resources appropriate for the program?
- Are the physical resources (e.g., space, laboratories, computers) appropriate for the program and the number of students?
- For research-based programs, is there evidence of reasonable financial support for the students?
- Are enrolments in the program commensurate with the resources available?

In considering these points, the External Consultants are encouraged to identify any issues or questions to pursue during their visit.

Normally, the External Consultants visit the program jointly and submit a joint report within two (2) weeks of the visit. The report will be submitted directly to the Chair of SUPR-G. The report should address the following:

- an **outline of the visit** (who was interviewed, what facilities were seen, any other activities relevant to the review)

- the competence of **the faculty**, including members of other units associated with the program, in the conduct of research, the advancement and dissemination of knowledge, the supervision of graduate students and in graduate instruction
- the **admission standards and procedures**, commenting on the quality of entering students (*for periodic appraisals*) and the appropriateness of the standards and procedures for ensuring quality (*in the case of new programs*), actual and estimated enrolments (admission standards and procedures should ensure that the students have the capacity and the preparation to meet the challenge of the program effectively)
- the adequacy and sources of **student support** (*actual support for periodic appraisal and anticipated support for new programs*)
- the quality of **student research** as demonstrated by an evaluation of a selection of completed theses and, where relevant, published works (*not applicable for non-thesis programs or in the case of new programs*)
- the **normal progress of students** through the program, including comments on the average time to complete the program and the number of withdrawals (*applicable for periodic appraisal*)
- the adequacy of on-campus and off-campus **library resources**, both holdings and services (in making this judgment, the External Consultants should take into consideration any co-operative collection development agreements between the libraries and the extent to which such agreements are being executed as intended)
- the adequacy of **physical resources**, including office space, laboratories, or other special facilities such as computers
- the **curriculum requirements**, milestones (e.g., comprehensive examinations) and student evaluation procedures including, in the case of certain professional programs, preparation for practice
- any **innovative features** with respect to either content or approach
- the **questions and issues** identified by SUPR-G and/or the Internal Reviewers not answered under the above items
- **recommendations** for program improvements and enhancements
- any **matters of concern and recommendations** to address these concerns
- the report should also include a **summary statement** to assist SUPR-G in reaching its decision on a recommendation.

The External Consultants are required to submit their report and to transfer the copyright of their report to SUPR-G. The report will be reviewed by the Internal Reviewers and shared with the program, Department Chair or School Director, and the Dean. The program is required to provide a written response to the report; the Department Chair or School Director and the Dean may include comments in the program's response, or may provide a separate response. Responses to the report are

submitted to the Chair of SUPR-G. Responses should be received within two (2) weeks of receiving the External Consultants' report.