# Program Review and Quality Assessment

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Dean and Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

New Deans' Institute
Council of Graduate Schools
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University of Michigan

- Large public research-intensive University
- Graduate School responsible for 108 Ph.D. programs, 87 master's programs
- ~8200 Rackham graduate students
- ~7000 Other graduate and professional students on campus
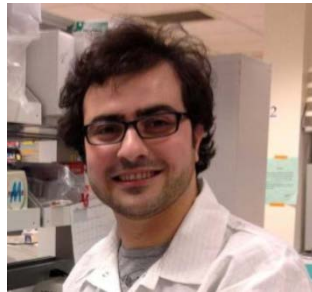
Seçkin Akgül, Ph.D. Student
Cellular and Molecular Biology,
Mary Sue and Kenneth Coleman Graduate Fellowship
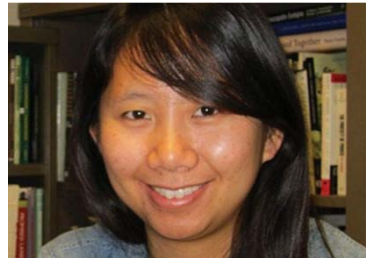
Theresa Ong, Ph.D. Student
Ecology and Evolutionary Biology,
Rackham Travel Grant

Andrew Goodman-Bacon, Ph.D. Candidate
Economics,
Predoctoral Fellowship

Why Should a Graduate Dean Measure Quality of Graduate Programs?

- To help to improve quality
  - Address poor quality in a systematic way
  - Encourage improvement
- To assess the validity of student concerns
- To ensure that campus priorities are taken seriously
- To respond to external raters and rankers
- To assure University leaders about quality

Measuring Quality is Harder than it Appears

- Graduate education is multidimensional
- Differences among degrees
- Differences among disciplines and fields of study
- Indicators are subject to distortion

Who Determines Quality?

- Faculty?

- Students?

- The "market"?

- Raters and rankers?

- University leaders?

Timeka Williams, Ph.D. Candidate
Communication Studies, Rackham Merit Fellowship

Hector Garcia, Ph.D., 2014
Electrical Engineering, Bouchet Honor Society Inductee

Alana LeBron, Ph.D. Student
Health Behavior and Health Education, Rackham Merit Fellowship

Possible Measures of Quality

- Admissions
  - Selectivity / Yield
  - GRE and GPA scores
  - National fellowships/ traineeships
- Faculty quality
- Comparison to peers
  - Competing for new students
  - National rankings
- Career Success
  - Short run
  - Long run
- Quality of program
  - Mentoring practices
  - GPA of students
  - Diversity
  - Adequate funding
  - Teaching experience
  - Honors and awards
  - Completion rate
  - Time to degree
  - Publications
  - Professional development
  - Student satisfaction

Variation by Degree Level

Doctoral

- Emphasis on academic credentials
- Research experiences
- Engagement in discipline
- Most students want academic placement, but many head for other careers

Master's

- Emphasis on prior preparation (both work and academic)
- Focus on career advising and placement
- Leadership in the profession
- Student satisfaction
- Faster throughput

Variation by Discipline

- Some quality measures widely shared across disciplines
  - High impact placement and success of graduates

- Some quality measures vary by disciplines
  - Publication in peer-reviewed journals while in graduate school
  - Admissions data: Number of applications, GRE scores, GPAs, yield
  - External awards received by current students: NSF Graduate Fellowships, Fulbright Awards

University of Michigan Program Review Process

- Provide systematic, comparative data
- Discuss data with program faculty leaders
- Collect student data
- Discuss student data with program faculty leaders
- Suggest opportunities for improvement
- Discuss improvements with deans
- Follow up on recommendations

Sara Blair, Associate Dean
Humanities & the Arts

Tabbye Chavous, Associate Dean
Social Sciences

Shelly Conner, Assistant Dean
Academic Planning & Policy

Peter Hitchcock, Associate Dean
Biological & Health Sciences

Michael Solomon, Associate Dean
Physical Sciences & Engineering

Ask Faculty for their Measures of Success

- You learn what is important in their program

- You give legitimacy to the process of quality measurement

- You avoid holding programs to inappropriate standards

Biological Chemistry

- Scientific productivity of students
- Success of faculty as mentors and instructors
- Receipt of fellowship and training grant support
- Progress of students through the program
- Participation of students in departmental scientific activities
- Long term career outcomes

Aerospace Engineering

- Reputation among peer institutions
- Selectivity / Yield
- GREs and GPAs of student who enroll
- Number of new students
- Competitive fellowships / traineeships
- Proportion of students who are supported by external funding
- Proportion of graduates with tenure-track positions

Urban & Regional Planning

- Placement in high-level research and government positions (outside academia)
- Securing grants and fellowships from outside sources
- Reputation of peer institutions with which we regularly compete for graduate students
- Research productivity while in doctoral studies, including publications and conference papers
- Completion rate
- Timely completion of requirements

Comparative Literature

- Reputation among peer institutions
- Diversity of race/ethnicity and gender in graduate students
- Quality of the intellectual engagement between faculty and students
- Honors and awards to students
- Proportion of graduates in academic / scholarly positions

Measuring Quality in the Context of Program Review

- If goal of program review is program improvement, then measures need to be customized to the program

- If goal of program review is resource allocation, then measures need to be standardized across programs

Institutional Process for Program Review

- How centralized should this process be?
- Role of school/college deans
- Importance of Institutional Research capacity
- Role of external reviewers
- Connection between undergraduate and graduate education
- Frequency of review

Products of Program Review

- Report

- Conversation

- Action Plan

- Resource Allocation

- Communication to the constituent groups that care about quality

- On-line posting of program statistics

Strategies to Gain Acceptance for Recommendations

- Use quality measures endorsed by faculty
- Hold conversations about why the data look as they do, to give faculty a chance to explain patterns
- Invite school/college deans to participate in the conversation
- Include the voices of students

Four Years Later

- We learned during the second review that 98% of graduate programs addressed at least one recommendation that we made at the end of the first review

- 81% of programs addressed at least half of all the recommendations made at the end of the first review

Program Review can Make you a Better Graduate Dean

- You learn about your graduate programs
- You have a context to interpret external ratings and rankings
- You can make better decisions about policies and services to the programs
- Working with other University leaders, you can allocate resources toward the greatest needs and the greatest opportunities to serve graduate education

RACKHAM GRADUATE SCHOOL
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Focus of Recommendations