

## Helpful Hints for Developing New Graduate Degree Programs

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

### Overview of the Process

The process of developing [new graduate degree programs](#) is a creative and challenging endeavor. It starts with extensive discussions among faculty and administrators to design the best program for the discipline(s) and then proceeds through University committees where the proposal is examined from a University-wide perspective. Many administrative offices on campus have an interest in how new programs are designed because of their responsibilities to provide accurate information to students, administrators, legislators, and state and national agencies. After receiving endorsement by all the appropriate University units, the proposal will then go to the UNC System where it must be justified and evaluated from the System and state's perspective.

At any step along the way, recommendations for improving/revising/expanding the proposal may be made by UNC-CH faculty, administrators and staff, and by the UNC System. Such recommendations should be considered by the proposing department or curriculum as a means to build buy-in among all reviewers and ensure a new program's success.

From the very beginning of the project, become thoroughly familiar with the [formal guidelines](#) for program development (both the *Request for Preliminary Authorization* and the *Request to Establish*) as outlined in the **Academic Program Development Procedures** found on the UNC System [website](#).

### Consult Broadly

It is never too early to seek advice and guidance from others during the proposal process. Ongoing University-wide planning may provide important information and support that can enhance the process at the program level. Meet with faculty and chairs of other programs who may have developed similar proposals and obtain their advice on what to include and how to plan. It is appropriate to share draft plans and engage with:

- Faculty, departmental/program colleagues in the interested programs
- Dean's Office of the appropriate school or college
- Dean's Office of The Graduate School
- Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost (especially Academic Finance)
- Division of Finance and Operations

### Requirements

- The Graduate School has found it best that the *Request for Preliminary Authorization* stage be based on the guidelines for the *Request to Establish*. In this way, many of the difficult questions are answered early in the process, and a more realistic sense of what is possible can be ascertained.
- This advice applies especially in the case of developing programs with significant interdisciplinary components. For further details on interdisciplinary, dual, or joint degree proposals, please see The Graduate School's [Policy on Transdisciplinary Programs of Study](#).
- If questions of budget, governance (inter- and intra-divisional), program and workforce demand, material resources and building/laboratory needs, faculty affiliations, workload, staffing, student recruitment, student financial support and student services are addressed early in the process, there is less likelihood that major revisions will be required between the *Request for Preliminary Authorization* and *Request to Establish* stages.
- It is also advisable to outline the curriculum, course offerings (new and established), new resource

requests, external funding opportunities, optimization of existing resources, and all other budgetary items in a forthright and realistic fashion. Planning must be concrete and detailed.

- As a general rule, tuition for newly proposed graduate programs follows the [base graduate tuition rates](#) already approved for campus. Any requests for different tuition rates and fee requests must be submitted through the annual campus tuition and fee review and approval process, which begins in late summer/early fall for the following academic year (fall-spring-summer admissions). Therefore, please note it can take up to an additional year for special tuition and fee approvals beyond the academic approvals for a new degree. Sponsors are encouraged to consult early with their finance team.
- Examples of successful proposals are available from The Graduate School.