

OFF-CAMPUS GRADUATE PROGRAMS

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**Principles for Off-Campus Graduate Programs Based on
Alternative Fee Structures**

1. **Academic Implications**
2. **Budgetary Implications**
3. **Approval Process**
4. **Contingency Planning**

1. **Academic Implications**

- 1.1 **Rationale**

The University of Victoria is committed to maintaining the integrity and excellence of existing graduate programs and, in keeping with the Strategic Plan, to enhancing their quality. However, the Strategic Plan also addresses the necessity to encourage new graduate initiatives in both on and off-campus programs. New initiatives necessitate the formulation of new guidelines and principles. Hence the creation of the current document.

The Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies recognizes the demand for, and desire of, academic units to mount new programs at a time when new internal resources are not forthcoming. Such programs will, therefore, be dependent on a variety of alternative fee structures. Many will be delivered at a distance, both in Canada and internationally, and can represent unique opportunities for both the University and the group of learners requesting specific program delivery.

The Faculty of Graduate Studies recognizes the potential benefit to existing graduate programs from the new educational and teaching modalities practiced by the faculty involved with off-campus, distributed learning models. Programs delivered by distributed learning methods to off-campus learners will adhere to the same principles of high academic standards and integrity as is required of on-campus graduate degree programs.

1.2. Comparability

Students admitted to off-campus programs will be University of Victoria graduate students and will have the rights and privileges of any such student. Moreover, the University has a responsibility both to these "off-campus" students and to the on-campus University of Victoria students, that their programs be comparable.

1.2.1 Entrance Standards

The minimum entrance standards which apply to any student seeking admission, must be maintained. These include the possession of a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution, a GPA of 5.00 (University of Victoria) on the last 30 units of academic work, and a minimum TOEFL score of 550 in the case of an international student for whom English is a second language. It is possible that the range of acceptable standardized language tests could be broadened and more flexible timing of language skills measurement considered. It is also possible that a flexible definition of the mature student category could be applied where appropriate.

1.2.2 Program Content

Many of the off-campus graduate programs based on alternative fee structures are targeting specific audiences with special requirements. It is only natural that while retaining academic standards comparable to on-campus programs, the course content of an off-campus program will be sensitive to these requirements.

1.3. Departmental Resources

As a first step in considering the introduction of a new graduate program, the host academic unit should consider whether internal budgetary re-focusing is possible in order to give the new program first priority as a replacement of an existing one. It is likely, however, that most new programs will be proposed as additional to existing programs.

1.4 Standards

1.4.1 At least 50% of the graduate courses in a new program should normally be taught by UVic faculty who are members of the Faculty of Graduate Studies at the University of Victoria. (This includes Adjunct Faculty members as defined in the document **Membership in the Faculty of Graduate Studies** approved by Senate in April, 1991.) UVic faculty will function in a supervisory capacity for graduate theses and projects. A UVic faculty member should also assume the role of program coordinator or director.

In keeping with the principle of extending the pool of expertise through adjunct appointment to the Faculty of Graduate Studies, individuals from outside the University of Victoria contracted to teach graduate courses must meet the academic standards and have a knowledge of UVic policies expected of those who are members of the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

According to a motion passed recently at a Faculty meeting: "Any sessional appointment of a person who is not a member of the Faculty of Graduate Studies in good standing to teach a course at the 500 level or greater, must be approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies...[and] referred to the Dean by the Chair of the department concerned."

- 1.4.2** Normally, in a program leading to a UVic degree which is taught by a consortium of post-secondary institutions, at least 50% of the courses constituting the program will be taught by faculty at the participating universities who have qualifications equivalent to Members of the Faculty of Graduate Studies at UVic.
- 1.4.3** The University of Victoria reserves the right to final approval of new courses and instructors from participating universities offering courses for a University of Victoria graduate degree.
- 1.4.4** Where a proposal includes release time for a UVic faculty member from teaching in order to deliver these graduate courses, the Chair/Director and Dean of the discipline Faculty should consider and address the potential impact of the faculty member's release time on the quality of the existing on-campus undergraduate and graduate programs. Inordinate dependence on sessional faculty to teach regular undergraduate and graduate programs is inappropriate.
- 1.4.5** The Chair/Director, and Dean of the Faculty should consider and address the effect of any extra-to-load expectation on the concerned faculty member's research and supervisory programs.
- 1.4.6** Normally, no new graduate program will be considered if based solely on extra-to-load teaching.
- 1.4.7** A program review process should be built into any off-campus graduate program proposal. This is particularly relevant to proposals based on a cohort principle or to those serving as pilot for other similar proposals.

1.5. Transportability

It is expected that courses taught through off-campus programs would be eligible for consideration for inclusion in on-campus programs, and vice versa.

In cases where an on-campus learner wishes to take a new course offered in an off-campus program, the on-campus learner should have the opportunity to take such a UVic course. The on-campus learner will pay the standard graduate tuition and may be required to pay any surcharges appropriate to individual courses. This model is currently in existence for a number of undergraduate courses, specifically in the Fine Arts.

It is anticipated that very few students would be interested in transferring between off-campus and on-campus programs. However, consideration should be given for the cases where such transfers might occur. A decision on the appropriateness of the course for any given program would be made by the student's supervisory committee. As is the case with all graduate students, transfers from one program to another would occur only with permission of the academic unit offering the program.

2. Budgetary Implications

- 2.1 The plan for any such new program should deal specifically with the form of cost recovery or alternative fee structure that is being proposed.

The proposed approach would depend on the expense to the academic unit of delivering an off-campus program by distributed learning methods in order to meet the demands of a specific group of learners. The proposal will analyze and include such factors as locale of the learners (Canadian vs. Off-shore), the fee structure of similar programs offered by other institutions, and the learners' economic status as driven by the circumstances of their occupational or professional fields.

- 2.2 The budget analysis should include all additional costs associated with the delivery of the program, including, but not limited to, the costs of the academic unit, Student Support Services, Graduate Studies, Graduate Admissions and Records, and Library Services. The budget analysis should also include reasonable additional funding for fellowships.
- 2.3 The budget analysis should also incorporate an infrastructure charge in accordance with the (draft) **Policy on Overheads for Contracts, Agreements, and Off-Campus Programs**.
- 2.4 Where a new program carries an extra-to-load teaching honorarium, the amount of this honorarium must conform with the University's official salary policy for extra-to-load appointment.

As a consequence of these factors, the approved alternative fee structures may vary from one off-campus program to another. As well, the amount of internal or external subsidy may vary from program to program.

- 2.5 Since the fees collected through alternative fee structures for off-campus graduate programs are specifically required to meet the costs of the program, students transferring from such off-campus delivery to on-campus delivery of their graduate program will not have their off-campus

fees (based on higher fee structures) counted toward the minimum fee for all graduate degree programs.

Similarly, the fees paid for an on-campus graduate program, cannot be used to defray the costs of the off-campus program.

3. Approval Process

The approval process for each new graduate program proposal will conform with the V-P's document describing the tracking process. Although the proposed fee structure and budget submission will be scrutinized during this process, the final approval will rest with the Board of Governors.

4. Contingency Planning

There are two categories of contingencies that may arise:

4.1 "Normal" contingencies which arise in on-campus programs

These generally can be dealt with in a reasonably simple fashion locally, but may cause major difficulties at distance. The fact that programs by distributed learning and based on alternative fee structures are generally highly structured and "packaged" will restrict flexibility in dealing with problems. When the program is given to a cohort, options should be planned for a student who fails a required course or is not able to complete due to illness. The proposal should indicate if there will be opportunities to complete course requirements, to take additional courses, or if the student will be required to withdraw from the program.

4.2 Contingencies unique to programs based on alternative fee structures

Some programs will require a minimum enrollment in order to make it financially viable. Others will rely on external agency grants. Prior to approval of a program, the obligation which the University will have to students in a program mounted on a cost-recovery basis which ceases to exist, must be established and clearly communicated.

Contingency planning must occur at the program planning stage.

Related Documents Available in the Office of Graduate Studies

- 1. Guidelines for the Development of a New Graduate Program Proposal.**
 - 2. Revised Guidelines for Submission of New Degree Proposals to the Ministry's Degree Program Review Committee (DPRC).** (Also available in the Office of the Vice-President Academic.)
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