**Graduate Program Standard and Draft Response**

**Graduate Council Discussion – 2.3.21**

**\*\*Yellow Highlights Represent Areas for Which We Need More Information on Appraisal/aspiration.**

**Graduate Programs - Standards**

**4.20** Graduate degree programs are designed to give students a mastery of a complex field of study or professional area.  Programs have an appropriate rationale; their clarity and order are visible in stated requirements, in relevant official publications, and in the learning outcomes of graduates.  Learning objectives reflect the high level of complexity, specialization, and generalization inherent in advanced academic study.

**4.21** Graduate programs are not offered unless resources and expectations exceed those required for an undergraduate program in a similar field.

**4.22** Faculty responsible for graduate programs are sufficient by credentials, experience, number, and time commitment for the successful accomplishment of program objectives and program improvement.  The scholarly expectations of faculty exceed those expected for faculty working at the undergraduate level.  Research-oriented graduate programs have a preponderance of active research scholars on their faculties.  Professionally-oriented programs include faculty who are experienced professionals making scholarly contributions to the development of the field.

**4.23** Students admitted to graduate degree programs are demonstrably qualified for advanced academic study.

**4.24** The institution’s graduate programs have cohesive curricula and require scholarly and professional activities designed to advance the student substantially beyond the educational accomplishments of a baccalaureate degree program.  The demands made by the institution’s graduate programs on students’ intellectual and creative capacities are also significantly greater than those expected at the undergraduate level; graduate programs build upon and challenge students beyond the levels of knowledge and competence acquired at the undergraduate level.  The institution offering both undergraduate and graduate degree programs assesses the relationship and interdependence of the two levels and utilizes the results for improvement.

**4.25** Degree requirements of the institution’s graduate programs take into account specific program purposes.  Research-oriented doctoral programs, including the Ph.D., and disciplinary or research-oriented master’s degree programs, are designed to prepare students to generate new knowledge; they emphasize the acquisition, organization, utilization, generation, and dissemination of knowledge.  Doctoral degree programs afford the student substantial mastery of the subject matter, theory, literature, and methodology of a significant field of study.  They include a sequential development of research skills leading to the attainment of an independent research capacity.  Students undertake original research that contributes to new knowledge in the chosen field of study.  Disciplinary or research-oriented master’s programs have many of the same objectives but require less sophisticated levels of mastery in the chosen field of study than does the research doctorate.  While they need not require students to engage in original research, they do provide an understanding of research appropriate to the discipline and the manner in which it is conducted.

**4.26** Professional, performance, or practice-oriented programs at the doctoral or master’s degree levels are designed to prepare students for professional careers involving the application or transmission of existing knowledge or the development of new applications of knowledge within their field. Such programs afford the student a broad conceptual mastery of the field of professional practice through an understanding of its subject matter, literature, theory, and methods. They seek to develop the capacity to identify, evaluate, interpret, organize, and communicate knowledge, and to develop those analytical and professional skills needed to practice in and advance the profession. Instruction in relevant research methodology is provided, directed toward the appropriate application of its results as a regular part of professional practice. Programs include the sequential development of professional skills that will result in competent practitioners. Where there is a hierarchy of degrees within an area of professional study, programs differ by level as reflected in the expected sophistication, knowledge, and capacity for leadership within the profession by graduates.

**4.27** Programs encompassing both research activities and professional practice define their relative emphases in program objectives that are reflected in curricular, scholarly, and program requirements.

**4.28** Students who successfully complete a graduate program demonstrate that they have acquired the knowledge and developed the skills that are identified as the program’s objectives.

**Written Draft Responding to 4.20- 4.28**

**Description**

The University offers two Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies (CAGS) degrees, 44 master’s level programs, and 10 graduate certificates.  The CAGS is available in Educational Leadership and Management and in Interdisciplinary Studies; each of these has several concentrations. Master degrees are available in Arts Education (M.Ed), English (MA), History (MA), Business Administration (MBA), Applied Communication (MS), Computer Science (MS), Occupational Education (M.Ed), Counseling (MS), Criminal Justice (MS), Curriculum and Teaching (M.Ed.), Early Childhood Education (M.Ed.), Education 5-12 (M.Ed.), Educational Leadership and Management (M.Ed.), Elementary Education (M.Ed.) Forensic Nursing (MS), Reading Specialist (M.Ed.), School Counseling (MS) and Special Education (M.Ed.) with a variety of concentrations available in some programs. Graduate certificate programs provide professional development and career advancement opportunities for working professionals and others seeking career change. The University also offers graduate programs in Education in cooperation with sixteen Extended Campus partners. (Program information need to be updated and reviewed)

The University’s admission requirements ensure that students admitted to graduate degree programs are demonstrably qualified for advanced academic study.  General minimum admission requirements include GPA, official transcript, and a professional resume. Several graduate programs have additional requirements such as personal essays, letters of reference, license-certification or passing MTEL test scores.  Admission requirements are posted in the University catalog.  Academic departments work with the School of Graduate, Online and Continuing Education and the admissions office to manage the review of applications and confirm the admission of candidates to their programs.

Each graduate program is managed by a program chair.  The program chair is responsible for coordinating faculty hiring and faculty assignments and working with the related academic department to vet and qualify faculty in accordance with departmental guidelines and established qualifications.  The program chair also serves as the primary advisors for students in the program. Larger graduate programs have additional academic advisors that are managed by the program chairs.

**Appraisal**

Academic departments are responsible for overseeing graduate program curriculum and setting standards for graduate level learning in their respective program.  Some departments have graduate curriculum committees and others have one committee that reviews and manages curriculum for both undergraduate and graduate programs.  All graduate curriculum changes are first requested by a program chair, reviewed and approved at the department level and are then reviewed and given a final recommendation for approval from the University’s Graduate Council. **Program learning outcomes with possible career pathways are listed in the University catalog and on the website ?**

Graduate programs at Fitchburg State prepare graduates for professional careers.  All programs include elements of applied learning that vary by program, but might include class assignments that embed workplace activities or projects, practicums, field experience and internships. Evaluation of the student experience takes place through a survey distributed to all students upon graduation, a bi-annual survey focused on perceptions of adult and graduate students and course evaluations.  Survey data is used by academic departments and the School for Graduate, Online and Continuing Education for program and service assessment.

\*\*Need to add links to the assessment materials mentioned, the catalog and program websites.

\*\*Need to make sure each program lists program outcomes in the catalog and on the website.