

## **Fact Sheet**

### Faculty-Student Designed Graduate Programs

This supplements information contained in the Graduate Section of the catalog under "Faculty-Student Designed Programs." It provides a step-by-step list of procedures to follow when submitting a Faculty-Student Designed program.

#### **SPECIAL CONDITIONS**

Advance planning, at least one, preferably two, quarters is required for this program. The review procedure with faculty, departments, and the Graduate Council necessitates that materials be available in a timely fashion for meeting schedules and agenda deadlines.

No conditional admissions due to low g.p.a. or inadequate preparation will be made for this program. Graduate Record Examination scores must be on file at the time of application. No more than fifteen credits of coursework, completed by the end of the quarter the petition is approved, can apply toward the designated program.

Usually more than the minimum number of credits for a master's (45 or 48) is required for this program because of its interdisciplinary nature.

NOTE: Only a small percentage of Faculty-Student Designed program proposals are acted on favorably, and these after several revisions. In many cases, augmentation of an existing program will serve the intended purpose.

#### **STEPS**

1. **STUDENT SUBMITS LETTER:** If you are interested in such a program of study, you should begin the process by writing the Graduate School, WWU, Bellingham, WA 98225-9037. In your letter, describe as clearly as possible the interdisciplinary program you have in mind, including:
  - A. Its focus or interdisciplinary area (i.e. atmospheric science, quantitative methods and analysis, environmental regulation, art and aesthetics, etc.)
  - B. The WWU departments that seem most suitable for your potential program (refer to the current general catalog for information about graduate course offerings).
  - C. Current list of graduate courses that might provide a substantial portion of your program.
  - D. Brief description of research, field projects, internships, or other elements that seem appropriate for the proposed degree.
  - E. Your reasons for being interested in this particular program.
  - F. Additional information that you think would be helpful in reviewing your letter.

No action will be taken on the student's proposal until letters of support are received from faculty.

2. **SPONSORING FACULTY SUBMIT LETTERS:** Faculty members from each of the graduate departments involved in the program indicate their willingness to work with the student on the proposed program by submitting a letter of support to the Graduate Dean. If the program includes a thesis, the three members of the thesis committee should be designated at this time. One faculty

sponsor should also be designated as primary sponsor to act as primary adviser and liaison between the student and the Graduate Office.

- 3. DEAN REVIEWS PROGRAM PROPOSAL AND FACULTY LETTERS:** The proposal and sponsorship letters are reviewed by the Graduate Dean. If the Dean deems the program valid, the student is asked to submit supporting application materials; if not, the applicant will be notified that the proposed program is unsuitable.
- 4. STUDENT SUBMITS SUPPORTING APPLICATION MATERIALS:** The student submits supporting application materials, to include: letters of reference/recommendation, official transcripts, and GRE scores. The Graduate Office, based on application materials, determines eligibility of the student for graduate study. If the applicant is not eligible for graduate study, the application and proposal are withdrawn.
- 5. SUB-COMMITTEE OF GRADUATE COUNCIL REVIEWS PROGRAM:** The sub-committee, based on its review of the student's program, may make suggestions to the student and sponsoring faculty for revising the program.
- 6. CREDENTIALS AND PROGRAM SUBMITTED TO DEPARTMENTS:** After changes recommended by the Graduate Council sub-committee have been made, the program and student's credentials are submitted to each graduate department involved in the proposal. The department chair, working with the sponsoring faculty member and/or graduate program adviser, will recommend acceptance of the student and the proposed program according to each department's admission criteria. Further revisions, if necessary, may be made to the program at the suggestion of the graduate departments, conditional on approval by the Graduate Dean and Graduate Council.
- 7. GRADUATE COUNCIL REVIEW:** The final review step involves a decision by the Graduate council of the student for admission into Graduate School and acceptance of the proposed program of study. Any subsequent changes in the approved program must be submitted to the Graduate Council for its approval.
- 8. STUDENT IS NOTIFIED:** The applicant is sent an official admission letter from the Graduate School indicating acceptance or denial into Graduate School and the proposed plan of study.

## **Check List**

### Faculty-Student Designed Program

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Student submits letter of interest/intent, outlining program/proposal to the Graduate Office, including application and fee
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Faculty from cooperating departments/program submit letters to the Graduate School Dean indicating sponsorship of the program/proposal
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Dean reviews program/proposal and faculty letters of support
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Student submits supporting application materials
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Sub-committee of Graduate Council reviews program/proposal
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Application materials and program/proposal submitted to the departments for their recommendation
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Graduate Council reviews final program/proposal and student application materials and approves or rejects the student and proposed program
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Student is notified of decision (acceptance or denial)

**NOTE:** If, at any time during this sequence, the program is deemed inappropriate or not the quality expected of graduate students, the proposal will be returned to the student. The student may choose to withdraw or revise his/her program.

## **Tips to Help**

*(This was submitted by a graduate student who completed a Faculty-Student Designed Program)*

- Have clear goals and good rationale for what you want to do
- Be absolutely sure that no other existing program will provide what you want – and be able to explain why
- A well-designed program will equally represent two or more programs. In other words, it won't have a majority of classes in on program augmented with two classes from another program
- Find an adviser who supports and understands what you're doing and work closely with that adviser
- Use the current course catalog to devise a good, thorough plan of study
- Talk to professors offering courses you want to take. Class offerings often change, causing you to have to change your plan of study. This can cause setbacks in the process
- Be able to articulate what career options you will have as a result of your program
- Find three people willing to serve on your thesis committee (doing a thesis is strongly recommended – it will lend more credence to your proposal)
- Be persistent! Be very sure this proposal is what you really want to do. Fight the urge to give up. It's a long process with many stumbling blocks
- Be prepared to be lonely – you won't be an integral part of one program. It takes effort to integrate two or more programs. You'll be anomaly in different programs
- Revel in your individuality!

- Good luck!