

**Report of The School of Graduate Studies on
Common Standards and Procedures for Graduate Diploma Programs**

As amended and Approved by Senate – May 2, 1997

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Preamble

In September, 1995, the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies, established a Task Force on Common Standards and Procedures for Graduate Diploma Programs.

The Quebec Ministry of Education places students in graduate diploma programs at the 2nd cycle level for purposes of funding and classification. Concordia University operates on this premise as well.

The mandate given to the Task Force by the School of Graduate Studies reads as follows: To make recommendations to the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies concerning university-wide standards, procedures and practices for the graduate diploma programs at Concordia University. To study the current situation with respect to the definition and nature of graduate diploma programs at Concordia University.

To achieve these ends the Task Force solicited information and data from each of the graduate diploma programs. A questionnaire was distributed and an open meeting was held on December 11, 1995, with the Graduate Program Directors and student representatives of the graduate diploma programs at Concordia.

The Task Force consulted representatives of the following graduate diploma programs at Concordia: In the Faculty of Arts and Science: Ecotoxicology; Communication Studies; Economics; Instructional Technology; Adult Education; Early Childhood Education; Translation; Journalism; Library Studies; Teaching of Mathematics; Theological, Religious and Ethical Studies; In the Faculty of Commerce and Administration: Accountancy; Institutional Administration; Sports Administration; In the Faculty of Fine Arts: Art Education; Advanced Music Performance Studies; In the Faculty of Engineering and Computer Science: Computer Science.

These seventeen programs represent the full compliment of graduate diploma programs at this University over the past eight years. We worked with this time frame because the last Task Force on Diploma Guidelines published its recommendations in 1988. It will be noted, however, that these seventeen programs include some which are terminated or which are in the process of rethinking their offerings. In some cases a newly instituted master's program draws away from the necessity of offering a diploma. In other cases, departments have rethought their positions and have opted for an extra year in their Bachelor's/Baccalaureate degree. Some diploma programs may have chosen to phase out because the student pool for such programs had ceased to exist. Programs affected by these situations include the diplomas in Early Childhood Education, Library Studies, Teaching of Mathematics and Art Education. There may be other programs in the coming years which have to face such options but at this stage Concordia operates with thirteen viable graduate diplomas.

Goals and Objective

In general terms the Task Force was struck by the diversity and specificity of each of Concordia's graduate diploma programs. The Task Force proposes that these programs work within the following guidelines for goals and objectives, with varying degrees of specificity: **1. Foundations:** Introduction to a new field of knowledge or discipline/interdiscipline with the express intent to develop some level of specialized knowledge. This may include preparation for further graduate studies or basic preparation for entry into a profession. **2. Development:** Further specialization in a field or discipline already studied. This may include a manifestation of qualifications as specified by particular professions.

These two major categories may be broken down further into four particular objectives which emerged in our exchanges with various people responsible for graduate diploma programs at Concordia. These four objectives can be summarized as follows: a) A Step Towards Further Graduate Studies. A graduate diploma program may serve as qualification for master's level programs in the same discipline. Taking this approach, however, is not a guarantee of acceptance into a higher level of graduate studies, b) Professional Formation. A graduate diploma program may provide, indeed may be set up precisely to provide, an introduction to and formation for a field for students who do not have a previous undergraduate degree in the field, c) Professional Development. A graduate diploma program may allow for further study, further understanding or relevant experience grounded in theory and reflection for one's current profession at the graduate level. d) Certification. A graduate diploma program may prepare its students for professional and/or academic levels of expertise and qualifications.

Statement of Principle

Students in diploma programs are graduate students with the accompanying rights and responsibilities as defined by the School of Graduate Studies and the particular discipline or field.

The Task Force wishes to state this principle in this report in order to emphasize that all graduate diploma programs are second cycle programs. This has implications for the administration of such programs as well as for the students in those programs. Students entering graduate diploma programs already have some depth of knowledge and maturity and are designated in Quebec as second cycle students funded by the provincial government at the same rate as master's/magisteriate students. As indicated in the Graduate Diploma Development Kit (1995), "... the student population served by graduate diploma programs is a unique and special group of people ... They are searching for a form of knowledge and specialization unavailable elsewhere. They often come from fields of study different from the one offered by the program. Because of this difference in background, these students often require particular attention: while much of the graduate diploma work they do may be introductory to the field, they are mature students ready for the challenge of more intense work than that offered at the undergraduate level". (p. 3)

In what follows it should be noted that recommendations state a minimum university-wide requirement. Individual programs may institute more stringent rules as they deem best. Such rules should be stated in the graduate calendar.

Recommendations

Admission

The Committee was concerned that students admitted to these programs be able to function at a graduate level. Applicants must demonstrate a high level of performance in their prior academic experience, and provide attestation for their academic qualifications in the form of official university transcripts, as well as some form of academic reference or evaluation. In addition, non-Canadians whose first language is neither English nor French must demonstrate their language ability to function adequately in the courses offered in the program.

Recommendation #1:

That candidates applying to graduate diploma programs must have completed an undergraduate degree with high standing or its equivalent as an essential entrance requirement to any graduate diploma program.

Recommendation #2:

That the minimum TOEFL admission requirement for graduate diploma programs for international students whose first language is not English, be a score of 550 (or its equivalent in other acceptable standard tests).

Program Requirements

Programs will be required on an annual basis to ensure that the students maintain good standing. The academic standing of all students will be evaluated at the time of graduation to ensure that all graduating students maintain a minimum GPA of 2.70 (B-) at that time.

Recommendation #3:

That graduate diploma students maintain a minimum GPA of 2.70 during their program of study in order to be considered a student in good standing.

Students should complete their programs within a reasonable amount of time in order to ensure the currency of their expertise. The changing nature of various fields or disciplines, requires that students complete their program of study in a timely fashion.

Recommendation #4:

That the maximum time limit for completing a graduate diploma program be two years of full-time study and four years of part-time study.

Students applying to diploma programs which require an appropriate background before commencing the course of study who do not have this background, may be asked to take the necessary coursework to prepare themselves for the diploma program.

Recommendation #5:

That students may be required to take qualifying courses for certain diploma programs.

Most diploma programs at Concordia University and other Quebec universities require a minimum residence of one full year of study with 30 credits of coursework being a norm. Thus, the Committee recommends:

Recommendation #6:

That a graduate diploma program will normally consist of a minimum of 30 credits.

Courses taken by graduate diploma students normally come from one of three sources: (a) Specific graduate diploma courses. (b) cross-listing with master's level courses. (c) cross-listing with senior undergraduate level courses. The Task Force agrees with the recommendation from our colleagues in 1988 who noted the difficulty that some programs have in providing a majority of courses fully at the graduate level. It was stipulated at that time that at least 40% of the student's courses in any particular program must be at the graduate level (sources a or b). The goal of such a recommendation was to provide a set of graduate level courses and course selection which would cater to a unique student population as reflected in the goals and objectives stated above.

This recommendation should be given due consideration especially at the time of program appraisals. These appraisals occur within the larger context of full departmental and unit appraisals which include all graduate programs offered by departments and units.

Recommendation #7:

That at least 40% of a student's courses in any particular program be at the graduate level in order for that student to graduate.

Program Administration

As with other graduate programs, the Graduate Program Director (GPD) is the front-line member directly responsive to the students in the program. The GPD may serve as solely responsible for the diploma program or may also be the GPD of other graduate programs within the department. The Graduate Program Committee in cooperation with the GPD will be responsible for admissions to the program as well as the

management of the program. The Graduate Diploma Program Committee may function independently as its own unit or may be the committee for the master's and/or doctoral program in the department.

Recommendation #8:

That graduate diploma programs be administered by a Graduate Program Director and a Graduate Diploma Program Committee.

Some programs have only few full-time faculty directly involved. This may result in the program and its students being marginalized, and in some cases the quality of the program may be jeopardized. In order to ensure the credibility of the program, its academic integrity, ongoing support and commitment, currency of knowledge in the field or discipline and the vitality of the graduate diploma program within the department, we recommend that at least some minimum participation of full-time faculty be required. This will become increasingly important in times of budget constraint and with the impact of certain retirements on department planning.

Recommendation #9:

That departments attempt to establish a balance between full-time and part-time faculty participation appropriate to the discipline in their graduate diploma programs.

Some programs may require appropriate professional accreditation or experience in order to participate in the teaching obligations of the program. In other cases, both an academic and professional background is desirable.

Recommendation #10:

That faculty who participate in graduate diploma programs have a master's degree or equivalent in the relevant discipline.

Program Continuity

In order to ensure the graduate nature and emphasis of all diploma programs at Concordia University, the recommendations within this report should be considered during the appraisal process of all graduate diploma programs.

Recommendation #11:

That the unit appraisals system of the University continue to apply to the diploma programs in order to ensure their academic quality and smooth functioning.

The School of Graduate Studies has prepared a Graduate Diploma Program Kit. This Report will be included with the Kit for any future diploma program considerations as an aid to help departments identify specific issues which may be relevant. The process for approval of any new program will include approval by the Council of the Faculty in which the program is proposed, the Council of the School of Graduate Studies and Senate.

Recommendation #12:

That any proposal for a new diploma program be studied in conjunction with an ad hoc evaluation committee struck by the School of Graduate Studies, and other relevant bodies where applicable.

As with any organization or institution, it is important to monitor changes and developments over time of all of its components. If a graduate diploma program is considered for closure, input should be sought from the appropriate legislative bodies, including the Council of the School of Graduate Studies. This recommendation affirms such a procedure in the case of graduate diploma programs.

Recommendation #13:

That any recommendation to terminate a diploma program be reviewed by the Council of the School of Graduate Studies.

Promotional Responsibilities

One very clear conclusion to which this Task Force came is that Concordia's graduate diploma programs represent a diversity of goals, objectives and services - all of which serve to strengthen the role of this University in the community and in the larger academic and professional spheres. The Task Force believes that such practice ought to be fostered and encouraged in whatever manner is possible by the School of Graduate Studies.

Recommendation #14:

That the School of Graduate Studies recognize and encourage the wide variety of objectives established in practice in all Concordia's graduate diploma programs.

The Committee noted the necessity to maintain and improve the graduate diploma profile at Concordia. All members of the Concordia community (students, faculty, administrative support staff, and alumni) should have a better sense of the diverse roles graduate diploma programs play within our larger mission.

Recommendation #15:

That the School of Graduate Studies regularly inform the Concordia community as to the contributions the graduate diploma programs make to this University.