

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Senate Committee on University Priorities
Memorandum

TO: Senate

FROM: John Waterhouse
Chair, SCUP
Vice President, Academic

RE: Guidelines for Development of
Professional Master's Programs
at SFU

DATE: December 9, 2002

Attached is the document: "Guidelines for Development of Professional Master's Programs at SFU" which is submitted for consideration by Dr. Jon Driver, Dean of Graduate Studies.

The Senate Committee on University Priorities (SCUP) reviewed this document at its December 4, 2002 meeting. The Guidelines were unanimously approved. Once approved by Senate, the Guidelines will be submitted to the Board of Governors.

Motion:

That Senate approve the Guidelines for Development of Professional Master's Programs as outlined in document S.03-05

encl.

c: J. Driver

Guidelines for Development of Professional Master's Programs at SFU

Jon Driver, Dean of Graduate Studies

October 2002

I. Preamble

There is considerable public demand for graduate level credentials (diplomas and master's degrees). Although it has been traditional for students to enter graduate programs shortly after completing a baccalaureate, there is increasing interest in mid-career credentials as part of lifelong learning and professional development. SFU already offers a wide range of master's programs. Some are research-intensive programs; some would be categorized as professional (e.g. MBA or M.Ed.); others (e.g. Pest Management or Resource and Environmental Management) combine attributes of both categories. There is strong interest in developing new master's programs, either within existing academic units or as cross-disciplinary programs

In British Columbia there are now many options available to potential graduate students. At the time of writing (2002) graduate credentials can be obtained from many sources. Public and private universities based in B.C. offer in-person and distance education, and many credentials can be obtained from other institutions located out of province. As a result of legislation passed in 2002, university colleges and BCIT will also be offering master's degrees in applied fields. Given the proliferation of institutions granting graduate credentials in professional and applied areas (especially in Business Administration and Education), SFU should develop guidelines in order to maintain the quality and distinctiveness of new professional graduate programs.

II. Professional Master's Programs

There is no simple distinction between research-intensive and professional programs. However, there seems to be general agreement that professional programs have the following characteristics:

- a. Students acquire knowledge and skills relevant to defined career areas.
- b. The program provides exposure to a profession through one or more of the following: co-op/intern opportunities; case studies; interaction with members of professions; applied research opportunities.
- c. A requirement of the program is that students apply what they have learned to "real life" situations or problems, through theses, projects or other examinable media; the intent of such a requirement is to develop critical, inquiring attitudes in those pursuing a profession.
- d. Acquisition of a professional graduate degree is likely to enhance employment opportunities and/or salary levels.

III. Guidelines for the Development of a Professional Master's Program

All new graduate programs must follow procedures defined by the University and the Province. The following additional criteria will be considered when a preliminary program proposal is developed for a professional master's program:

- a. The program will build on existing teaching and research strengths, or will incorporate plans for hiring tenure-track faculty members to create such strengths.
- b. There should be demonstrated demand for a professional master's degree in the field, and the likelihood of a long-term need for the program.
- c. If similar programs already exist in B.C., the SFU program should be distinctive (e.g. in particular sub-fields or in pedagogy) or provide new spaces for high demand areas.
- d. The program should be sufficiently general and flexible to accommodate changing professional priorities.

IV. Guidelines for Program Structure

When developing the full program proposal for a professional master's program, the following guidelines will be useful in ensuring that the program meets the University's requirements.

- a. A steering committee of tenure-track faculty members will be responsible for governance and regular monitoring, and there is a provision for regular review of course content, grading practices and pedagogy.
- b. The program will be structured to allow completion in no more than two years, preferably through a cohort system; part-time options should be described clearly.
- c. To maintain a combination of academic integrity and flexibility, there should be a set of core/foundation courses and electives or streams.
- d. There should be a "capstone" requirement at the end of the program to demonstrate a student's ability to apply knowledge and skills.
- e. The admissions process may recognize previous professional experience in lieu of normal graduate admission requirements; such criteria should be described clearly.
- f. The program should include interaction with relevant professions.
- g. The program should demonstrate efficient linkages to existing SFU programs and courses to avoid duplication of effort and to promote efficient use of teaching resources.
- h. The proposed fee structure should be linked to budget estimates for mounting the program, including faculty and support staff, library, space, equipment and other resources, and adequate bursary support for students with financial needs. Such estimates should be developed after discussion with the relevant faculty Dean and the Vice-President Academic, and should follow any procedures required by the Board of Governors.