Response to the
Graduate Program Review Report
2012-2013

Department of
Nutrition, Hospitality, and Retailing
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This document will address the comments submitted by the Graduate Program Review Committee based on their campus visit on April 17-19, 2013. Just as the reviewers did in their report, these responses will address the Hospitality and Nutritional Sciences programs separately. Comments will be made under the same headings as the committee report.

**Hospitality Administration (PhD) and Hospitality & Retail Management (MS)**

**A. Academic Unit Description and Strategic Plan**

Committee:
For the most part, the Master’s and Doctorate programs are treated as one by the reviewers. This limits the usefulness of the report to each program.

Outside Reviewer:
The reviewer comments that the program has an appropriate strategic plan but lacks “…assessment exercises that track whether these goals are being met”. In fact, degree program assessment has been tracked for several years. A Unit Assessment Report has been created each year for both the Ph.D. and Master’s programs. Based on the outcomes, changes have been made to program assessment criteria and curriculum as needed. (See Appendix A)

The reviewer suggested, “…regular exit interviews and surveys with individual graduating students”. Actually, each graduating doctoral student is given the opportunity to complete an exit survey. The department staff distributes and collects the surveys in order to help assure anonymity. This procedure has been followed for approximately the last eight years. We are in the process of converting the survey to an online version through Qualtrics (see draft in Appendix B). A similar survey will be administered to all graduating master’s students.

Further, student input regarding the HA program has been solicited through four focus groups that have been held over the past three years: three were with alumni of the program and one was with current students. The findings were shared at a faculty meeting and at the RHIM faculty retreat in 2012.

**B. Program Curriculum**

Committee:
The committee rated, “Alignment of program with stated program and institutional goals and purposes” as “Needs Improvement” yet the outside reviewer rated this area as “Very Good”. The committee did mention that students commented that there is, “… a lack of research emphasis in many courses”. This was also mentioned by the outside reviewer and will be addressed below.

Outside Reviewer:
The reviewer suggests that the program, “…consider establishing distinct tracks or areas of emphasis.” This is currently done in the master’s program (see Appendix C), and has
been discussed at the doctoral level. A Retail Management track has been explored and will most likely be offered once the Hospitality & Retail Management Department is created. This may lead to the development of tracks within Hospitality. Presently the lack of multiple faculty in certain areas, lodging for example, prevents the program from offering a variety of courses; thereby limiting the ability to create distinct tracks in those areas of study. Currently RHIM 5311- Problems is being utilized to provide depth in specialty content areas. RHIM 7000 -Research provides for depth in research in specific content areas. Finally, all doctoral students are questioned on a content specialty area on their Qualifying Exam.

Student comments regarding irregular course offerings was mentioned. It is true that we have some elective courses that are not offered on a regular basis, primarily due to faculty availability. Occasionally courses may not have the required enrollment of five students, but typically we will make accommodations for those students through an independent study or directed research course. Barring that, all students should be able to plan their courses well in advance by referencing the Graduate Course Rotation (Appendix D).

The reviewer mentions that, “…the curriculum seems to be leaving less differentiation between Master’ and Doctoral levels”. With the current number of faculty in the program it would be impossible to offer a separate master’s and doctoral section for every course. Most faculty require doctoral students to do additional work (case studies, research projects, etc.), and this can be done on a more consistent basis to make the curriculum more challenging for doctoral students. Further, there was a time early in the development of the doctoral program when there were 5000-level as well as 6000-level courses in the program. With the number of faculty, it became extremely difficult to implement our plan for two course levels with pre-requisites. A decision was made to hold off on offering the 5000-level courses for a few semesters, but eventually decided that it was too difficult to offer two sections of each course. Hence two different degree plans are shown at the Hospitality Administration Website; one for students entering Fall 2004 and beyond and another for students entering Fall 2011 and beyond.

The need for two additional courses, one course dedicated to advanced research applications and another course dedicated to a core specialization area, was mentioned. With the current number of faculty it would be difficult for us to offer an advanced research course; however, recently we began offering a master’s level and separate doctoral level section for our RHIM 5353 Introduction to Research course. We realize the value of an advanced research course and plan to pursue the feasibility of creating such a course.

In terms of a course dedicated to a core specialization area, those already exist. We offer courses in core concepts such as hospitality marketing and strategic management, as well as in food and beverage management, lodging, tourism, event management and retail management. It is true that in some areas we may only offer one or two courses, but once again this is based on available faculty who are experts in those areas. Selected core courses and a hospitality segment course are part of the doctoral students’ qualifying examination (Appendix E).
C. Faculty Productivity

Committee:
The committee rated the faculty teaching load as “Needs Improvement” while the outside reviewer rated it as “Very Good”. They mention that, “… some faculty chair far more theses and dissertations than others”. Since the program allows students to select their own chairperson and committee members, this may occur from time to time. Faculty members have the ability to control their thesis/dissertation load by agreeing to serve on committees. As previously mentioned, in some areas of study the program may only have one faculty member who is an expert in that field. If we have several students who are interested in research in that area, by default, that faculty will serve on a disproportionate number of committees. In addition, some faculty serve on multiple committees due to their expertise in other areas (statistics, for example).

Outside Reviewer:
The reviewer mentions that, “… there is a varied level of productivity among graduate faculty”. This is true; naturally some people are more productive researchers than others, just as some are better teachers than others. However, the program has procedures in place to guide all graduate students’ research agenda. During their Program of Work meeting (details to be discussed in the next section), students submit their Research Planning Sheet (Appendix F) that outlines the research projects, conferences, and papers they plan to work on over the next few years. If they follow the designed plan students should graduate with several conference presentations and at least two submitted journal articles.

D. Students and Graduates

Committee:
The committee rated student demographics as “Needs Improvement” while the outside reviewer rated it as “Very Good”. All Hospitality Administration doctoral programs in the United States have a large number of international students. Why, as the committee suggests, the enrollment should, “…represent the Texas high school demographics” is not clear.

A comment from the committee states, “… very few Ph.D. graduates are finding teaching positions in the U.S and not as many are going into teaching internationally as would be expected”. It is unclear how the committee came to that conclusion based on the list of Hospitality Administration graduates provided in the report (Appendix G). The program also has a 47-page document that tracks the first and current job of ever graduate since the program began. Nearly all have academic positions soon after graduation, or shortly thereafter. This has been a “bragging fact” for the program; therefore, the reviewer’s comment seemed incongruous.
Outside Reviewer:
It should be clearly noted that the reviewer recognizes that the hospitality graduate program at Texas Tech is, “…already among the largest in the country”. There is also mention of the program’s “dramatic growth over the past few years”. In actuality, enrollment has peaked and fewer students are being accepted per fall semester. For example, 14 students were admitted in fall 2010 while only seven were admitted in fall 2011. Spring enrollment is typically around three to four students. Graduate faculty members have had on-going discussions about the number of doctoral students that the program can accommodate. There is general agreement that we have been at our maximum capacity for the past few years.

Various recruitment efforts are underway to increase our master’s enrollment. For example, a 150-hour accelerated bachelor’s/master’s degree is being explored as a viable recruiting tool for RHIM and Retail students.

The reviewer mentioned that the average GRE score of our admitted students is less favorable than other peer institutions. Perhaps the reviewer is unaware that at Texas Tech we cannot select students based on their GRE or GMAT scores. In fact, many programs on campus no longer even require that their applicants take the GRE, however, we still require these test scores from our master’s and doctoral applicants.

It is unclear where the reviewer got the information for the section entitled, “Assessing the fit of applicants with the graduate program” because none of the information is accurate for the Hospitality Administration program. Applicants submit transcripts, curriculum vitae, three letters of recommendation, and a statement of professional interest and intent for consideration by the graduate faculty. The program has a very formal procedure for reviewing applicants which begins with the review of the applicant file by all faculty using the Ph.D. Applicant Rating Sheet (Appendix H). Then all applicants are discussed in a meeting attended by all of the Graduate Faculty, where a vote is taken on admission. Those applicants that pass this step are then interviewed via Skype or face-to-face by two faculty members who ask a series of questions (Appendix I). If the applicant passes the interview they are recommended back to the faculty for admission to the program. Therefore, the statement that, “different applicants receive different evaluations, influenced by the lack of unified criteria for admission decisions” is completely false.

Under “Advising” the reviewer mentions that students are, “… unclear with the less technical advising that lead to the full immersion of the doctoral students into the culture of academia, including the preparation for successful job placement and effective functioning as a faculty member”. Apparently the reviewer was not aware that the doctoral program curriculum includes three seminars: one that introduces students to their doctoral studies, taken in their first semester; another that focuses on research; and a third that discuss the job search process and their transition into academia that they take their last semester.

Another statement under the “Advising” section states, “… the Department is recommended to develop an official agreement among graduate faculty on concrete
means and guidelines to make advising more consistent for all graduate students, especially those students enrolled in the Ph.D. program”. Once again, it appears that the reviewer was unaware that all doctoral students complete a Program of Work meeting during their first semester. The students are advised by their faculty mentor regarding their coursework plan. Then the student, mentor, Doctoral Advisor, and Department Chairperson meet to finalize the student coursework planning sheet, which is then submitted to the Graduate School by the Graduate Advisor. The procedures and documents included in the Program of Work are shown in Appendix J.

The reviewer mentions that students are very happy with the level of support they receive, but also mentions that all of the graduate students serve as Teaching Assistants and none serve as Research Assistants. This is true; there are no funds at the department level to support RA’s, which typically come from faculty grants and research projects. More emphasis needs to be placed on faculty generating funds to support graduate students through grants.

Some good recommendations are made to, in the words of the reviewer, “strengthen a culture of research” among the doctoral students. It is suggested that students select their dissertation committee during their second semester. Procedures stipulate that students select their chair and committee “by their third semester”, which means they can select their chairperson earlier, and many do. However it is important to have students take a few classes with different faculty before they select their chairperson. A change to the end of the second semester could be considered so students can begin working on their research earlier.

The comment about, “… an agreement among graduate faculty with regard to graduate student scholarly productivity expectations” has already been addressed. If students follow the Research Planning Sheet they should have a minimum of three conference presentations and two submitted journal articles by the time they graduate.

Another suggestion was that graduate students research expectations be reviewed annually. Currently all doctoral students submit an Annual Review (Appendix K) and discuss the review with their Dissertation Chairperson. It is true that faculty could, “… more aggressively assist students in the process of transitioning their research projects into conference and journal submissions”.

E. *Facilities and Resources*

**Committee:**
The committee realizes the need for additional staff members for the department, since as they mention, the department only has three staff members and nearly 30 faculty and almost 1,200 students. Once the department splits there will still be a need for additional staff members to help support the two new department’s faculty and students.
Outside Reviewer:
The reviewer mentions the need for, ‘graduate student retreats and social and professional gatherings”. In fact, there is a Graduate Hotel, Restaurant, & Institutional Management (GHRIM) student organization that hosts a number of events throughout the year. They organize a graduate student and faculty party at the beginning of each semester to welcome everyone back to campus. At the end of each semester the department holds a reception to honor that semester’s graduating students. Doctoral students are given a plaque and master’s students receive and engraved pen. Unfortunately, time constraints of both faculty and students limit these types of gatherings to two each semester.

Our Skyview’s Restaurant is mentioned as an excellent lab for RHIM students, but the reviewer then states that, “…such a teaching facility for the lodging operations side of the field is yet to be developed”. This statement is puzzling since we operate a classroom at the Overton Hotel and Conference Center where graduate students teach classes and labs and take an Advanced Hotel Operations course.

F. Overall Ranking

Committee:
The statement about students not having the same experience is troublesome. Students come here with a variety of experiences and we honor the fact that they may have different goals. The committee states that there is a need for, “…more structure and clearer expectations”. Appendix L shows a list of checklists, planning sheets, and guidelines for HA doctoral students. As an example, Appendix L also includes the Program Procedures and Checklist and the Proposal and Dissertation Guidelines. These are just two examples of over a dozen documents created to provide students with information about the doctoral program. It is unclear how much more “structure” could be provided.

Separate courses for masters and doctoral students and additional courses in specialized areas, such as lodging, were mentioned several times in the report. Adding courses to the graduate curriculum would put a tremendous strain on the current number of faculty. Not to mention, if faculty had to teach more it would take time away from their research, which would be counterproductive if we try to create a “culture of research” as was suggested.

The committee suggested that the Ph.D. program limit acceptance to only students who have completed a thesis or have previous research experience. Currently students who have not written a thesis are required to take the RHIM 5353 Introduction to Issues and Research course and a RHIM 7000 Research course where they conduct a major research project. Students take these courses to learn about the research process in order to prepare themselves for their dissertation research.

While requiring a thesis could positively impact graduate research since students would not take leveling course and could begin their research earlier, it would, at least in the short-term, negatively affect enrollment. However, limiting the number of students
accepted could permit more time to focus on research, as recommended. This idea does have its merits and will be discussed as an option with the graduate faculty.

Outside Reviewer:
The reviewer mentions that, “…based on the graduate faculty workload and available facilities the Hospitality and Retail Management program is currently functioning at its capacity”. To a certain degree this is true of the doctoral program; however there is room for additional students at the master’s level. Increasing the acceptance criteria to the doctoral program could result in a decrease in enrollment, but it would hopefully increase the quality of students and subsequently the research productivity of the program as a whole.

Finally, the report mentions several times that students stated that they had different experiences. It is difficult to understand why this is viewed as negative and how the department can change this. Differing experiences are a reality based on the diversity of the faculty. Procedures are in place to assure that every student is treated fairly, but their experiences may differ based on the faculty they work with. There is some indication that during the meeting with students that one very vocal student addressed this and other issues. Hopefully this response to the Graduate Program Review Committee report clarifies the program’s stance on all of the committee’s concerns.

Action Plan

1 Year (2013-2014)

Hospitality & Retail Management Master’s

- Adapt the student exit survey from the doctoral program for master’s students.
- Complete and submit the accelerated bachelor’s/master’s proposal.

Hospitality Administration Doctorate

- Continue plans to offer a separate master’s and doctoral level course in research.
- Complete revisions to the online student exit survey and administer it in the fall of 2013.
- Stress to faculty that they use the Research Planning Sheet and other resources to encourage students to conduct more research.
- Continue to encourage students to complete the Annual Review with mentors or dissertation committee chairs.
- Use the RHIM 6100 section 002 as a forum to review doctoral students’ progress.
- Use new and existing scholarships and fellowships to attract more domestic students.
- Summarize the findings from the current student focus group (conducted in December 2012) and present the findings to the faculty.
- Sponsor a social event for alumni and current students at the ICHRIE Conference in San Diego being held July 30-August 1, 2014.
- Track student progress through the ITA Workshop for approval to serve as a TA or for remedial English coursework for approval to teach.
• Consider requiring students to select their dissertation chair in their second semester instead of the third. As in the past, extenuating circumstances will be considered.
• Encourage faculty to fund research assistant positions through their grants.

5 Years (2013-2018)

Hospitality & Retail Management Master’s
• Once the NHR department splits, create a focused marketing campaign for the HRM Master’s degree and the accelerated bachelor’s/master’s program.
• Review and update curriculum. New courses will be determined based on faculty expertise and need within the hospitality and retail industries.

Hospitality Administration Doctorate
• Review program and course learning outcomes, assessment, and goals.
• With additional faculty, tracks in hospitality subject areas could be created. Additional curriculum issues pertaining to course offerings and new courses will also be addressed.
• Review the number of hours in each area of the PhD degree plan: Core; Research & Statistics, Education, Seminars and Dissertation.
• Create a Retail Management track within the PhD Program. Review entire curriculum to determine changes, additions, etc. needed to implement this track.
• Review the leveling course requirements for students who do not have at least one hospitality/retailing-related degree.
• Continue to admit students who have not written a thesis. As is the case now, these students must enroll in an introductory research course (RHIM 5353) and complete a research project (RHIM 7000) which should be done during their first semester. This should assure that they have the necessary skills to conduct additional research in order to increase their publications and get started on their dissertation.
• Create procedures for review of the course rotation by a panel of students before it is finalized.
• Develop a plan for weekend courses, online courses, and other adaptations of courses to help recruit domestic students.
• Continue posting video clips of alumni on the program website; follow-up on employment of graduates; and conducting bi-annual focus groups with alumni and current students.
• Develop a competitive event as a way to recruit doctoral students. Funds have already been allocated for the initial phase of this project.
• Faculty will continue to attend conferences, such as I-CHRIE, for recruitment of new students and to assist our current students with job placement.
• Encourage more doctoral students to do an industry internship. Expand internships and other opportunities through our relationships with graduates and experts in the field.
• Emphasize the brand of the doctoral program in recruitment efforts.
Nutritional Sciences Master’s & Doctoral Programs

A. Academic Unit Description and Strategic Plan
This was regarded as “Very Good” and “Appropriate” by the reviewers. As we transition to our own Department of Nutritional Sciences, we will review our “Academic Unit Description and Strategic Plan” to ensure that it is accurate and positions us well for excellence in the short and long terms, especially in light of our new “obesity cluster” and strategic and senior hires.

B. Program Curriculum
Reviewers indicated that “Curriculum development, coordination, and delivery and program curriculum compared to peer programs” “Need Improvement,” and that “student learning outcomes assessment” “Is Appropriate.” The NS faculty agree with this assessment and this past summer (2013) formed a Graduate Curriculum Committee that has met four times. In addition we conducted a focus group discussion with current graduate students in early July 2013. The findings support most of those needs identified by the reviewers. We are addressing the Graduate Review deficiencies as follows:

- Course rigor, redundancy: The Committee recommends a restructuring of the nutrient classes to provide foundational (basic) courses that would be taken by MS students and the development of more advanced courses taken by primarily PhD students. We have placed all of the graduate course syllabi in Dropbox so that faculty can review easily to reduce redundancies, yet reinforce subject matter in other courses. We are suggesting that in courses where MS and PhD students are both enrolled that an extra assignment or course component be required for the PhD students. The Committee recommends more review and communication among faculty for new course approval.

- Lack of opportunity to teach and inadequate mentoring for teaching: We will continue to create funding for TA’s to assist faculty in their teaching or where TA’s can teach their own course. Faculty who have students on their research team who do not have TA positions can do guest lectures for their faculty mentor’s classes to get teaching experience. We have also created a mentoring program that will be part of the course load for a new instructor who is a Registered Dietitian who got her BS and MS in Nutritional Sciences from TTU and has been an outstanding adjunct faculty member here. Thus, she is very familiar with our NS courses and can provide leadership for mentoring the TA’s.

C. Faculty Productivity
In the joint report, it was stated “The students do not have an awareness of what the faculty does for their research.” This is a surprising finding in light of the fact that students are exposed to all of the faculty’s research in the NS 5330 Introduction to Nutrition Research class. In this class, each faculty member does a presentation on their research. In addition, faculty research interests are detailed on our NS website. Students definitely have some information to get them started --- they may need to take the initiative and meet with faculty members one-on-one to discuss mutual research interests.
Also, it was stated, “They also are not encouraged to access the resources of the university outside of their own department.” All incoming MS and PhD students attend an orientation session conducted by the Graduate Advisor to discuss resources on the Graduate School website (calendars, timelines, forms etc.) and program-specific degree plans, forms, etc. In addition, students are encouraged to read Tech Announce and to visit the TLPDC website for resources. We provide students with extensive lists of courses in education, statistics, research methods, etc. that are offered by other departments. Also, we distribute an email newsletter (once or twice a month) to all graduate students. In addition to presenting reminders about Graduate School and University deadlines, we provide opportunities for volunteer experiences and jobs and campus resources in a variety of areas. We will continue to do this and look for other opportunities to mention resources to students.

The ranking of “Needs Improvement” for Teaching Load will be eased somewhat with some new hires that are starting this fall. The “Appropriate” ranking for external grants will likely improve as new and current faculty have been very active in grant writing the last 6 – 9 months.

D. Students and Graduates
No areas were cited as “Needs Improvement.”

- Our response related to mentoring of TA’s has been discussed above under Program Curriculum since this is where some reviewers’ comments were made.
- We will continue to seek input from our “customers,” the students, via focus group discussions and exit surveys.

E. Facilities and Resources
No areas were cited as “Needs Improvement.”

- With the dramatic increase in students and the new hires in the basic nutrition area, lab space and office space for these faculty have not been optimum. However, gradual improvement and renovation have been achieved. Continued faculty input and cooperation will be key to future success. The outside “audit” suggested by the NS reviewer may be an objective way to approach lab space.

F. Overall Ranking
Overall Ranking was “Appropriate.”

- To see how well we are addressing the needs identified and the strategies we have put into place, we will do a focus group with current graduate students every 1 -2 years as we did this past summer (July 2013). In addition, we will continue the exit survey that we initiated with May 2013 and August 2013 graduates. The survey is online and thus promotes confidentiality and candor.

Notes:
- It would have been helpful for the Review Committee to have met separately with the Nutritional Sciences Graduate Advisor since this was a review of the Graduate Program; this would have been especially helpful given the unproductive meeting with all of the Graduate Faculty where a couple of senior faculty dominated the discussion with irrelevant and divisive comments.
The external Nutritional Sciences reviewer, Vivian Haley-Zitlin, had to leave early from the meeting with all NS faculty to catch a flight which was very unfortunate.

We appreciate this opportunity to receive feedback and input about our NS Program. We are at an exciting crossroads on the road from “Good to Great.”

NS Program Action Plan

1 Year (2013-2014)

Curriculum
- NS Graduate Curriculum Committee will continue to meet regularly to plan for new courses and revision of current courses to meet the needs of NS Graduate Students and prepare them for jobs and opportunities in the field upon graduation; strengths and interests of new faculty will be used to determine course teaching assignments, especially for new courses.
- Promote increased awareness and communication among NS Graduate Faculty about course content to avoid overlap. This will be accomplished by maintaining all NS graduate course syllabi in Dropbox for easy access.
- Encourage faculty to increase the rigor in classes in general and to require extra assignments for PhD students when they are in classes with MS students.

Teaching Assistants
- Explore options for creating opportunities for teaching especially for PhD students either as teaching assistants for a course or giving guest lectures.
- A NS instructor will serve as a mentor for the current Teaching Assistants to provide more assistance and feedback.

5 Years (2013-2018)
- Revise program mission and strategic plan to address changes related to Nutritional Sciences becoming its own department.
- Continue to solicit input from graduate students via focus groups and online exit survey. Revise program to be responsive to students’ needs.
- Continue to grow the program in terms of quality and number of students with enhanced recruitment efforts.
- Ongoing evaluation of curricula and student opportunities for teaching, engagement, and preparation for careers after graduation.