

A Guideline for Creating Online Graduate Programs in Departments that Have Existing In-Person Graduate Programs

Hadi El-Farr, Online MHRM Program Director, Assistant Teaching Professor, SMLR, Rutgers – New Brunswick
 Richard Novak, Vice President for Continuing Studies and Distance Education



Abstract:

The proposal addresses the problem of loss of opportunity for some departments that already have in-person graduate programs but still did not start online graduate programs. This might be due to their lack of knowledge and guidance, resistance due to stakeholders' concerns, lack of awareness of its significance for the future, and/or lack of time and resources.

- Graduate programs are consistently growing at a healthy rate compared to undergraduate; nationwide, enrollment increased by 10% from 2009 to 2020 and is expected to increase further by 6% from 2020 to 2030.
- In 2020 alone, 71% of graduate students enrolled in at least one online course, and 52% of the total graduate students exclusively enrolled in online courses.
- In 2021, 78.5% of graduate students enrolled in at least one online course, and 52% of the total graduate students exclusively enrolled in online courses.
- Therefore, the dominance of online education in graduate studies is a persistent trend.

Primary Stakeholders:

- Students
- University Leadership
- School & Department Leadership
- Centralized IT
- Faculty
- Instructional Design
- Marketing
- Student Councilors & Administrators
- Program Directors

Key Steps:

- **Step 01:** Forming a task force to write the preliminary guideline
- **Step 02:** Drafting a guideline based on the expertise of the taskforce
- **Step 03:** Pilot Study with one existing in-person program
- **Step 04:** Finalizing the guideline and publishing it university-wide
- **Step 05:** Marketing the guideline throughout the university
- **Step 06:** Continuous Support and Training

Effectiveness Measures:

- Time for completion
- Pilot study results & feedback collected from the stakeholders
- Success rate of created online programs
 - Increased total enrollment
 - Low cannibalization rate
 - Increased revenues
 - Student retention rates
 - Student completion rates
 - Student satisfaction rates
- Number of programs that are using the guideline and supporting tools to create online programs
- Number of created online programs.

Communication/Engagement:

- Awareness Campaign through emails and one-on-one meetings with program directors.
- Creating a Canvas Shell, hosting the guideline and supporting material.
- Canvas could be used for continuous communication, reminders, and training events.
- Communication effectiveness could be measured through:
 - Number of downloads
 - Traffic on the training website
 - Number of programs that are considering creating online programs

Current Status/Future Directions:

- A sponsor to lead and champion the project.
- Forming the Task Force
- Selecting the Pilot Study
- Preparing the support and training infrastructure

