

**University of Wisconsin System**  
**Criteria for Approving the Establishment of**  
**Professional Doctorate Programs at UW Comprehensive Institutions**

**Background**

Higher education in the United States has experienced a rise in the development and awarding of professional doctorates. Many of these degrees, especially those in the health or medical fields, have been, to a large extent, driven by changing practice and accreditation standards aimed at increasing the knowledge depth of individuals being awarded these degrees.<sup>1</sup> Thus, several of these clinical degrees currently offered at the master's degree level at comprehensive institutions within the UW System must now be offered at the professional doctorate level. The principles and guidelines stated below will guide the process for approving the establishment of professional doctorates at comprehensive institutions within the UW System, effective March 16, 2009. These principles and guidelines are in addition to all other established requirements and guidelines for the approval of new degree programs (see *ACIS 1 Revised* and the *Guidelines* document at: <http://www.uwsa.edu/acss/acis/acis-1.pdf>).

**I. Principles:**

**A. Enhance access to professional degrees.** The goal of offering professional doctorates at the comprehensive institutions is to provide additional high-quality doctoral degrees in fields where there are clearly defined market needs. The development of such programs may also be determined by the needs of place-bound students, regional employer needs, space limitations in UW-Madison or UW-Milwaukee programs, or clear demonstration that UW-Madison and UW-Milwaukee cannot fulfill the need.

**B. Enhance efficiencies and avoid unnecessary duplication.**

Collaboration with other institutions will remain a key consideration in the development of new professional doctorates.

1. In the case of collaborative degree programs, the proposal should demonstrate that the institutions have the capacity and logistical ability to jointly offer the program.
2. The proposal should demonstrate that the professional degree does not replicate unnecessarily already existing or similar degrees at other UW institutions.

**C. Criteria**

1. Ordinarily, professional doctorates should be offered only where Master's degrees with established high quality already exist (with existing faculty, laboratories, resources, etc.). The proposal should demonstrate that the proposed professional doctorate program is high-quality in terms of the rigor of its curriculum and program objectives, and its available resources,

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<sup>1</sup> For a fuller discussion of the context leading to the rise of professional doctorates, please see the Executive Summary on *Professional Doctorates in the UW System* located at:

<http://www.uwsa.edu/acss/acis/acis-1.pdf>

including faculty and facilities. The establishment of a professional doctorate at an institution that does not have a Master's degree program in the discipline may be approved if the discipline does not include the Master's degree. In such a case, it will be necessary for the institution seeking such an approval to demonstrate that it has, in addition to physical and financial resources, adequate faculty with the qualifications and significant experiences in instructing and supervising graduate students.

2. Geographic location of programs should be appropriate to ensure that the state's workforce needs are effectively addressed, and that students have reasonable access to the education necessary to meet those needs;
3. The degree should prepare students for professional practice in a specific field. The proposals should demonstrate that the degree is necessary based on new practice requirements, accreditation requirements, or for licensure in the professional field of study.
4. The proposal should demonstrate that the doctoral degree does not reduce the integrity of the institution's undergraduate mission, does not take away resources devoted to undergraduate education, and does not undermine the strength of undergraduate program array offerings.
5. The proposal should assure that offering a professional doctorate will not lead to adjuncts being overly or highly utilized in the offering of undergraduate classes.
6. The proposed professional doctorate program should be carefully targeted to align with the goals, mission, strategic plan or direction of the specific institution. The program should also align with the UW System's mission and Growth Agenda for Wisconsin.
7. Professional doctorate proposals should demonstrate national, regional and local market needs.
8. The cost and price for offering a professional doctorate program at an institution should be competitive.
9. New and emerging fields of study that do not currently exist at the Bachelor's level at the comprehensive institutions or within the UW System will be offered through UW-Madison and UW-Milwaukee.