PROGRAM EVALUATION SERIES

A How-to Manual for the Graduate Review and Improvement Process

Leah Hakkola, Doug Moon, and Michelle Gensinger

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NOTE TO READERS

This book is designed for graduate programs and department leaders who are interested in conducting holistic program review that is developmental, student-centered, and action-oriented.

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If intending to implement GRIP, please ensure that the "GRIP Central Tenets" are part of your process.

Comments from faculty and staff at the University of Minnesota

Participating in GRIP gave us a structure for doing graduate review. That was helpful. The traditional review process that we conducted in the spring gave us a partial view, but we learned more through the internal process of GRIP. We had a more productive external review because of GRIP.

Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), Department of Curriculum and Instruction

It cemented for me, as DGS, some things that I had heard about, but had not realized were systemic issues that could be addressed. I also learned that collaborating with graduate students gave me insights that I wouldn't have otherwise had and that "top down" (even if well-meaning) changes to a graduate program are not always the best idea. At the same time, it's really given me insight into the necessity for giving students an "inside view" of the program from the faculty/DGS perspective.

A Director of Graduate Studies

Our program gained very informative insight into the day-to-day struggles of our students. While we were aware of several preexisting issues at the program level, we were able to take the results we gained from GRIP to strengthen our justification for making changes. It was very helpful to have concrete data to present to our program's committees.

Water Resources Sciences Professor

Through a developmental and student-centered process, GRIP helped OLPD provide a systematized venue for listening and responding to student, faculty, and staff voices in order to enhance academic, professional, and social experiences in the department. OLPD gleaned insight into sensitive perspectives that were not represented prior to the evaluation process.

Chair of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development (OLPD)

We put in place a regular evaluation instrument to provide more detailed feedback on a regular basis than we currently get from our annual student progress surveys. The plan is to repeat the survey on a regular basis at least every 3 years to get ongoing feedback and to look at progress over time.

Director of Graduate Studies, Carlson School of Management,

We've created a new class, created new information sheets for students, implemented new processes in our orientation and student reviews.... The process itself helped us zero in on what we wanted to know, in addition to helping us ask the questions. We are still studying the numbers, and the words "GRIP responses" are part of many conversations when we talk about program changes.

Professor, Masters of Liberal Arts Program

Editor-in-Chief and Editorial Board

The series Editor-in-Chief, Professor Jean A. King, lives in both the scholar's and the practitioner's evaluation worlds; she has taught at the University for over a quarter century while maintaining an active school- and community-based evaluation practice.

Similarly, the Program Evaluation Series Editorial Board includes diverse representatives from both the university and the evaluation practitioner communities:

INTRODUCTION

With pleasure I introduce the inaugural volume of the Program Evaluation Series, an occasional publication of the Minnesota Evaluation Studies Institute (MESI), which has its home in the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development at the University of Minnesota. Owing to the lengthy history of its evaluation training programs (extending back to the late 1960s when the field originated), the University of Minnesota has a strong reputation for evaluation, both nationally and internationally. For over two decades, MESI has sponsored exceptional professional development on **program evaluation*** and provided graduate students hands-on opportunities to hone their skills on evaluation projects in a variety of organizations. This new endeavor, the Program Evaluation Series, seeks to broaden the number of people who can benefit from MESI activities by providing high quality, up-to-date, and affordable materials on critical developments in the field.

Why now? There are three reasons we are launching the e-book series at this time:

- As the field of evaluation continues to grow around the world, it increasingly relies on on-line electronic materials to keep people current. The benefit of a series of e-books is clear since these books can be downloaded and re-produced for only the cost of the printing or formally printed for a nominal fee.
- The practice of program evaluation is a growing activity internationally, and the number of novice evaluators and people conducting evaluations who do not consider themselves professional evaluators is expanding. Knowing that only a small number of colleagues nationally and globally are able to attend trainings in person, this series of e-books

*The definitions of words in boldface are included in the glossary beginning on page 64.

will enable MESI to provide useful materials to a broader array of individuals engaged in the field.

- An e-book series provides a vehicle for dispersing innovative evaluation content stemming both from academic settings like universities and, equally important, from the world of practice, including the multiple communities in which evaluators ply their trade. Practicing evaluators, many of whom write weekly or monthly blogs, routinely develop materials that they would like to share widely. The Program Evaluation Series provides a mechanism for such dissemination.

We hope you find this publication of value to your evaluation practice and sincerely invite your feedback (mesi@umn.edu) and suggestions for additional volumes.

Jean A. King, PhD
Director, MESI

PS: Each volume in the Program Evaluation Series will include one example of a signature MESI product: A top ten list that compares program evaluation to something else. These lists are created collaboratively at our Spring Training each year and highlight the fact that evaluation really can be fun.

INTRODUCTION TO THE GRIP E-BOOK

We are pleased to inaugurate the Program Evaluation Series with the publication of a how-to manual for planning and running a student-centered evaluation of a university graduate program. Developed by graduate students in collaboration with Graduate School staff at the University of Minnesota, the Graduate Review and Improvement Process (GRIP) responded to the need for a more qualitative, student-centered evaluation process to complement traditional university review that frequently relies on quantitative indicators like financial support, number of publications, and time to degree. The results of GRIP across a number of diverse academic programs were both positive and heartening, encouraging us to write a formal manual for GRIP implementation. The GRIP Manual, edited by Melissa Chapman-Haynes, was originally hosted on the website of the University's Graduate School, but by publishing its content as an e-book, the Editorial Board hopes to make the GRIP process widely available to faculty, staff, and students at university programs far and wide.

FOREWORD

In 2011, GRIP was created through a collaborative effort of educational leaders at the University of Minnesota (UMN), in response to important challenges generated by the report, Commission on the Future of Graduate Education in the United States (Triggle & Miller, n.d.). This collaboration included: Dr. Henning Schroeder, Dean of the UMN Graduate School; Dr. Jean King, professor of Evaluation Studies; Dr. Rebecca Ropers-Huilman, Professor of Higher Education and chair of the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development (OLPD); Leah Hakkola, president of the student governing association of OLPD, and Marta Shaw, doctoral student of OLPD. This group slated a set of questions to be asked of UMN's graduate programs:

1. What purpose does the [graduate] program serve?
2. How well, and how effectively, is the program meeting its purpose?
3. With what evidence, and/or rationale, will we know?

This leadership group, two additional GRIP student consultants (doctoral students Michelle Gensinger and Doug Moon), and Dr. Melissa Chapman-Haynes, Coordinator of the Minnesota Evaluation Studies Institute (MESI), designed, piloted, expanded, and documented the GRIP implementation at UMN. As of January 2015, GRIP had been conducted in over twenty graduate programs. The GRIP team designed this e-book to share the experiences, knowledge, and outcomes gained in the past few years.

Getting a GRIP on Your Graduate Program

The Graduate Review and Improvement Process (GRIP) allows program leaders to consider the educational quality of their courses, curriculum, and services for the purposes of program improvement. GRIP is a student-centered process designed to identify and develop actionable steps that will enhance educational success. It was developed as an alternative to the traditional external review process that occurs every five to ten years and which produces largely quantitative and summative information about the program. Further, GRIP can serve as a complementary process to external monitoring and surveying that is conducted to assess indicators such as time to degree, retention, number of publications, financial aid provided, or student demographics.

GRIP is unique in that it places the emphasis of the evaluation process and program improvement in the hands of participating students, faculty, and staff. GRIP is a collaborative and participatory process, which means that individuals identified to be on the internal program team determine what information should be collected and relay that information back to other program **stakeholders**, allowing for feedback and additional **data** collection and review. GRIP allows programs to define discipline-specific metrics and outcomes using a variety of evaluation tools and methods.

GRIP provides a way to explore and measure both **qualitative** and **quantitative data** in graduate education. For example, programs may ask questions such as:

1. How should we evaluate the crossing of disciplinary boundaries?
2. What is the ideal path to degree in our program? What strategies have students created and used in their paths to degree?
3. How do we quantify intellectual risk-taking?
4. How can we measure originality and innovation?
5. How can we enhance program recruitment, retention, and graduation?
6. How aligned is our program curriculum and coursework with current career trends in our field?

GRIP is a customizable process that is intended for a wide range of programs. Graduate programs that have participated in GRIP span a variety of degree types (Master of Science; Master of Art; Master of Fine Arts; doctoral students and candidates). GRIP has been applied across various disciplines and specialized areas of learning, from dentistry to veterinary medicine and securities technology to curricular instruction. The flexible nature of GRIP has allowed for successful implementation in programs, including entomology, public affairs, business administration, anthropology, and nursing.

GRIP Central Tenets

- Identify a project-specific GRIP team that includes the following individuals: current student(s), **director of graduate studies** and/or a faculty in an administrative role, and program faculty or staff.
- Determine whether the review process will include any external evaluation consultation or whether the review will be conducted internally.
- Complete an initial **evaluability assessment**, which includes meeting as a project-specific team, to review existing information about the graduate program of interest and determine the evaluation questions of most relevance to program needs.
- If you have decided to work with an **external evaluator**, develop regular meetings throughout the semester outlining the following activities:
  - Development of an **evaluation plan**
  - Evaluation tools specific to program needs
  - Data collection dates
- Design and implement a process for sharing evaluation findings with program constituents (students, faculty, staff, alumni). Develop an action plan that includes reflections on lessons learned, next steps, roles, and responsibilities.

How to Use this E-book

GRIP is a tailored evaluation process that is contingent upon program needs, resources, and scope. Accordingly, the GRIP authors have identified several key factors that will shape your evaluation. Factors include the following:

1. The graduate program's internal capacity to conduct program evaluation
2. The information needs of the program
3. The timeline that evaluative information is needed
4. Motivation of the program to prioritize and implement that timeline

Generally speaking, the above factors provide a framework for an initial evaluability assessment so that a graduate program can determine how to approach GRIP activities. The degree to which an initial evaluability assessment is formalized is up to each graduate program interested in pursuing GRIP as a model of program evaluation.

In developing the process, the GRIP team worked with over 20 programs, providing them with evaluation expertise, consultative service, and internal program capacity building. For programs interested in working with such an external evaluator, this e-book will provide an overview of the major compo-

nents of this process. Our hope is that this e-book will help to guide graduate programs interested in developing and utilizing their internal capacity to conduct GRIP activities with confidence. This e-book can also be used with the guidance of an internal staff member who has expertise in graduate education evaluation.

THE GROUNDING OF GRIP

GRIP is designed to provide graduate program leaders with the tools and strategies they need to conduct a thorough review of their educational quality and effectiveness. GRIP responded to a need for information on graduate programs and how well they prepare students for an increasingly complex and ever-changing world. Our GRIP "strategy" builds upon the scholarly evaluation approaches introduced and refined by leading scholars and practitioners in the fields of evaluation and higher education. The GRIP initiative is informed by scholarship from The Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate and Michael Patton's developmental evaluation and **utilization-focused evaluation**. GRIP consultation is guided by the Program Evaluation Standards (Yarbrough, Shula, Hopson, & Caruthers, 2011). The scholarship and evaluation tools mentioned above provide a solid foundation for implementing and facilitating high-quality, meaningful, relevant, and useful program review and improvement (see Appendix A).

PART I

From Assessment Readiness to Evaluation Design

Establishing a GRIP Leadership Team

Implementing GRIP requires facilitation and coordination from a leader in the graduate education program with other key program stakeholders. Based on our experience at UMN, GRIP leadership found that the most effective internal GRIP program teams include at least one faculty member and at least one student representative. Team member participation rates vary depending on the resources allocated to each individual. For example, approximately half of past participating programs created graduate assistantships for interested students from their programs. Other programs selected student leaders who wished to volunteer their time while gaining evaluation experience in the process.

The "GRIP Leadership Team" provides tremendous value and is necessary in moving GRIP through its various phases. This leadership team strategically involves decision makers and champions (Director/Coordinator of Graduate Studies, other faculty) in the program and at least one student from the program's population of interest. Additional team members may include alumni and staff from the program. Throughout this manual, we refer to a "GRIP Consultant" as an individual with evaluation expertise whose primary role is to guide and facilitate the GRIP leadership team throughout the evaluation process. This individual provides the group with evaluation training, coaching, and internal capacity building to ensure quality and effectiveness of the evaluation process and results. Please note that at UMN, GRIP consultants were advanced doctoral students with expertise in evaluation and post-secondary education. These

consultants were supported largely by the UMN Graduate School to facilitate University-wide graduate education review. In your program, the GRIP consultant may be an internal faculty or staff member or a graduate student with interest or expertise in evaluation.

ESTABLISH INITIAL CONNECTIONS

We recommend inviting students, faculty, and staff to an initial and informative meeting to discuss how your program could benefit from a review and improvement process. Casting a net among the program at large may generate a variety of individuals who can be helpful in developing the internal GRIP leadership team and the evaluation plan. We suggest contacting program constituents through program listservs, e-newsletters, student leadership organizations, and faculty meetings. Appendix B contains a sample letter that one program used when it began GRIP. The table below can be used to assemble a GRIP leadership team and provide an initial framework for roles and responsibilities.

Roles	Responsibilities	Contact Information
GRIP Consultant		
Faculty Leader (Chair, DGS, Senior Faculty Member)		
Staff Representative (optional)		
Student Representative(s)		

During the initial interest meeting, we recommend providing a brief overview of GRIP using "GRIP Central Tenets" (p. xiii). Providing useful information with definitions for any evaluation rhetoric will help to build healthy rapport. In this meeting, make sure to highlight the fact that GRIP is distinct from external reviews and accreditation and is designed to engage with qualitative and quantitative data to develop focused plans for improvement. GRIP uses quantitative data to demonstrate what is going on in your program, while making use of qualitative data to provide the narrative for why those elements exist. GRIP is based on the principles of **developmental evaluation** and action research methodologies and creates a complementary method for graduate education review.

Regular GRIP leadership team meetings offer a venue for deeper analysis of evaluation results and discussions of next steps. Involvement in the GRIP leadership team requires consistent participation and ongoing commitment. Clarification of expectations, roles, and responsibilities is critical in the initial meeting. Near the end of this meeting, make sure to structure an opportunity for questions

and answers and provide a way for individuals to sign up if they are interested in joining the GRIP leadership team. Once you have established your internal GRIP leadership team, your next step is to schedule your first GRIP leadership meeting where you will conduct a brief stakeholder analysis, discussion of **primary intended users** (PIUs), and an evaluability assessment.

YOUR FIRST GRIP TEAM LEADERSHIP MEETING

Conducting a Stakeholder Analysis

Implementing GRIP successfully requires the engagement of those who are primarily affected by the program. The meaningful involvement of stakeholders—those who have a stake or investment in the program—will increase ownership of the process, decrease resistance to change and involvement, and can save time and resources. Investing time at the beginning to consider the program's key actors, decision makers, service providers, and clients—the graduate students—will increase GRIP's quality and usefulness. Knowing who should be involved, when to inform them, and how to involve them are key questions in the stakeholder involvement process (Aerden, 2013). Those with more interest in the program will be more likely to actively contribute (Bourns, 2013).

Helpful stakeholders for GRIP include the following:

- Coordinator of Graduate Studies
- Director of Graduate Studies
- Program Director or Chair
- Faculty (junior, tenured, adjunct, etc.)
- Staff at companion and/or co-located programs
- Students

When recruiting students:

- Look for naturally occurring groups (by year of program, by program track or specialty, by location)
- There might also be student leadership groups within a program or department. Universities often have councils and/or associations with elected or appointed student leaders

Check these groups out as appropriate; in addition to comprising your stakeholder group, they might have keen insights into the political climate and cultural nuances of the program.

Remember that stakeholders have various reasons to be involved, a range of perspectives, different priorities, and, often, preferred ways to communicate. Some may be directly involved in delivering or supporting aspects of the program; others may be indirectly affected (e.g., potential students, students who

withdrew from program). It is worth investigating to see if communication plans or documents exist that describe program stakeholders already. The following table, completed for all key stakeholders, will be helpful for organizing a stakeholder analysis and a plan for engaging them throughout GRIP implementation.

Stakeholder Name	Ex: Dr. Cassie Rodriguez
Stakeholder Category*	Faculty
Interest or Perspective	Wants to strengthen student involvement
Role in the Evaluation	Volunteer member of GRIP leadership team
Level of Involvement	Regular GRIP team meetings
Notes: Communication	She is the faculty advisor for the department student organization

*You might create categories of stakeholders based on their interest, experience, resources, or program relevance. Simple classifications such as PRIMARY, SECONDARY, TERTIARY or by communication strategy (e.g., INCLUDE, INFORM, INVOLVE, ENGAGE) are useful. Be diplomatic in assigning "importance" to people—these are often public documents.

IDENTIFYING INTENDED USERS AND "PRIMARY" INTENDED USERS

Intended users—and specifically, the primary intended users (PIUs)—are not only stakeholders, but also offer critical insight and direction for how the GRIP evaluation will be conducted and ultimately how the findings will be communicated and used. Years of research on evaluation use suggest that "evaluators should facilitate the evaluation process and design any evaluation with careful consideration of how everything that is done, from beginning to end, will affect use" (Patton, 2012). PIU(s) have the unique responsibility of making decisions on when to take action and how the GRIP evaluation strategy should evolve because of their involvement with the evaluation process and findings (IRDC, 2012). Plan on regular, high-quality interactions with the PIU(s), and other intended users because they will be instrumental during GRIP implementation and analysis and in the development of an action plan.

Focusing on Intended Use

We have found that maintaining a focus on how the primary intender user(s) will use the information generated by the evaluation is critical to conducting a successful evaluation. This process includes engaging stakeholders, especially intended users, in a conversation to reach shared understanding about how the results can and will be used. Be mindful that you may initially encounter some resistance to this process. Building rapport and trust is an important aspect in

easing this resistance and gaining consensus among intended users about the evaluation design. King and Stevahn (2013, p. 61) address this issue in their practical guide to Principles for Interactive Evaluation Practice (IEP). Their IEP principles provide a structured process to manage evaluator-stakeholder interactions by examining the political and cultural dimensions of the evaluation context. Developing a shared understanding of the decision-making process and other environmental factors can help mitigate resistance towards the evaluation process and use of subsequent findings. Below is a set of questions for intended users to explore in order to identify the extent to which GRIP will influence forthcoming program decisions.

Questions for Intended Users about How GRIP Will Influence Forthcoming Decisions

- What is the history and context of the decision-making process in the program? What do we know are current issues in our program?
- What decisions, if any, do we expect GRIP findings to influence? Who makes the decisions, and when will decisions be made?
- When do findings from GRIP need to be presented in order to be timely and influential?
- What controversies or issues surround the decisions? Around GRIP itself? For whom?
- What other factors (values, politics, personalities, promises already made) will affect the decision making? Could decisions somehow be kept from being made? How much influence do you expect GRIP findings to have on decision making?
- Have decisions already been made—regardless of GRIP and its findings?
- What can be done to enhance GRIP's relevance and influence in your program? How will you know the extent of GRIP's usefulness or if it was used as intended?

Adapted from: Utilization-Focused Evaluation by Michael Quinn Patton

Defining Intended Use

Engaging a program in a methodical self-study process to explore values, attitudes, and interests among its stakeholders will likely build useful knowledge. Gathering information for the purposes of program improvement, however, implies some degree of decision making and/or prioritization processes. Identifying the purpose of the evaluation and how the findings will be used is critical. GRIP thrives in a developmental context and nurtures itself through iterative, meaningful, and useful pieces of information. The healthy, living, and breathing evaluation process gets off to a good start with a centering, systematic inquiry. It is recommended that questions here stimulate dialogue and shared understanding. Documentation of agreements, decisions, and plans will prove unde-

niably worthwhile. Below are central questions that inform the evaluation design for intended use.

Building Agreement & Focusing the Evaluation on Intended Use

1. What are you asking?
2. Whom are you asking?
3. How will you ask?
4. Why are you asking this?
5. How will this information be used?
6. When is this information needed?

Conducting the Evaluability Assessment

For many years, evaluability assessments have been recommended as the first step for those interested in program improvement. Assessing your program's readiness for GRIP, or any evaluation process for that matter, helps to test it for reality—to see if the espoused theory of the program and its design is aligned with how participants actually implement it (Schön, 1997). Smith (1989) provides a concise description of this process below:

> [Evaluability assessment] is a diagnostic and prescriptive tool for improving programs and making evaluations more useful. It is a systematic process for describing the structure of a program (i.e., the objectives, logic, activities, and indicators of successful performance); and for analyzing the plausibility and feasibility for achieving objectives, their suitability for in-depth evaluation, and their acceptability to program managers, policy makers, and program operators. (Smith, 1989, p. 1)

It is possible that the graduate program for which you want to introduce GRIP has faculty and staff who are familiar with evaluation. It is also possible that there will be a range of opinions about what evaluation should be and what it entails. In addition to preparing the program for reality testing, evaluability assessments bring program staff, faculty, and other stakeholders onto the same page to share their hopes, fears, expectations, and exceptions for what GRIP might bring. During the evaluability assessment discussion, be mindful that there is no "right" way to decide on the overarching evaluation questions that will drive your participation in GRIP. We recommend an open and reflective process that is guided by the GRIP evaluability assessment questions described in the "Evaluability Assessment Report."

There are several ways to begin an evaluability assessment, and the process does not have to be linear. While some (Strosberg & Wholey, 1983) prefer a checklist of activities, Michael Quinn Patton (2012) gravitates towards a more

informal conversation designed to build consensus around the nature of the program, its political climate, and why the evaluation is being conducted. Both approaches emphasize the involvement of key program stakeholders, intended users, the review of program-defining documents, and a focused discussion on how the information gained will be used. Working with your GRIP leadership team, we recommend using the questions outlined below to structure your evaluability assessment discussion.

NOTES ON ASSESSING & BUILDING READINESS FOR GRIP

1. Review website and printed information (e.g., handbooks, newsletters, brochures) that describes the program and its history
2. Meet with key program stakeholders to explain GRIP (or the evaluation initiative), but more importantly to get a sense of general issues with the program
   A. How does the program fit within the larger department or college?
   B. Are there recent changes or political issues?
   C. When was the last evaluation conducted? How did that go? Who was involved? Were any findings used?
3. Determine what kinds of [evaluation] information are routinely collected
   A. Exit interviews? (look for useful questions)
   B. Course evaluations? (look for trends)
4. Navigate through potential resistance to evaluation, but promote the positive aspects of evaluation:
   A. Program clarity and improvement
   B. Reflection and input from others
   C. Building cohesiveness, morale, and motivation
5. Generate some initial evaluation questions:
   A. What does "the program" want to know?
   B. How would this information be used?

Evaluability Assessment Report

Because GRIP is an internal and ongoing improvement process rather than a one time assessment, documenting the building of readiness, including the people involved and the questions to be asked, is an essential activity. Hence, the evaluability report will serve as a guide for ongoing and future review and adjustment of activities and decisions made in your program. The nature of the evaluability report will vary depending on the needs of your program; however, there are some essential pieces of information that should be documented.

These include:

- Description of the graduate program
- Names of individuals on the GRIP Leadership team
- Names and roles of primary intended users
- Stakeholder groups who should inform the process
- Information that is currently collected about the program—type of information collected and results, as applicable
- Information needs of the program—what do we want to know? Initial evaluation questions
- Actual or perceived resistance to GRIP

HOW TO STRUCTURE OVERARCHING EVALUATION QUESTION(S)

Evaluation questions in GRIP lay the foundation upon which other lines of inquiry are constructed. Honing in on a small number of primary questions such as, "What do you really want to know?" is a critical step in designing the GRIP evaluation. These "big" questions (no more than one to three) should focus the program towards improvement. GRIP provides an opportunity for the program to gather actionable feedback from current students, alumni, faculty, staff, or some combination of these stakeholders. Keep in mind that the information collected from the evaluation will become the content used for strategic planning and improvement processes. It is important to understand that the quality of the questions is enhanced by their orientation towards use and improvement.

Below, we offer examples of past GRIP evaluation questions:

- What is the ideal path to degree in our program?
- What strategies have students created / used in their path to degree?
- What would help our Master's students improve their post-graduation career prospects?
- How can we increase our recruitment of _____?
- To what extent is our program's purpose aligned with the interests of our incoming and current students?
- Does our program mission align with student expectations and the employment landscape in our field?
- How satisfied are our students with our coursework, curricula, and pedagogy?

Developing an Evaluation Plan

A critical step in your GRIP evaluation is the design of the evaluation plan. This evaluation plan can provide a large amount of information in a matrix format

that will be a visual representation for your process. The evaluation plan provides an at-a-glance depiction of the what, who, how, why, and when questions asked and answered. The plan identifies your program's primary evaluation questions, central evaluation objectives, key stakeholders, methods for data collection, and when collection of information will be completed. This plan should be developed within the first few GRIP team leadership meetings and will act as a guide throughout the GRIP process. Please visit the following website for additional guidance on developing an evaluation plan: www.bja.gov/evaluation/guide/documents/developing_an_evalu.htm.

To put our learning to practical use, imagine the following fictitious graduate program scenario:

> The "Business-Ready-Instruction (BRI)" graduate program is designed to provide students with both academic grounding and professional skills that prepare them for future employment in settings as diverse as university instruction, entrepreneurial consulting, and marketing research. For the last few years, the administrative staff has commented on the time it takes to respond to a wide range of questions from Master's students who stop in the DGS' office. Perhaps not so surprisingly, these questions are addressed in great detail in the 115-page graduate program handbook that each newly admitted student receives electronically. Additionally, SRTs (student ratings of teaching) administered at each term's end have hinted at a growing dissatisfaction with the teaching of professional development. Phrases like "outdated information" and "more opportunities to practice" are common in student evaluations.
>
> The graduate program coordinator suggests that a GRIP evaluation would be an effective way to address the student complaints and concerns. After some informal conversations with office staff, an appearance at the monthly BRISTLE (BRI Student Learning Event), and a subsequent one-on-one with the Director of Graduate Studies, the program Chair agrees to an initial meeting with a GRIP consultant. Brainstorming ensues, details are discussed, and spirited exchanges are followed with more reflective e-mails. The GRIP leadership team, a thoughtfully composed and now more formalized group (including the DGS, program coordinator, associate professor, adjunct faculty member, student graduate assistant, staff member from the BRI career center, and GRIP consultant from the Graduate School) emerges with the latest iteration of its two evaluation questions. The program has arranged for the GRIP consultant to facilitate the evaluation plan discussion that will explore how to get answers to their overarching questions below.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. How can the BRI program better prepare students to succeed in their chosen careers?
2. What are effective modes of and how can BRI improve program communication to its students?

Evaluation Design/The Matrix Model

Below, we have provided a sample evaluation plan based on the Business-Ready-Instruction Graduate Education scenario:

Evaluation Question	Information Needed	Information Source	Methods Used	Timing
Q1. How does BRI improve career preparation for students?	Perceptions and suggestions of BRI alumni re: program relevance across various career options Perceptions and suggestions of BRI students regarding program information (quality) and curricular focus (relevance) Expectations of incoming Master's students re: BRI program Current BRI curriculum and program requirements; BRI promotional info	BRI students BRI faculty BRI alumni BRI website BRI exit interviews? (can we do this confidentially?)	Document analysis: Explore SRTs and student exit surveys for questions and comments re: career preparation, skill development.	Sept–Nov
			Online survey: of BRI students and alumni (retrospective-post)	Nov–Jan
			Paper survey: Incoming Master's students at orientation event	August

Evaluation Question	Information Needed	Information Source	Methods Used	Timing
Q2. How does BRI improve programmatic communication to its students?	Perceptions, norms, suggestions re: communication modes: students Current material that displays information re: program requirements, policies. Faculty/staff input re: critical and helpful information that students "need"	BRI students BRI staff/ faculty BRI website	Document analysis: Review program website content & patterns of use; review written program material for accuracy	Sept–Nov
			Key interviews: w/ admin staff	Oct–Nov
			Online survey: BRI faculty	Nov
			Focus group: BRI students	Jan–Feb

The BRI program has committed to a full year of continuous GRIP activities. The evaluation plan both summarizes and organizes content from numerous discussions among program stakeholders. This template can be used generally for GRIP evaluation planning, implementation, and next steps. The evaluation plan displays a shared understanding about important program aspects and the information and data needed to answer the evaluation questions and improve the program.

Evaluation plans evolve in developmental evaluations. (For more information on developmental evaluation, please see Appendix A.) While documentation is highly recommended, nothing is written in stone. Your GRIP leadership team may not have all the information it needs, for example, to determine what methods might work best to get alumni input. Gathering more information from a broader stakeholder circle, in this case—*especially alumni*—makes sense. Knowing when information is optimally needed for decision making helps determine the timing of the data collection activities. This evaluation design provides important content for a more comprehensive and time-bound evaluation plan.

PART II
Data Collection

A thoughtfully constructed evaluation design will help facilitate data collection activities. Successful data collection involves gathering substantial feedback from a representative cross-section of program participants. The value of stakeholder involvement has been emphasized throughout this manual. As you approach the data collection phase of GRIP, it is important to include stakeholders and champions of your program to promote data collection activities. Please note that GRIP does not recommend one method over another. More importantly, the evaluation question(s) should determine the methodological choices. Deciding on a method is not the first step in the GRIP process.

The intended use and the intended users along with the overarching evaluation questions will guide the data collection process.

Data are the information collected from a variety of methods that your GRIP leadership team identifies in the evaluation design. Examples of methods to collect data include surveys, online or in-person **focus groups,** and interviews. In addition to gathering enough data, data must be collected systematically, with quality control in mind. In many higher education settings, surveys can be administered online, and statistical analysis can be generated using the online survey instrument. Focus group and interview data require careful note-taking, recording, transcription, and a systematic analysis process. Selecting the appropriate data collection methods is an important decision based on a variety of factors, such as time and resources as well as the type, quality, and depth of information needed to address the respective evaluation question. In addition to surveys and focus groups, your program can also conduct an analysis of existing information as a method of data collection. Using information that is

already gathered may be more economical and efficient and reduce the burden among others in the program.

Collecting Secondary Information First

Existing information that would be useful to address an evaluation question is called **secondary data**. It is advised to be systematic and careful about how this secondary data collection is performed. The following list might be helpful.

1. Depending upon the needs of the intended users, secondary data might include:
   A. Program information (enrollment, demographics, performance, etc.) from the college or department that houses the program. University-wide information is often available from the Office of Institutional Research (OIR)—or a similar unit. A university's OIR usually has a wealth of untapped information and can often compare aggregate program/college data across different units of analysis: colleges, departments, universities, regions, etc.
   B. Existing program/departmental mission statements and goals. Do not shrink from the challenge of finding where it is written what the program is supposed to do.
   C. Current program handbook—Is it accurate? Up to date? Does the printed version match the online version?
   D. Diagrams of how the program is structured—How does communication flow? Is there agreement about how the program looks on paper? Are there omissions?
   E. Existing evaluation reports; program metrics and data collection tools; strategic planning notes—all can be helpful to initiate conversations.
2. There may be a need to create a presentation for stakeholders that provides a historic picture of the program so the current situation can be placed in context. Such a presentation might include:
   A. How the program is defined to students, to the public
   B. How the program may have changed recently (e.g., graduation requirements; curricular emphases; technology use)
   C. How the program changes may reflect longer-term trends (e.g., program expansion or downsizing; declining enrollment; changing demographics of students; aging faculty)

3. You should check with administrative staff who have access to student self-assessments, progress reviews, and/or exit surveys. Students are routinely asked to identify general program challenges and concerns from their perspective. It may be possible to get aggregated responses from these sources without violating anyone's confidentiality. Efforts like these can potentially inform survey or focus group questions and save the evaluation process time and resources.

Collecting Primary Data

One of the fundamental challenges of evaluation is identifying the appropriate data collection method that matches the information that you are trying to obtain. Working with your program's stakeholders and especially those from whom you wish to collect **primary data** will be of great benefit when you are at the point of considering what may be optimal methods. Some data are easier to obtain than others. Demographic information such as age, income, last year of schooling, etc. may be captured on a survey or intake sheet. Gathering other information, such as whether one feels motivated academically with the current curriculum or the degree to which one's proximity to campus affects communication needs, presents more challenges.

Among the more common data collection methods are those that attempt to solicit information from individuals about their attitudes, opinions, behavior, knowledge, skill level, memory, suggestions, or a range of other beliefs or behaviors. Some of this information is better collected in quantitative form while, as illustrated above, other information is better described as a qualitative narrative. Many in the evaluation field would agree that getting both kinds of data (quantitative and qualitative) can strengthen the evaluation overall.

The survey, or questionnaire, is one of the most commonly used methods of data collection. Taking time to create a good survey is important. Equally critical is exploring strategies to increase the likelihood that the survey reaches the intended **audience** and that the survey will be returned. For sample surveys, see "Appendix C: Sample Survey One" and "Appendix D: Sample Survey Two."

Besides surveys, there are other ways to gather information. One-on-one and small-group interviews have proved particularly useful when trying to get more nuanced and specific descriptions from knowledgeable sources. For example, it may be worthwhile to explore different perspectives regarding how a graduate program's degree requirements should be communicated to students. Engaging students, staff, and faculty in comfortable, appropriate, and confidential settings with a well-structured set of questions can also provide insight about the quality, consistency, and accuracy of—in this case—communication within a program.

GRIP evaluations have also used focus groups to explore important topics and themes in participating programs. The advantage of having a focus group is that it brings together those who share a common interest, such as program instruction, and structures a dialogue that explores agreement and differences among its participants' perspectives. Doing focus groups well, however, requires a good deal of expertise and facilitative skill in the group moderator. An increased commitment is also needed from the group participants. Focus groups take more time (on average from 45 to 90 minutes) and a degree of comfort with being vulnerable in a peer group (Krueger & Casey, 2008).

One of the novel things about GRIP is the extent to which creativity can be explored in the collection of information. At the University of Minnesota, GRIP teams have developed appropriate methods to engage students with multiple, divergent, and competing priorities. For example, events such as **town-hall** styled forums were used in more than one program to bring students together in a social and convenient setting—with food—in order to generate interactivity and dialogue about important program issues. Another program invited all of its residents, separated by their specialty, to a one-hour lunch to glean information through facilitated, interactive conversation and activities.

Whether quantitative or qualitative data, or a mix of both, are needed to address a program's particular evaluation questions is a decision for the GRIP program team. However, the value of the GRIP evaluation is often determined by the degree of student participation in the process. Participatory methods that bring together previously untapped voices can also be criticized for having the appearance of a random, haphazardly organized student mixer. This may be especially true for veteran faculty or conservative programs accustomed to more traditional methods of data collection. Working closely with program stakeholders can help define where effective student engagement practices meet appropriately rigorous methodology to get the information most useful to improve the program.

The following table created by the Northwest Health Foundation (Gelmon, 2005) may help your GRIP leadership team decide which data collection methods are appropriate and more likely to be successful.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: COMPARISON OF ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Method	When to use	Advantages	Disadvantages
Document review	Program documents or literature are available and can provide insight into the program or the evaluation	Data already exist Does not interrupt the program Little or no burden on others Can provide historical or comparison data Introduces little bias	Time consuming Data limited to what exists and is available Data may be incomplete Requires clearly defining the data you seek
Observation	You want to learn how the program actually operates—its processes and activities	Allows you to learn about the program as it is occurring Can reveal unanticipated information of value Flexible in the course of collecting data	Time consuming Having an observer can alter events Difficult to observe multiple processes simultaneously Can be difficult to interpret what is observed
Survey	You want information directly from a defined group of people to get a general idea of a situation, to generalize about a population, or to get a total count of a particular characteristic	Many standardized instruments available Anonymous Allows a large sample Standardized responses easy to analyze Able to obtain a large amount of data quickly Relatively low cost Convenient for respondents	Sample may not be representative May have low return rate Wording can bias responses Closed-ended or brief responses may not provide the "whole story" Not suited for all people—e.g., those with low reading level

Method	When to use	Advantages	Disadvantages
Interview	You want to understand impressions and experiences in more detail and be able to expand or clarify responses	Often better response rate than surveys Allows flexibility in questions/probes Allows more in-depth information to be gathered	Time consuming Requires skilled interviewer Less anonymity for respondent Qualitative data more difficult to analyze
Focus group	You want to collect in-depth information from a group of people about their experiences and perceptions related to a specific issue	Collects multiple people's input in one session Allows in-depth discussion Group interaction can produce greater insight Can be conducted in short time frame Can be relatively inexpensive compared to interviews	Requires skilled facilitator Limited number of questions can be asked Group setting may inhibit or influence opinions Data can be difficult to analyze Not appropriate for all topics or populations

Data Collection Methods—Comparison of Advantages & Disadvantages Advantages courtesy of Northwest Health Foundation, Gelmon, S., 2005

Two sample surveys and a sample focus group protocol are included in Appendices C–E.

PART III
Data Analysis

As described in the previous section, the most appropriate type of data collection will depend on the evaluation questions being asked. Subsequently, data analysis activities will depend on the kinds of information gathered and the degree of rigor (appropriate and/or possible) needed by the intended users of the evaluation. In our experience, the preference of most programs participating in GRIP is to collect both quantitative and qualitative types of data, thus utilizing a mixed-methods approach.

In this section, we provide a framework for how to approach the task of analyzing data—quantitative, qualitative, or a mix of both. For detailed guidance on specific data analysis techniques, there is a multitude of available resources.

What Is Needed?

GRIP leadership teams commonly discuss two topics throughout each stage of GRIP: 1) the capacity to conduct the tasks at hand and the information needs of the intended users, and 2) a thoughtful plan that connects the evaluation question and evaluation design with what will be needed in the analysis stage of GRIP.

First, when developing the evaluation questions and the evaluation design, it is important to consider the capacity of the program team to conduct the analysis. By capacity, we mean both the knowledge of conducting the specific analysis as well as the time to do so. Building the capacity of your GRIP leadership team is essential for many reasons, including capacity to potentially conduct some or all of the analysis.

Second, it is important to revisit the needs of the intended users at this point in the process (see: "Evaluability Assessment Report"). The intended users should be involved in discussions regarding the degree of rigor needed for the analysis. For example, if the evaluation questions are highly political, it may be important to have an external consultant conduct qualitative data analysis. Depending on resources, it may be worthwhile to have discussions about reliability of qualitative coding. On the other hand, in some situations it may be acceptable to have qualified students who are internal to the program conduct the analysis.

What Kind of Analysis?

Quantitative data can usually be entered into free, low-cost, or university-supported Web-based software. Programs such as Qualtrics or Survey Monkey can generate useful descriptive summaries, conduct data comparisons and cross tabulations, and provide graphic illustrations to display the data. These survey instruments also provide generic reports and data that you can import into Microsoft Word or Excel to conduct further analysis.

More complex methods used to collect qualitative information, such as interviews, focus groups, and observations, generally require more time for the analysis and a higher degree of skill to organize, code, and analyze this qualitative and narrative information. Resources may also need to be considered for transcription of textual data. As with quantitative data analysis, Web-based data analysis software programs, such as QDA miner and nVivo, are available and can be quite helpful. There are generally five basic steps in the analysis of qualitative data:

1. **Processing, exploring, and assessing the data**
   This first step involves gathering the information into one place. Being able to see all the data, transcribed and entered into a quality software program, provides the opportunity to get to know and assess the quality of the information.

2. **Aligning the data analysis with the evaluation purpose**
   Knowing what is ultimately needed will inevitably shape the way the data are read. If the qualitative data collection tool (focus group or interview protocol, for example) reflected what information was important, it is likely that the way in which the tool was organized will provide a helpful way to approach the data.

3. **Organizing the data into practical categories and themes**
   The amount and complexity of the data will affect how much time and skill are needed in this step. A practical approach would be to use the focus group or interview protocol to categorize the responses and then to summarize the responses for each question. A complementary,

but more open approach would be to allow themes and patterns to emerge from the data.

4. **Connecting patterns, themes, and categories**
   After having spent a considerable amount of time with the data, sorting it into a useful thematic framework, and then sitting with the data some more, it is likely that higher-level groupings can be made. Strategies at this point include combining themes into larger categories or assigning differing levels of importance to categories and describing the relationships between categories.

5. **Moving towards interpretation and triangulating meaning**
   By now you have a more organized set of useful data; synthesizing this work into a meaningful display is the next step of qualitative analysis. Depending again on the needs of the intended users, you might consider working with them and other skilled analysts to support and/or challenge interpretations reached in the organization and analysis phase. Packaging and presenting the findings will depend upon the needs of the program stakeholders.

Final thoughts on analysis

Remember that analysis is an iterative and flowing process. It is beneficial to work within an adaptive framework so that a shared understanding of the data, interpretations, and next steps can be achieved. The goal of this analysis is to shed light on diverse perspectives and experiences within your program with the hope of improving programmatic outcomes.

PART IV
Data Reporting

One of the central tenets of GRIP is that data collected are reported in ways that are meaningful, so that results turn into actionable next steps for program improvement. Below we present a realistic GRIP scenario that may help you decide how to consider reporting similar information to different groups of stakeholders.

Scenario 1: The Master of Science in Security Technologies (MSST) Program

MSST is a 14-month interdisciplinary program. While there is a core group of departmental faculty, the program relies on faculty from a range of fields from both within and outside of the university. Further, of the 32 credits required for the program's MS degree, one-third of these are dedicated to an area of specialization decided by the student. The MSST program is approaching five years as a program, and there is interest in evaluating the successes and areas for improvement. MSST's GRIP leadership team decided to work with a GRIP consultant to develop an online survey for current students and for alumni. After a successful data collection period, data were analyzed together by the GRIP team and the consultant.

In this example, one of the key findings was that current students needed advisers with various specialties, many of whom were in other departments. The survey findings indicated that over 60% of the students were having difficulty finding a willing faculty adviser outside the MSST program. The GRIP leadership team was convened to discuss this and other findings, to debrief the survey process, and to draft a document listing preliminary key findings. Although it was easy to list the strengths of the program, just as much time was spent

identifying challenges commonly reported by the survey respondents. Where there were areas needing improvement, the group suggested feasible solutions.

Earlier in the GRIP process, the leadership team had promised a report about GRIP findings to many different stakeholders. Having discussed the survey process and key findings, the group was now ready to share this information with others. It is advisable to review your GRIP team's communication plan or decisions made earlier in the process regarding what kind of information is needed by which stakeholders. The next step is deciding when and how best to present GRIP information to these various audiences. As important as the conversation among your leadership team is what kind of information or feedback you want in return. Do you want certain groups to discuss certain findings, make recommendations, or help plan next steps? Knowing ahead of time will facilitate your success in attaining the desired outcomes set for each presentation.

Reporting to Stakeholder Group A: Other GRIP Programs

One of the GRIP traditions was to facilitate collaboration across different GRIP projects and leadership teams. Programs presented at a final "showcase" where leadership team representatives presented an overview of their programs and gleanings from their GRIP evaluations. Because there were several programs presenting, one guideline was that presentations were brief and illustrative of the "big picture" results. In this situation, the MSST program developed and delivered a five-minute PowerPoint presentation. In general, for this type of setting GRIP suggests a simple three-part presentation, covering the important points of the GRIP project.

GUIDELINES FOR CONCISE GRIP PRESENTATIONS:

1. **What:** Describe the program, its key concerns, the evaluation questions, and methodology
2. **So What?** Describe the key findings and how they are important to the program
3. **Now What?** Present and discuss recommendations or important next steps for action.

Reporting to Stakeholder Group B: Program Students

As with most stakeholder groups and other intended users of the evaluation findings, creating a continual feedback loop between them and GRIP project teams can enhance buy-in for the current project and will likely facilitate future assessment efforts.

It is highly suggested that your GRIP leadership team creates a feedback loop with students whose programs are involved with GRIP. In addition to delivering key findings, GRIP should involve students in the discussion and development of recommendations and in the prioritization of next steps.

Creative ways of reporting GRIP information to students include the following:

- Town halls
- **Data dialogues**
- Subsequent focus groups
- E-mail updates, websites, and social media

Reporting to Stakeholder Group C: Program Faculty/Staff

Generally speaking, faculty and staff have standard ways in which information is shared. While faculty meetings, memos, and email chains are common—and should be respected—and utilized—there may be alternative ways of presenting key information to this important group of stakeholders. An important strategy for GRIP leadership teams is maintaining a transparent relationship with faculty who, in many cases, hold power and authority to facilitate—or block—the improvement or change suggested by GRIP reports. Equally important is recognizing the important role and contributions of program staff—often the glue holding program components together and the keepers of institutional knowledge. Efforts to work with and through widely respected faculty members and ones who have indicated their support for GRIP may yield positive results when trying to share important information pertaining to GRIP. Administrative staff, especially GRIP champions, can prove to be very important allies.

Other Suggestions for Reporting/Disseminating GRIP Information:

A variety of tools are available to inform program stakeholders and/or to remind them of the value of their participation in the evaluation. Your team may consider the use of **dashboards** to display visually appealing summaries, emergent themes, and broad outcomes. Conferences can also be used to showcase well-conceived program evaluation processes and findings. Using the Internet and e-mail to disseminate findings can also be cost-effective. Work closely with the program stakeholders to clarify how and where program information and findings are discussed and shared.

Information can be delivered in a traditional written format, through formal presentations and informal discussions, or in the creative use of technology, poetry, or data visualization. Reporting the findings is not the end point of evaluation, however. Reports should always lead to "next steps" and a clear plan for how the findings will be used to improve the program.

Data Visualization Resources

- Stephanie Evergreen (stephanievergreen.com/)
- Stephen Few (www.perceptualedge.com/)
- Edward Tufte (www.edwardtufte.com/tufte/)

PART V

Checklist for Managing Your Evaluation

Here we provide several tables that can help the GRIP leadership team manage and implement your evaluation. Having documents that list what needs to be done, by whom, and when will help keep your GRIP evaluation on track. These tables can be used to structure your meetings and can be easily shared with members on your team. Often, teams may have both narrative descriptions and something more shorthand, like checklists or tables. Making sure that everyone is clear on what activities are happening, by when—and why they are happening—is key to a successful GRIP evaluation.

Data Collection Management

QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED

- What data will be collected?
- What activities are needed to carry out the data collection successfully?
- When should each of these activities be completed?
- Who is responsible for conducting each activity?

TABLE 1. **Data Collection Plan**

Evaluation Questions	Data Collection Method	Activities Needed	Person(s) Responsible	Due Date
1.				
2.				
3.				

Data Analysis Management

QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED

- What data will be analyzed, how, and when?
- Who is responsible for conducting the analyses?

TABLE 2. **Data Analysis Management**

Analysis to Be Performed	Data to Be Analyzed	Person(s) Responsible	Due Date

Communicating and Reporting Management

QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED

- Which stakeholders need progress reports? How often? In-person? E-mail?
- How about reporting findings? What format needs to be used?
- What other kinds of communication does each stakeholder group need?
- When? What is the best way to share this information? Different for different audiences? When will the communication take place? Is feedback needed from them?

TABLE 3. **Communication and Reporting Plan**

Audience 1: {insert name of audience}				
Applicable?	**Purpose of Communication**	**Possible Formats**	**Timing/ Dates**	**Notes**
Yes/No	Include in decision making about evaluation design/ activities			
	Inform about specific upcoming evaluation activities			
	Keep informed about progress of the evaluation			
	Present initial/ interim findings			
	Present complete/ final findings			
	Document the evaluation and its findings			

*Adapted from Russ-Eft and Preskill (2001), pp. 354–357.

Timeline

QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED

- When will planning and administrative tasks occur?
- Will any pilot testing occur? When?
- When will formal data collection begin? Is there an end date planned?
- When will analysis tasks occur? Is analysis concurrent with data collection?
- When will information (updates, reports, interim findings, etc.) be disseminated?
- If a single timeline were created for the project, are there foreseeable bottlenecks or sequencing issues? Does the evaluation timeline conflict with that of the program?

TABLE 4. **Evaluation Timeline Template**

Group	Purpose	Methods	Lead	Timeline

PART VI
Next Steps

The goal of GRIP is to put continuous review and program improvement in the hands of students, faculty, and staff. It is designed to generate meaningful information that can be readily used to the benefit of programs, students, and faculty. This manual has provided a step-by-step process to follow as you move through the review of your program. We encourage you to create an action plan that spells out action items for improvement that will address issues that emerged in your findings and final report. Below is an example of a completed Action Plan that you can use as a template to help guide you in this process.

Key Themes	Next Steps	Responsible Party
Issues with commu-nication	Convey clear student responsibilities Revise handbook-more specific regarding student responsibilities	DGS / Chair Faculty
Funding for students	Find alternative sources of funding Create advanced student mentor group	DGS Student leaders / Advanced PhD students
Prelim exam / prospectus schedule / format / process	Faculty / advisors / older students can encourage newer students to self-advocate more Faculty will communicate next steps earlier in the process	DGS / Advisors Advanced PhD students Faculty

APPENDICES

Appendix A: The Grounding of GRIP

The Graduate Review and Improvement Process is grounded in five distinct, but related concepts: developmental evaluation, utilization-focused evaluation, **interactive evaluation practice**, action research, and **evaluation capacity building**. What these approaches share is a commitment to "process use" (Patton, 2008), i.e., the use of the evaluation process itself to generate change through involving program staff and participants actively in framing questions; collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data; and making and implementing actions grounded in the evidence collected. Empirical research has shown how involving people in the program review increases the likelihood that they will both care about and ultimately apply the results of the study (Johnson, Greenseid, Toal, King, Lawrenz, & Volkov, 2009; King & Stevahn, 2013).

This initiative differs from traditional review in that its participants are trained and encouraged to make note of intended and unintended consequences, while being given the flexibility to adapt to unforeseen changes along the way, central elements to both developmental evaluation and action research (O'Brien, 2001; Patton, 2011). Ultimately, GRIP, which is student-centered and improvement-oriented, can provide graduate education faculty, students, and staff the tools necessary to adjust to the variable needs, aspirations, and expectations of graduate students and faculty in structured and transparent ways. Each of the approaches on which GRIP builds is a distinct area of inquiry, briefly summarized below.

Developmental Evaluation

Developmental evaluation evolved from Michael Quinn Patton's insight that a more nuanced approach was needed to help evaluation processes and social programs become more responsive to the context in which they are situated. Since its naming almost 25 years ago (Patton, 1994), developmental evaluation has provided evaluators a way to work in complex contexts as programs evolve in response to the systems within which they operate. Patton (1996, p. 30) writes that developmental evaluation "identifies the dynamics and contextual factors that make the situation complex, then captures decisions made in the face of complexity, tracks their implications, feeds back data about what is emerging and pushes for analysis and reflection to inform next steps." The evaluator joins the program team and works collaboratively with them, meaning that they serve simultaneously as an evaluator, collaborator, and researcher along with key stakeholders of the review. Gamble (2008) states:

> [D]evelopmental evaluation facilitates assessments of where things are and reveals how things are unfolding; helps to discern which directions hold promise and which ought to be abandoned; and suggests what new experiments should be tried. (p. 18)

This evaluation approach is particularly appropriate for innovative processes in environments that are changing rapidly and have unpredictable outcomes. Developmental evaluation tracks the choices that are and are not chosen in an attempt to make decisions clearer and to allow for continuous improvement in real time, which differs from traditional program review in post-secondary education contexts. Working within a GRIP framework gives the evaluation consultant and the program stakeholders the opportunity to receive real-time feedback from those who take part in the process.

Utilization-Focused Evaluation

Patton's orientation towards developmental evaluation embraces the concept of utilization-focused evaluation (UFE) of the findings and the organizational learning in the process itself. Based on empirical research, UFE is defined as "evaluation done for and with specific, intended primary users for specific, intended uses" (Patton, 2008, p. 37).

UFE has several essential elements. First, the evaluator must clearly identify and personally engage the evaluation's primary intended users (PIUs) at the beginning of the evaluation process to ensure that their concerns and primary intended uses are identified. Second, evaluators must ensure that these intended uses of the evaluation by the primary intended users guide all other decisions that are made about the evaluation process (Patton, 2008). Third, the evaluator interacts with PIUs over the course of the evaluation to discuss credible methods in the setting, review instruments, interpret results, and perhaps even help to frame recommendations. The point is to make sure, to the extent

possible, that the people who have the power to use the evaluation's results will have the credible information they need to move forward.

Interactive Evaluation Practice

Involving intended users is likely to increase an evaluation's usefulness; however, GRIP will be more successful when the evaluation consultant and program members use skillful communication and interpersonal dexterity. King and Stevahn (2013) expand upon what Patton calls the personal factor that facilitates evaluation utilization (Patton, 2008) with an equally important focus on the interpersonal factor, the interactive practices that establish stakeholder rapport and buy-in so that valid and credible evaluation processes can lead to UFE outcomes.

King has been directly and uniquely involved with GRIP since its inception at the University of Minnesota. Although she would deny it, she is responsible for much of GRIP's initial success, in large part due to the interpersonal factor: professorial grace, being held in high regard, and her attentiveness to relational dynamics. Her legacy, however, lies in the practical wisdom instilled in interactive evaluation practice (IEP) and in GRIP: skilled inquiry, negotiated collaboration, facilitated decision making, and attention to process.

Action Research

Social psychologist Kurt Lewin created this term while conducting research in communities after World War II (1946). Not surprisingly, action research combines two processes: taking actions likely to result in meaningful change in social situations (action) and simultaneously collecting high quality data to study the effects of what occurs (research). It shares similarities with the continuous improvement process of total quality management (Kanji, 1990) and typically has four steps that may go by different names: planning, acting, studying/data collection, and reflection (Sagor, 1997). According to Gilmore, Krantz, and Ramirez (1986):

> . . . [T]here is a dual commitment in action research to study a system and concurrently to collaborate with members of the system in changing it in what is together regarded as a desirable direction. Accomplishing this twin goal requires the active collaboration of researcher and client, and thus it stresses the importance of co-learning as a primary aspect of the research process. (p. 161)

Because action research allows for continuous change, tracking, reflection, and improvement, it is a practical and relevant approach to graduate education review.

Evaluation Capacity Building

Among the challenges inherent in processes that address change within programs and institutions are opportunities to build upon organizational development practices and adult learning theories so that a more positive attitude towards evaluation can emerge. Preskill and Boyle (2008) shed light on the growing need for evaluation capacity building (ECB):

> The ultimate goal of ECB is sustainable evaluation practice—where members continuously ask questions that matter, collect, analyze, and interpret data, and use evaluation findings for decision making and action. (Preskill & Boyle, 2008, p. 2)

At its best, GRIP ideally leads to continuous process documentation and cyclical reflection as departmental participants first identify appropriate changes, then implement and track their results.

Appendix B: Sample Introductory Letter to Program Stakeholders

In many cases it is necessary or optimal to provide a descriptive overview of GRIP to key faculty and staff—who may or may not have experience with assessment and evaluation or student-centered processes. The formality of the group, the informational needs of the stakeholders, and the overall communication plan will affect the types and timing of communication efforts. Below is a sample letter sent as GRIP was beginning in this particular program.

UMN SCHOOL OF DENTISTRY (SOD) MS PROGRAM

GRIP Evaluation Plan

Greetings!

We hope this document is helpful. It is designed to familiarize you and other key stakeholders of the School of Dentistry about the Graduate Review Improvement Process, commonly referred to as "GRIP." There are opportunities to provide input in alternate ways, and certainly questions can be posited at any time.

However, we know you are busy. The following information gives an overview of GRIP's University-wide purpose and a suggested draft of an evaluation design for SOD—based on input from Dr. H., Dr. L., and secondary data previously gathered from UMN and SOD sources. A.T. is the RA selected from SOD to work on this project. D.M. is SOD's GRIP Consultant.

GRIP Overall Purpose

Systematize a meaningful and ongoing evaluation process throughout UMN Graduate Programs that include and/or highlight students' experience and result in actions designed towards Program improvement.

Key Evaluation Questions

Overall UMN Grad School Questions

- What is the purpose of the program? What are its desired outcomes? What is the rationale and education purpose of each element of the program?

- Which elements of the program should be retained and affirmed? Which elements of the program could usefully be changed or eliminated?
- How do you know?
  - What evidence aids in answering these questions?
  - What evidence can be collected to determine whether changes serve the desired outcome?

Key Questions from SOD Faculty

- What are the goals of the MS of Dentistry program, and are we meeting them?
- How valuable (and or relevant) is it to have a Master's degree (in this field; to practice)?
- Is the current curriculum the best, or do we need to re-evaluate? Should milestones be set in place for incentive and to keep students on track?
- Should it be required for students to complete a Master's (MS) with certificate training?

Key (Additional) Questions from SOD Student Perspective & Literature

- How can we refine questions above and pilot test selected methods? What does literature/field expertise offer as design options for addressing above?

Appendix C: Sample Survey One

Vet Med Survey v3.0

This survey has been designed with you in mind—and your participation is very important!

You have been selected to help evaluate your Veterinary Medicine graduate program. Your program's faculty and staff want to better understand how to improve your experience as a graduate student.

While participation is voluntary, your completion of this entire survey will help us strengthen and improve the program for you and future students. We are not requesting your name, so your responses will be confidential. We estimate this survey will take no longer than 15 minutes to complete. THANK YOU!

SECTION A: PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Please check the appropriate response to each of the following questions.

1. How do you identify your status within the Veterinary Medicine Graduate program?
   - ☐ Master's student
   - ☐ PhD student
   - ☐ PhD candidate
2. Are you currently in a residency program?
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No

   If yes, please indicate specialty:
   - ☐ Small animals
   - ☐ Large animals
   - ☐ Dairy
   - ☐ Other

3. What is your Veterinary Medicine Program Track?
   - ☐ Infectious Diseases
   - ☐ Comparative Medicine and Pathology
   - ☐ Population Medicine
   - ☐ Surgery/Radiology/Anesthesiology
   - ☐ I don't know
4. When do you plan to have completed all of your current program's requirements?
   - ☐ By August 2017
   - ☐ By August 2018
   - ☐ By August 2019
   - ☐ After August 2019

PhDs Only

5. How clearly do you understand the following requirements to complete your PhD?

	Very much so	**Mostly clear**	**Not quite clear**	**Not at all**
Coursework				
Prelim Oral Exams				
Prelim Writen Exams				
Dissertation				

Master's Only

6. How clearly do you understand the following requirements to complete your Master's degree?

		Very much so	**Mostly clear**	**Not quite clear**	**Not at all**
Coursework					
Choose one	Thesis Plan A				
	Thesis Plan B				

	Very much so	Mostly clear	Not quite clear	Not at all
How clearly do you understand the mission of the Veterinary Medicine Graduate Program?				

SECTION B: WHAT'S IMPORTANT?

The following table identifies various components of your graduate education experience. We'd like to ask you how important these items are in your Veterinary Medicine graduate program.

7. Please indicate **how important** the following numbered items are to you by marking the appropriate box.

	Very import-ant	Import-ant	Not that import-ant	Not at all import-ant
Research				
A. Developing research skills				
B. Opportunities to assist/ collaborate with faculty on his/her research				
C. Opportunities to pursue my own research ideas				
D. Opportunity to take courses directed towards research interests				
Teaching				
E. Developing skills to become an instructor				
F. Opportunities to teach (or present material in front of others in a classroom setting)				

	Very important	Important	Not that important	Not at all important
Other Skills				
G. Knowing how to submit material to scholarly journals				
H. Knowing how to successfully build my CV/professional résumé				
I. Developing grant-writing skill				
Other Students				
J. Having peer support from others in the Vet Med program				
K. Feeling like other Vet Med students are enthusiastic about our program				

8. For each item in Q#7 that you rated "important" or "very important" (and ONLY for those items), please indicate below **how satisfied** you are with your relevant experience in your Vet Med graduate program.

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Not satisfied	Very dissatisfied
Research				
A. Developing research skills				
B. Opportunities to assist/collaborate with faculty on his/her research				
C. Opportunities to pursue my own research ideas				
D. Opportunity to take courses directed towards research interests				

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Not satisfied	Very dissat-isfied
Teaching				
E. Developing skills to become an instructor				
F. Opportunities to teach (or present material in front of others in a classroom setting)				
Other Skills				
G. Knowing how to submit material to scholarly journals				
H. Knowing how to successfully build my cv/professional résumé				
I. Developing grant-writing skill				
Other Students				
J. Having peer support from others in the Vet Med program				
K. Feeling like other Vet Med students are enthusiastic about our program				

SECTION C: FACULTY FEEDBACK AND SUPPORT

These next questions ask you to assess the feedback and support you receive from faculty in your graduate program. Please check the appropriate response.

	Very satisfied	Satisfied enough	Not very satisfied	Not at all satisfied
9. Overall, how satisfied are you with the feedback you have received from various instructors regarding coursework?				

	Very satisfied	Satisfied enough	Not very satisfied	Not at all satisfied
10. How helpful has your advisor(s) been in providing you feedback about your overall progress in your graduate program?				
11. How timely has your advisor(s) been in providing you feedback about your overall progress in your graduate program?				
12. How responsive has your advisor(s) been in addressing concerns or questions that you raise regarding your graduate program?				
13. What is one suggestion you have to improve the advising you wish to receive regarding your Veterinary Medicine graduate program?				

14. To what extent are you satisfied with the academic support you receive in your graduate program from the following sources? Mark the appropriate response:

	Very satisfied	Satisfied enough	Not very satisfied	Not at all satisfied
A. Advisor				
B. Co-advisor				
C. Graduate school staff				
D. Director of graduate studies (DGS)				
E. Fellow graduate students				

15. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements regarding your experience in your Vet Med graduate program. Mark the appropriate response:

	Strongly agree	Mostly agree	Mostly dis-agree	Strongly disagree
A. I have received adequate support to develop my research ideas.				
B. I have received adequate support to attend conferences.				
C. I have received adequate support to practice presentation skills.				
D. I have enough time to conduct my own research.				
E. I have adequate support to develop my thesis. (MS only)				
F. I have adequate support to pass my preliminary exam(s). (PhD only)				
G. I have adequate support to develop my dissertation. (PhD only)				

ALL STUDENTS CONTINUE HERE

16. Please answer the following questions about your [research] contributions in the space provided.

A. How many scholarly articles have you helped develop as co-author?	
B. # of these articles published?	
C. # of scholarly articles written as primary author?	
D. # of these articles published?	

E. How many times have you orally presented [your own research] at U of M?	
F. # of oral presentations at a conference outside U of M?	

17. What research opportunities and practical experience would you like to have by the time you graduate?
18. Overall, how do you think the Vet Med program is doing in preparing you for your career goals?
19. What is one suggestion you have to improve the academic support you wish to receive in your Vet Med graduate program?
20. What is one suggestion you have to improve the quality of mentorship you wish to receive in your Vet Med graduate program?
21. Have you been placed into a graduate assistantship?
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ No

    if NO, SKIP to Question #25

	Very much so	Much so	Not much	Not at all
22. Overall, to what extent are you satisfied with the assistantship into which you have been placed?				

23. What is your favorite aspect about your teaching or research assistantship?
24. How would you improve the overall experience of a teaching or research assistantship in the Vet Med graduate program?

SECTION D: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please mark the appropriate response.

25. What is your gender?
    - ☐ Male
    - ☐ Female
    - ☐ Trans
    - ☐ Prefer not to say

26. What type of career are you seeking upon receiving your graduate degree? (Pick one.)
    - ☐ Academic (e.g., teaching at University)
    - ☐ Government
    - ☐ Veterinary practice
    - ☐ Working in industry
    - ☐ Continue post-grad studies
    - ☐ Continue post-doc studies
    - ☐ Other (please explain _____)
    - ☐ I don't know
27. Which category best describes your race and/or ethnicity? (Choose all that apply.)
    - ☐ American Indian/Alaska Native
    - ☐ Asian
    - ☐ Black or African American
    - ☐ Hispanic/Latino
    - ☐ Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
    - ☐ White/Caucasian
    - ☐ Other
    - ☐ Choose not to answer
28. Are you an international student?
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ No
29. When did you enter your Veterinary Medicine program?

	Month	**Year**	**Doesn't Apply**
Master's Program:			
PhD Program:			

30. Any final comments about your graduate experience or this survey?

Thank you for completing this survey.

Appendix D: Sample Survey Two

The Graduate Student Experience Survey

SURVEY INTRODUCTION

Greetings!

Through the Graduate Review and Improvement Process, the Department of Spanish and Portuguese Studies has the opportunity to explore your thoughts about your experience as a graduate student here. You have been chosen to participate in this survey because you are a graduate student in this department and you have very valuable information to share. We strongly encourage you to take the time to complete this 15-minute survey. Your personal information will remain completely confidential, and your feedback will be used to improve the experience for you and future students in Spanish and Portuguese Studies. You are welcome to answer this survey in the language with which you are most comfortable. At the end of this survey, you can choose to enter a drawing for one of four $10 gift cards to Bordertown Coffee.

You can access the survey by clicking on the following link: [link]

Sincerely,

Graduate Student Representative

The Graduate Review & Improvement Process Team

Beginning of Survey

SECTION HEADER: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. What academic year did you enter the program?
2. What level of graduate study are you currently in?
   - ☐ First year Master's student
   - ☐ Second year Master's student
   - ☐ First year PhD student
   - ☐ Second year PhD student
   - ☐ ABD (all but dissertation)

3. What track are you in?
   - ☐ Hispanic Linguistics
   - ☐ Hispanic Literatures and Cultures
   - ☐ Portuguese Literatures and Cultures
4. How do you identify as a student?
   - ☐ Domestic graduate student
   - ☐ International graduate student

SECTION HEADER: CORE DEPARTMENT ELEMENTS

Department Orientation /Teaching Preparation

5. How, if at all, did the department orientation help you?
6. How, if at all, could the department orientation be improved?
7. How satisfied are you with how the department is preparing you in the following areas:
   (Options: Very satisfied, Satisfied, Somewhat satisfied, Not satisfied, Not applicable)
   - ■ Orientation toward publication
   - ■ Conference preparation
   - ■ Professional networking
   - ■ Job searching
   - ■ Teaching experience
   - ■ Mentoring in pedagogy
   - ■ Securing research funding
   - ■ Training in linguistic research methods
8. What are your top three ideal career options post graduation? Please rank your top three options (1 = most ideal of the three options, 2 = second ideal of the three options, 3 = third ideal of the three options)
   - ☐ Tenure track position, research university
   - ☐ Tenure track position, small liberal arts college
   - ☐ Higher education teaching position (community college, vocational)
   - ☐ Higher education teaching position outside of the United States
   - ☐ Primary / secondary school teaching position
   - ☐ Nonprofit / NGO
   - ☐ Other (text box)

9. In general, do you feel the department is preparing you for your future career? (Options: Yes, Somewhat, No) *Please explain your answer in the space provided:

Research and Teaching Balance

10. How many hours do you spend on your teaching per week?
    - ☐ <5
    - ☐ 5-10
    - ☐ 11-20
    - ☐ 21-30
    - ☐ 31-40
    - ☐ 41+
11. How many hours do you spend on your research / coursework per week?
    - ☐ <5
    - ☐ 5-10
    - ☐ 11-20
    - ☐ 21-30
    - ☐ 31-40
    - ☐ 41+
12. Please use the space below to describe your perceptions of departmental expectations about balancing your research and teaching workload.
13. How, if at all, does the department support you in balancing your responsibilities with research and teaching?

Coursework

14. Please rate your level of satisfaction with the methods course, [course name]. (Options: Very satisfied, Satisfied, Somewhat satisfied, Not satisfied, Not applicable)
15. How, if at all, could the department improve the methods course, [course name]?

Departmental Culture

16. Please describe the current culture of the 4th floor graduate student workspace (Select your top three items)
    - ☐ Inclusive
    - ☐ Non-inclusive
    - ☐ Collegial
    - ☐ Social

- ☐ Productive
- ☐ Distracting
- ☐ Hostile
- ☐ Welcoming
- ☐ Competitive
- ☐ Supportive

17. Does the graduate student workspace on the 4th floor meet your needs as a graduate student? (Options: Yes, Somewhat, No, Not applicable). Please explain your answer in the space provided
18. If applicable, please use the space below to describe your experience as a mentor / mentee in the peer mentor program.
19. How, if at all, could the peer mentor program be improved?

Relationships with Advisor

Please rate your level of satisfaction with your advisor-advisee relationship (Options: Very satisfied, Satisfied, Somewhat satisfied, Not satisfied). Please explain your rating in the space provided

20. What, if any, expectations do you have of your advisor?
21. Has your advisor met your expectations? (Options: Yes, Somewhat, No, Not applicable)
22. What, if anything, would you change about your relationship with your advisor?

Department Activities

23. How often do you attend the following events per semester? (Options: Never, Occasionally, Often, Very often, Always)
    - Department-sponsored speakers, symposia, and research talks related to your track
    - Departmental-sponsored speakers, symposia, and research talks unrelated to your track
    - Non-department-sponsored speakers, symposia and research talks related to your track
    - Pedagogy-related workshops SPRG
24. Please rate your level of satisfaction with the annual review process (Options: Very satisfied, Somewhat satisfied, Not satisfied, Not applicable)
25. How, if at all, could the annual review process be improved?

SECTION HEADER: MOVING FORWARD

26. What recommendations do you have for the Department of Spanish & Portuguese Studies in preparing you for completion of your graduate degree and for your future career?
27. Please use the space below to share any additional comments about your experience as a graduate student in the Department of Spanish & Portuguese Studies.

Please enter your email address in the space below if you would like to be entered in the drawing for one of four Bordertown Coffee gift cards. Your email address will not be associated with your responses to this survey.

— End of Survey —

Appendix E: Sample Focus Group Protocol

Nutrition Graduate Program GRIP Focus Group Protocol

INTRODUCTION OF THE MODERATOR

For an in-person focus group

Thank you for taking the time to talk with us today. You have been invited to this discussion because you have valuable insight that will help us improve graduate education in this program. Your input will help us gain a better understanding of the experiences you have had in the Nutrition Graduate Program. We are also interested in ways that the program can better serve students like you in the future. We want you to share anything that you think is relevant to your experience and how it has impacted you in a meaningful way. The conversation will be recorded, but your personal information will remain confidential. Please be mindful of others while they are speaking and keep your responses constructive. Also, please make sure to turn off or silence your cell phones at this time. Thanks again for participating in this discussion. My name is _____ , and I will be the moderator today. This is _____ , who will be our note-taker today.

For an on-line focus group

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this on-line focus group. You were invited to this discussion because you have valuable insight that will help us improve graduate education in this program. Your input will help us gain a better understanding of the experiences you have had in the Nutrition Graduate Program. We are also interested in ways that the program can better serve students like you in the future. We want you to share anything that you think is relevant to your experience and how it has impacted you in a meaningful way. The content of our on-line discussion will create a written record of what we write, but your personal information will remain confidential. Please be mindful that others may have opinions that differ from yours and keep your responses constructive. Thanks again for participating in this discussion. My name is _____ , and I will be moderating this week's discussion, adding new questions each day.

Question type	Question / Description	In-person time (minutes)	Online focus group
Introduction Question 1	Let's start with some introductions. Tell us your name, and your main motivation for pursuing a degree from the Nutrition Graduate Program.	5	Day 1
Transition Question 2	What has been your most positive experience in the Nutrition Graduate Program?	10	
Transition Question 3	What has been your most challenging experience in the Nutrition Graduate Program?	10	
Key Questions Moderator: Now I'd like to talk about the specific things that have moved you forward in your graduate student career. I want you to reflect on what has made you feel like your time here has been well spent and what has frustrated you or slowed you down (classes, advisor, research, career preparation, program support, professional development).			
Key Question 1	**Classes** How would you describe the usefulness of the courses you have taken in your program? Probe for quality of curriculum and teaching	10	Day 2
Key Question 2	How would you describe your relationship with your peers in the program? Probe: Satisfaction with how you interact with your lab group? Satisfaction with funding? Diversity question: How do you feel about the level of diversity in the pool of students in the Nutrition Graduate Program?		

Question type	Question / Description	In-person time (minutes)	Online focus group
Key Question 3	Mentoring/relationship with advisor How would you describe your relationship with your advisor?	10	Day 3
Key Question 4	Career preparation Probing for research opportunities / practical / professional opportunities Overall, how do you think the program is doing in preparing you for your career goals? How could it improve?	10	
Key Question 5	Program support Probing for research opportunities / practical / professional opportunities Overall, how do you think the program is doing supporting you as a graduate student in the Nutrition Graduate Program?	10	Day 4
Ending Question 1	How would you like to be connected to Nutrition Graduate Program alumni through the following: Research Career Academic activities	10	

Question type	Question / Description	In-person time (minutes)	Online focus group
Ending Question 2	I have learned quite a bit about the experiences of students in Nutrition Graduate Program from your insightful and engaging comments. On behalf of the program and myself, I want to thank you for taking the time to participate in this discussion with me. Your feedback and suggestions will be used to help understand and improve the Nutrition Graduate Program now and into the future. Please take a moment to reflect on your experience in the program, focusing on the topics we have covered. If you could do one thing to improve your graduate student experience, what would you do? How would you do it? What could the Nutrition faculty do to improve your experience here? Is there anything that I missed that you would like to share? Thanks again and good luck with your semester!	10	Day 5
Total Time		85 minutes	5 days

Appendix F: Sample PowerPoint Slide Content and Results

Methods

Method	Faculty Survey	Prelim-inary Student Survey	Town-Hall Event	Follow-Up Student Survey
Electronic	x	x		x
In-Person			x	
Mechanism				
Tabulated Results	x	x	x	x
Open-Ended Response	x	x	x	x
Oral Discussion			x	

Courtesy of Michelle Gensinger, GRIP Consultant

Graduate Review & Improvement Process
Almost all residents want: Experience with patients Clinical proficiency (esp. in their specialty) Multidisciplinary, well-rounded experiences
And value: Research, Evidence Faculty Attention
But would like: Structured, didactic courses in their specialty Efficiency: patient flow & clinic operations Relevant courses & flexibility to prioritize

Key Findings
Students get information from each other
Make sure key & senior students have correct information about events, timelines, requirements, opportunities, and policies, and can share with new and junior students
Students identified a need for:
More time to conduct their own research
Standard, regular, and earlier feedback re: progress
More support to develop research ideas, attend conferences, practice presentation skills
Clearer & more consistent communication

Appendix G:
Sample Evaluation Plan One

Year One: The Graduate Student Experience

KEY QUESTIONS

- What are emerging themes and key variables that influence student experiences and learning in OLPD? (facilitators and challenges)
- What are the goals and objectives of OLPD as defined by masters and doctoral students in OLPD?
- How do student expectations align with faculty expectations in OLPD?

Group	Purpose	Method(s)	Timeline
OLPD Faculty and Staff	To remind faculty and staff what we have been doing in GRIP To highlight what we are doing well and what we can improve To measure "where we are" compared to where we want to be To inform faculty and staff of the GRIP Process	Retreat: Introduction and Overview of "OLPD GRIP Evaluation Overview Grid" Presentation of focus group findings Living Into Our Mission Survey (Administered to faculty and P&A staff)	August- September
Recent OLPD Graduate Student Alumni	Allows faculty to engage in gauging and reaching a better understanding of authentic student experience before beginning GRIP process	Interviews via video recording	Mid July-Mid August

Group	Purpose	Method(s)	Timeline
Incoming OLPD Graduate Students	To gain feedback on student expectations of themselves as Grad. students and of the department	Online new student orientation survey	September
CEHD Advisory Board (one faculty and one student repre-sentative from each depart-ment)	To ensure department voice/ feedback To provide a hub wherein GRIP information can be disseminated to each department via representatives	Semester Meetings	Meeting once during Fall and Spring semesters
OLPD Student Interest Group	To ensure student voice/ feedback To provide learning and professional development opportunities for students	Meeting once during Fall semester, twice during Spring semester	Meeting once per semester
Master's and doctoral part-time and full-time students in OLPD	To assess what is working and what needs improvement To garner recom-mendations for improvement	Online / in person focus groups	Spring

Year Two: The Faculty Experience

KEY QUESTIONS

- What are the goals and objectives of OLPD as defined by faculty and staff of OLPD?
- What are the progress indicators used to measure how the program meets these goals and objectives?
- What kinds of experiences do students need to move toward intended learning outcomes? (Curricular and co-curricular—draw on survey data)
- How do faculty expectations align with student expectations of OLPD?

Group	Purpose	Method(s)	Timeline
OLPD Faculty and Staff	To remind faculty and staff what we have been doing in GRIP To highlight what we are doing well, and what we can improve To measure "where we are" compared to where we want to be To inform faculty and staff of the GRIP	Retreat: Overview of "OLPD GRIP Evaluation Overview Grid" Presentation of focus group findings Living Into Our Mission Survey (Administered to faculty and P&A staff)	August-September
Incoming OLPD Graduate Students	To address issues that emerged in student feedback based on GRIP evaluation findings	Redesigned new student orientation (more interaction with new and current students and faculty, student group activities and events requested by students in evaluation)	August

Group	Purpose	Method(s)	Timeline
Incoming OLPD Graduate Students	To address issues that emerged in student feedback based on previous GRIP evaluation findings	Online student survey	September -October
OLPD Faculty and Staff	To review and revise curriculum To review GRIP data and inform faculty and staff of process and progress	Faculty mid-year retreat	February
Focus groups with faculty of OLPD	To assess what is working and what needs improvement To garner recommendations for improvement	In person focus group with tracks	March-April

Year Three: Alumni and Community

KEY QUESTIONS

- What are emerging themes and key variables that influence student experiences in graduate school and OLPD? (Facilitators and challenges)
- What are the goals and objectives of OLPD as defined by alumni of OLPD?
- What are key elements of department/ experiences that are valuable to alumni? (Indicators of successful and positive experience)

Group	Purpose	Method(s)	Timeline
OLPD Faculty and Staff	To remind faculty and staff what we have been doing in GRIP To highlight what we are doing well, and what we can improve To measure "where we are" compared to where we want to be To inform faculty and staff of the GRIP Process	Retreat: Overview of "OLPD GRIP Evaluation Overview Grid" Presentation of focus group findings Living Into Our Mission Survey (Administered to faculty and P&A staff)	August-September
OLPD Alumni	To build connections (for funding/ professional networking/ tracking of careers) To better understand student experience upon graduation To learn what factors contribute to positive and successful graduate student experience	Online survey Interviews / Focus Groups Social media connections (Linked-In) OLSA alumni gathering	Spring

Group	Purpose	Method(s)	Timeline
Community and business partnerships	To gain information regarding connections, impact and influence of community as it relates to partnerships with OLPD students and faculty	Group Interviews Online survey	Fall: Education and nonprofit community members/ organizations Spring: Corporation partnerships

Appendix H:
Sample Evaluation Plan Two

Anthropology GRIP: Evaluation Plan		
Team Lead	**Activity**	**Due Date**
GRIP leadership team	Meet to conduct evaluability assessment	February 20th
GRIP leadership team	Meet to continue evaluability assessment discussion and survey development	March 4th
GRIP leadership team	Meet to finalize survey	March 26th
Graduate student volunteers and (DGS)	Comments on survey draft sent to Leah (GRIP consultant)	April 10th
DGS	Obtain permission to use $100 gift card as incentive for the survey	April 5th
DGS	Will send out email - to inform students that they will be getting a survey and encouraging them to fill it out	April 10th
Graduate student volunteers	Send out survey by the anthropology graduate student team on the GRIP leadership team (online via Qualtrics)	April 14th
Graduate student volunteers	Send out reminder to Anthropology students to complete the survey	April 22nd
GRIP leadership team	Meet to discuss preliminary results of the survey and develop PowerPoint for GRIP celebration on May 6th	April 30th
GRIP participating program representatives	GRIP celebration and presentation	May 6th
GRIP consultant	Finalize executive summary	End of May / beginning of June

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GRIP Glossary

AUDIENCE The individuals or groups who receive evaluation reports

DATA Information collected using different methods; can be numbers or words

DATA DASHBOARD An information management tool that visually tracks, analyzes, and displays key data to monitor the outcomes of a program or department

DATA DIALOGUE A form of qualitative data collection that engages small groups (4-5 people) discussing common questions and recording people's results both to generate content and to develop shared understandings (see King & Stevahn, 2013, pp. 127-129)

DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION "an approach to evaluation in innovative settings where goals are emergent and changing rather than predetermined and fixed" (Patton, 2008, p. 277); "developmental evaluation supports program and organizational development to guide adaption to emergent and dynamic realities from a complex systems perspective" (Patton, 2008, p. 278)

DGS (DIRECTOR OF GRADUATE STUDIES) At the University of Minnesota, a departmental leader (other than the chair) who serves as the academic head for the department, addressing the curriculum, recruitment and retention, student support, assessment, etc. Different universities may use different names for people engaged in these functions.

EVALUABILITY ASSESSMENT ". . . a diagnostic and prescriptive tool for improving programs and making evaluations more useful. It is a systematic process for describing the structure of a program (i.e., the objectives, logic, activities, and indicators of successful performance); and for analyzing the plausibility and feasibility for achieving objectives, their suitability for in-depth evaluation, and their acceptability to program managers, policy makers, and program operators" (Smith, 1989, p. 1)

EVALUATION CAPACITY BUILDING The process of using an evaluation not only for its results, but also for the explicit purpose of building people's capacity to evaluate again

EVALUATION (see Program evaluation)

EVALUATION PLAN A detailed proposal or outline for conducting a program evaluation, typically including evaluation questions, proposed methods, a budget, and required reports

EXTERNAL EVALUATOR An evaluator who is not a permanent employee hired by an organization to conduct an evaluation (also called an independent or third-party evaluator)

FOCUS GROUP (INTERVIEW) A form of data collection that consists of interviews in which small groups of people discuss their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes toward a program, product, or service

INTERACTIVE EVALUATION PRACTICE ". . . the intentional act of engaging people in making decisions, taking action, and reflecting while conducting an evaluation study" (King & Stevahn, 2013, p. 14)

PRIMARY DATA A set of numbers or words collected directly through first-hand experience or observation, including information collected from experiments, surveys, interviews, and other data collection methods.

PRIMARY INTENDED USERS "Those **specific** stakeholders selected to work with the evaluator throughout the evaluation" (Patton, 2008, p. 72; emphasis in original)

PROGRAM EVALUATION "A process of systematic inquiry to provide sound information about the characteristics, activities, or outcomes of a program or policy for a valued purpose" (King & Stevahn, 2013, p. 13); "systematic investigation of the value, importance, or significance of something or someone along defined dimensions (e.g., a program, project, or specific program or project component)" (Joint Committee, 2011, p. 287)

QUALITATIVE DATA Information collected primarily in narrative rather than numerical form (words rather than numbers)

QUANTITATIVE DATA Information collected primarily in numerical rather than narrative form (numbers rather than words)

SECONDARY DATA A set of numbers or words that someone other than the person using them has already collected

STAKEHOLDER An individual who has a vested interest in a program or its evaluation

TOWN HALL In the context of GRIP, an event during which leaders (including faculty, staff, students, and possibly alumni) discuss issues and answer questions from members of the departmental community

UTILIZATION-FOCUSED EVALUATION "Evaluation done for and with specific, intended primary users for specific, intended uses" (Patton, 2008, p. 37)

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Top Ten Answers to the Question

How is program evaluation like a baseball game?

10. Both are team sports relying on different skill sets of the players to make the team complete.

9. Homeruns get the crowd excited, but base hits ultimately win more games.

8. There are long periods of inaction punctuated by white-knuckled excitement that may or may not end well.

7. Both are more fun with peanuts and beer.

6. Sometimes it takes extra innings to get clear results.

5. As Yogi Berra put it, "In theory, there is no difference between theory and practice. In practice, there is."

4. There's no crying in baseball—or evaluation!

3. Because by the time you are finished, half the crowd has already moved on.

2. It is important to be ready for a curve ball.

1. It only seems endless!

LEAH HAKKOLA is an Assistant Professor in the Higher Education Program at the University of Maine. Her current research examines how local, national, and global discourses about difference shape and are informed by educational policies and practices and how these discourses affect student success and higher education efficacy. Currently, Leah serves as a member of the Provost's Council for Advancing Women Faculty and as a faculty representative for the Rising Tide Center, working as an ambassador and advocate for gender equity and inclusion. Leah also has extensive evaluation experience working on the University of Minnesota's Graduate Review and Improvement Process, in the Minnesota Evaluation Studies Institute, and in the Stop Hazing Initiative at the University of Maine. In her spare time, Leah enjoys exploring Maine's beautiful landscapes, playing the guitar and piano, and learning how to play the violin.

DOUG MOON joined the GRIP team when he began his doctoral program in UMN's Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development. His dissertation focuses on the evaluation capacity needs of HIV prevention programs serving minority communities. As a Community of Scholars Fellow, Doug is currently teaching at UMN's Morris campus and consulting with various departments there to identify assessment and evaluation needs. Prior to his studies at UMN, Doug received his MPA at Portland State University with an emphasis in health administration and spent fifteen years within Oregon's public health system designing, delivering, and evaluating health education programs as well as coaching local health department staff. Outside of academia, Doug spends time with his adorable beagle, actively quilts, and helps his teenage nieces with math homework.

MICHELLE GENSINGER is a retired assistant professor from the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine. After raising four children and following a lengthy career in education, Michelle came to the University of Minnesota to pursue a PhD She is currently a full-time Evaluation Studies student in the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development Department in the College of Education and Human Development where she serves as a Graduate Research Assistant for the Minnesota Evaluation Studies Institute (MESI). Her professional evaluation experiences have been in the areas of graduate education, interprofessional healthcare teams, public health, after-school programs, professional conferences, art education, and medical education. Michelle's goal is to bring evaluative thinking and evaluation capacity to organizations and programs. When she is not being a grad student, Michelle enjoys traveling, gardening, and throwing pots.

Leah Hakkola, Jean King, Michelle Gensinger, and Doug Moon

"A program like GRIP could flip on its head the traditional model that involves ranking graduate programs by external standards."

- Richard Ehrenberg, Director, Cornell Higher Education Research Institute

Cited as one of the "Best Practice Institutions" in *Best and Innovative Practices in Higher Education Assessment* report, published in April 2013 by Hanover Research

The inaugural volume of the Minnesota Evaluation Studies Institute (MESI) Program Evaluation Series features the Graduate Review and Improvement Process (GRIP). GRIP is an innovative student-centered process designed to develop actionable steps to enhance student success in graduate programs. MESI staff, primarily graduate students in the Evaluation Studies program, developed and implemented the process in consultation with the University of Minnesota Graduate School as an alternative to the traditional University external review process that typically occurs every five to ten years and produces largely quantitative information about a program (for example, time to degree, retention, and number of publications). With its commitment to active student involvement in the evaluation, GRIP can serve as a complementary process to external monitoring and surveying, one that allows students and program leaders to assess the quality of their curriculum, advising, instruction, and related services and to devise realistic plans to improve them.

Leah Hakkola is an Assistant Professor in the Higher Education Program at the University of Maine. • **Doug Moon** is currently teaching at University of Minnesota, Morris campus and consulting with various departments there to identify assessment and evaluation needs. • **Michelle Gensinger** is a current Ph.D. student in the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development at the University of Minnesota where she serves as a Graduate Research Assistant for the Minnesota Evaluation Studies Institute (MESI).

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