



Council of Graduate Schools

Advocacy, Research, and Innovation



GUIDELINES FOR FORMAL CGS RECOGNITION AS A PROFESSIONAL SCIENCE MASTER'S PROGRAM (PSM)

The Professional Science Master's (PSM) degree is a unique professional degree grounded in science and/or mathematics and designed to prepare students for a variety of career options in business, government, or non-profit organizations. The degree combines advanced coursework in science and/or math with an appropriate array of professional skill-development activities to produce graduates highly valued by employers and fully prepared to progress toward leadership roles. The PSM is designed to be self-contained and is not a traditional master's degree earned *en route* to or from a PhD degree.

The following criteria are intended to provide guidance to faculty and institutions planning new PSM programs, or to assist leaders of existing programs who feel their programs meet the criteria to be recognized as a PSM or who wish to modify their programs in order to be recognized as a PSM. The following characteristics are deemed important for a master's program to qualify for PSM status.

- Total credits equivalent to a standard master's degree (approximately 2 years, full-time equivalent, including projects and internships).
- A majority of program course work in graduate-level science and/or mathematics courses in one or more disciplines. An interdisciplinary curriculum is highly desirable.
- Program quality assurance should be provided using the faculty-based mechanisms normally used by the institution for graduate programs in order to ensure institutional integration and sustainability. It is understood that the professional nature of the program may lead to substantial participation by non-academic practicing professionals, for example as adjunct faculty course instructors or student internship mentors.
- The professional skills component (often called the "plus" component of a "science-plus degree") may consist of a variety of relevant courses and activities developed in consultation with prospective employers. Examples include business basics, legal and regulatory issues, finance and marketing, communication and teamwork, and are often developed in collaboration with appropriate academic units outside the sciences or taught by adjunct faculty from the targeted employment sector. In addition to courses and workshops, professional skills are usually enhanced by internships and problem-based projects sponsored by employers. The professional component should result in a portfolio of experiences recognized by and involving the client employers.
- An active and engaged client advisory board. Examples of board and/or individual-member functions include providing advice on the program curriculum, assisting with internships and placement, assisting with project-identification, and/or interacting individually with students.
- A commitment to attempt to track the career trajectory of every graduate in order to help assess program outcomes and success.
- Agreement to use the name "Professional Science Master's" and the PSM logo on Websites and advertising brochures. In turn the program will be listed on CGS national PSM websites and data bases, and will be included in CGS PSM promotional activities.