

Graduate Increment Requirements and Guidelines



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The graduate increment (GI) is the work required of graduate students to distinguish their learning experience from that of undergraduates in courses where both participate (400-level UG courses). There are separate guidelines for co-convened 400- and 500-level courses (301.20). Graduate education is significantly different in scope and depth from undergraduate education and is not merely about completing additional credits beyond that required for an undergraduate degree. While ideally graduate and undergraduate courses would be separate, this is often not possible due to limited resources. Mixed graduate-undergraduate courses, therefore, need a well-crafted, appropriate GI for successful student and course outcomes.

Requirements for graduate increments for 400-level UG courses:

1. The GI must include expectations for difficulty, coursework, and corresponding assessment that contribute to the course grade above that of the undergraduates attending the course.
2. The syllabus must have a separate section dedicated to the GI that clearly and specifically describes:
 - a) the learning objectives of the GI;
 - b) the contribution of the GI to the total course grade (points and/or %);
 - c) the details of the GI assignment (description, basic requirements, deadlines); and
 - d) the manner in which the GI will be evaluated.

Suggested guidelines and best practices for GIs:

1. Given that graduate education is multifaceted, the GI should include diverse learning outcomes and create a dynamic learning environment. This could be accomplished by using multiple assignments rather than a single exercise (e.g., paper) or evaluation type.
2. The assignments included in the GI should require a higher level of sophistication, synthesis, or integration of course material than that required of undergraduate students.

APPENDIX

In order to assist faculty with understanding graduate increment requirements and guidelines, examples of actual proposed graduate increments are provided along with comments on their suitability. These examples are meant to be a starting point for improving the use and effectiveness of the graduate increment.

Proposed Graduate Increment	Adequacy of Proposed Increment
<p>"A research paper on a topic related to the class that covers material not otherwise addressed."</p>	<p>Requiring graduate students to go beyond the regular course material on their own is laudable; however, this GI does not meet the requirements because it lacks detail. Specifically, it does not indicate the learning objectives, % of the course grade that the assignment is worth, basic details about the assignment (length; due date), or evaluation method. In addition, per the guidelines, the faculty member should consider if a single assignment meets the learning objectives and whether the required work is expected to be at a higher level of sophistication than that asked of undergraduates.</p>
<p>"Regularly leading a group of undergraduates in discussion."</p>	<p>Using graduate students to assist with course activities may or may not be appropriate depending on the learning objective of the GI. To meet the requirements, the instructor would need to add learning objectives that would be met through leading group discussions, as well as the % of the grade that this activity would be worth and how it would be evaluated. In addition, the guidelines for best practices for increments should be considered.</p>
<p>"Graduate students will be required to spend at least 10 hours working in a cardiac rehab center or with a cardiologist to evaluate ECG's. They will also be required to write a paper on a focused area of ECG interpretation."</p>	<p>This example defines the basic expectations for the graduate increment and is consistent with the guidelines (multiple assignments), but does not include the learning objectives % of the grade for each activity, and evaluation methods.</p>
<p>"A 10 - 12 page term paper addressing a current management issue, focusing on land use planning on public land, is required. The paper will be of publishable quality, including an introduction, literature review, presentation of the issue, discussion of the significance for management, conclusion, and references to literature cited."</p>	<p>This GI clearly indicates that synthesis / sophistication is required. To meet the requirements, the instructor would need to add the learning objectives, contribution of this assessment to the overall grade, and evaluation methods.</p>
<p>"Develop a research design for the study of the ecology of a mammal species using the methods discussed in class."</p>	<p>This is a good example wherein the basic knowledge gained in class has to be used in a specific application. The instructor would need to add the learning objectives, contribution of this assessment to the overall grade, and evaluation methods.</p>

<p>"Graduate students will complete two additional assignments: a teaching demonstration related to one of the strands of reading that has been used with students in the field during the semester and a research paper (8 - 10 pages) that addresses a topic related to the teaching of reading that will be presented to the class."</p>	<p>This is a good example of a GI that is specific in detail and tests on competencies uniquely expected of graduate students. The instructor would need to add the learning objectives, contribution of this assessment to the overall grade, and evaluation methods.</p>
<p>"Assigned work and examinations for graduate students, though overlapping, are more extensive and will probe the _____ theory more deeply than those for undergraduate students."</p>	<p>It is better to get a graduate student to perform at a higher level by setting a more difficult task than to expect superior performance on a more mundane task. In addition, this GI does not include the learning objectives, contribution t to the overall grade, and evaluation methods, and the assignment is vague.</p>
<p>"Graduate students will be required to teach at least one class session."</p>	<p>'more extensive papers' is vague and does not include assessment. Using a non-TA graduate student to teach a course (unless the GI objectives specifically involves teacher training or oral presentation skills) could be a poor use of a graduate student's time and could also adversely affect the course overall if too high a percentage of the total class contact time is instructed by graduate students. The latter point remains a judgment call for the particular faculty member teaching the course to make in the context of providing a sound graduate increment. In addition, other required elements are missing.</p>
<p>"Graduate students will conduct an additional assignment related to the course debate (see details above) worth a total of 20 points (20% of course grade). Specifically, each graduate student will write an annotated bibliography on their assigned debate topic that includes at least 14 references to be submitted one week before the assigned debate. For each article, the student must provide a 300-500 word assessment of the authors arguments related to the pros and cons of the debate topic. Learning objectives include: 1) critical analysis of the scientific literature, and 2) application of concepts from the scientific literature to developing ecological arguments. The assignment will be evaluated based on the relevance of the literature included (15%), the strength of the scientific arguments (55%), and the quality of the writing (30%)."</p>	<p>This increment includes all the required elements. However, the instructor might want to consider whether the use of a single assignments meet the learning objectives.</p>

Higher Caliber of Work: Graduate students who elect to take this course will be expected to perform at an advanced level compared to undergraduates in the class. All work on projects, assignments and exams is expected to be at the graduate level and will be graded and evaluated accordingly.

Exam Difference: Instructors will select essay question(s) that will be given to graduate students following the first two exams. These essays questions will be worth 15% of the exam grade.

Lay Public Poster(s): Graduate student groups will present a poster or infographic that illustrates a salient concept translated to the lay public. This information is meant to be used in an athletic training/physical therapy like environment where accurate, scientifically supported, information is assembled in a compelling, creative fashion. Selection of topics should be useful to your future career endeavors.

Paper: Each graduate student will be required to submit a 4-6 page review paper of a self-chosen sport nutrition topic. Overlap with the poster assignment is not appropriate.

Evaluation:

Your grade is a function of the undergrad requirements (75%), grad paper (15%), exam essays (7%) and the article presentations/reports (3%).

This GI meets all of the requirements and most of the guidelines.