

**Policy for Stacked Undergraduate and Graduate Courses**  
**Approved by Graduate Faculty Governance Council May 4, 2021**

**Purpose of Stacked Courses**

To offer a combined course that enhances the educational experience of both undergraduate and graduate students. In general, academic units are encouraged to offer distinct undergraduate and graduate courses. Although normally undergraduate and graduate courses are separate and distinct from each other, there are circumstances in which academic units may wish to teach certain graduate and undergraduate courses together. This policy provides explicit guidelines for offering stacked undergraduate/graduate courses and distinguishes these offerings from ordinary cross-listed courses.

*Stacked Course* refers to offering two courses, one undergraduate and one graduate, for which the class experience is shared; the graduate course is expected to have learning outcomes consistent with the relevant graduate program outcomes that must be clearly identified on the syllabus.

**Guidelines for Developing Stacked Courses**

- A. Specific, unique expectations must be provided for each course. Different requirements and expectations should be clearly outlined on a combined syllabus or separate syllabi for each course.
- The central expectation for graduate students is that they will do more advanced work than undergraduate students.
  - Assessment measures such as exams, written assignments, computational exercises, etc. should delve more deeply into the content area and be more sophisticated at the graduate level. Graduate students should be held to a higher standard in grading all exams and assignments.
  - The expectations and learning outcomes of each course must be commensurate with the level of that course. For graduate students, these expectations and outcomes must include more advanced learning through distinct activities, assignments, and/or assessments. These expectations must be clearly differentiated from expectations of undergraduate students and must be clearly documented in the syllabus.
  - Graduate students enrolled in a stacked course should not be used in a teaching assistant capacity for that course. For example, graduate students should not conduct substantial lecture components or grade undergraduate work in that course.

*Some suggested activities, assignments, and/or assessments that may be appropriate for graduate students in a stacked course:*

- Distinct reading assignments based in research literature, evaluated via written critical reviews and/or oral presentations.
- Distinct writing assignments that evince ability to synthesize research fields (comprehensive scholarly reviews or synthesis of other disciplinary areas with the course material)

- Assignments to measure the ability of graduate students to integrate course material into experimental design, such as writing formal research grant proposals, or oral or written presentation of how the course material informs the student's own thesis research
  - Separate exams for graduate students that measure not only comprehension of the lecture material but the ability to integrate and apply the material at more advanced levels, such as hypothesis formulation and experimental design, or the ability to interpret raw research data. An option is to assign extra 'take-home' exam portions for graduate students. Graduate student exams could include additional questions based on reading of research literature.
  - Leading of discussion groups or presenting analysis of primary research, offering another context in which graduate students may demonstrate more advanced knowledge and be assessed accordingly.
- B. Prerequisites should be appropriate for both courses. Required knowledge should be the same or comparable for both courses, or more advanced for the graduate course.
- A graduate course could require the same prerequisite as an undergraduate course, or, depending on the circumstances, a prerequisite might be required for only one level (e.g., either undergraduate or graduate). A graduate student, by virtue of having been admitted to a specific graduate program, may meet the prerequisite requirement automatically and be eligible to enroll.
  - Use of the "permission of the instructor" restriction allows for individual instructor discretion regarding a student's preparation for the course content and may facilitate the verification of prerequisite knowledge and efficient enrollment.
- C. Only upper-division undergraduate courses (3xx and 4xx) may be stacked with graduate courses.
- D. Course titles must be related but do not have to be identical.
- E. Courses not approved as stacked courses through the curriculum approval process must be taught separately.
- F. Graduate programs may either allow or prohibit students who take the undergraduate course to later take the graduate course.

NOTE: material for this draft was borrowed and edited from the following sources:

- George Mason University: <https://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/cross-level-listing-of-undergraduategraduate-courses/>
- University of Alaska Anchorage: <https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/about/governance/graduate-academic-board/documents/curric-recommendations-stacked-400-600-courses.pdf>
- University of Hawaii: [https://manoa.hawaii.edu/graduate/wp-content/uploads/stacked\\_undergraduate\\_graduate\\_courses\\_guidelines.pdf](https://manoa.hawaii.edu/graduate/wp-content/uploads/stacked_undergraduate_graduate_courses_guidelines.pdf)