

Suggested Guidelines for the design and approval of Stacked 400-600 level courses.

Based on both BOR and UAA curriculum guidelines (pasted at end of this document).

Difference between 400 vs 600 Level Courses In general, the difference between 400 and 600 level courses are as follows (phases in italics)

A400-A499: Require the ability to analyze, synthesize, compare and contrast, research, create, innovate, develop, elaborate, transform, and/or apply course materials to solving complex problems. These courses are generally supported by a substantial body of lower-level courses.

A600-A699 – Require a background in the discipline and an ability to contribute to written and oral discourse on advanced topics in the field at a level beyond that required by a bachelor's degree. Require the ability to read, interpret and evaluate primary literature in the field. Students analyze raw data, evaluate models used in research and draw independent conclusions. Preparation includes demonstrated accomplishment in a specific course discipline, or completion of a significant and related program of studies. Student activities are often self-directed and not only at the formation of supportable conclusions. When 400-level courses are stacked with 600-level courses, consider the impact of stacking the course on the graduate student experience and how that affects the criteria for 600-level courses. In general, ANY graduate-level course proposals should include the following justification: cation: 601009 T-14

3. Readings and information sources:

In courses designed to provide detailed knowledge set to advanced undergraduates or graduate students, the primary reading and informational sources should be advanced texts or instructor compiled readings, and not research journal articles. Undergraduate students generally lack the knowledge base and experience to derive all information from the primary literature. While it is certainly valuable to expose undergrads to primary literature, it should not form the dominant reading source for the course. Graduate students could be expected to use professional literature for background reading and/or specific assignments. This is one potential way to clearly separate graduate and undergraduate expectations in the course.

Logistics of Stacking:

The course description and syllabus of a stacked course must clearly articulate the difference in experience, performance and evaluation of students at different levels, including graduate students vs. undergraduate students. If a graduate-level course is stacked with a 400-level course, or if undergraduate students are taking the course as part of their baccalaureate degree, the justification must clearly describe how the quality of the graduate student experience will be maintained in a mixed-level classroom.

Whatever means, methods, and criteria are used to distinguish graduate vs undergraduate experience and grading in the course, they must be clearly outlined in the course proposal and clearly described in the course syllabus. It is highly recommended that TWO SEPARATE SYLLABI be created for the graduate and undergraduate aspects of the course. This will prevent confusion among students, and force instructors to clearly distinguish the courses and grading schemes.

Some suggested outcomes/assessments that may be appropriate for 600-level students in a stacked course:

Extrareading assignments based in the primary research literature, evaluated via written critical reviews and/or oral presentations.

Extra writing assignments that prove 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 designs, 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.

Teaching experiences, in which graduate students instruct undergraduates, lead discussion groups or present analysis of primary research, offer another context in which graduate students may demonstrate and more advanced knowledge be assessed accordingly. NOTE: It is permissible to foist major lecture components of the course onto graduate students (e.g. each graduate student teaches a full lecture). Graduate teaching experiences, if utilized, must be carefully planned, integrated, and supervised by the instructor.

Distinct difference grading and assessment of exam and assignments. Graduate students should be held to a higher standard in grading all exam and assignments, especially those shared with undergrads.

In addition, the ratio between undergraduate and graduate students should be addressed. Courses that are evenly divided may provide a balanced environment than a course in which only one or two graduate students are present.

Resources consulted:

University of Alaska Board of Regents

**UNIVERSITY REGULATION
PART X – ACADEMIC POLICY
Chapter 10.04 Academic Programs**

The University of Alaska Anchorage Curriculum Handbook for Faculty

Revised August 2010

3. **Course level justification** – Provide a justification for the level to which the course has been assigned. *Course Level Expectations for Academic Course Levels* – In general, advances in course level (lower, upper, and graduate) correlate with sophistication of academic work. It should be noted that some students find introductory courses more demanding than advanced, specialized courses, a more comprehensive approach and the first exposure to new ways of thinking may be harder for some individuals than covering a smaller, more familiar area in much greater detail.

The following definitions describe the expectations for the academic course levels:

Lower Division Courses

A100-A199: Introduce a field of knowledge and develop basic skills. These are usually foundation or survey courses.

A200-A299: Provide more depth than 100-level courses and/or build upon 100-level courses. These courses may connect foundation or survey courses with advanced work in a given field, require previous college experiences, or develop advanced skills.

B. *Upper Division Courses*

Require a background in the discipline recognized through course prerequisites, junior/senior standing or competency requirements. These courses demand well-deve

- e. Self-directed written research projects
- f. Mastery of theoretical knowledge

- I. **Stacking** (if applicable)
 - i. Stacked courses are courses from the same program at different levels offered at the same time and location.
 - ii. Existing and new courses may not be stacked unless approved as stacked courses by UAB/GAB.
 - iii. Courses may not be stacked informally for scheduling purposes.
 - iv. The course description and course content guide of a stacked course must clearly articulate the difference in experience, performance and evaluation of students at different levels, including graduate students vs. undergraduate students.
 - v. Courses that are at the 500 level may not be stacked with any other credit course numbered A050-A499 and A600-A699 or noncredit courses.
 - vi. If stacking status is requested, rationale must be provided.
 - vii. Courses at the 300 level may not be stacked with 600-level courses.

All graduate-level courses must meet criteria established by the GAB. In addition, when 400-level courses are stacked with 600-level courses, the faculty initiator must consider the impact of stacking the course on the graduate student experience and how that affects the criteria for 600-level courses. If a graduate-level course is stacked with a 400-level course, or if undergraduate students are taking the course as part of their baccalaureate degree, the justification must clearly describe how the quality of the graduate students' experience will be maintained in a mixed-level classroom.

The following guidelines may assist in determining whether a course is suitable for stacking according to graduate criteria:

i. ***Do the prerequisites (not registration restrictions) differ for the 400- vs. 600-level versions of the course?*** It is difficult to justify stacked courses in which the graduates and undergraduates have a significantly different knowledge base relevant to the course material. If the knowledge is required for the course, the prerequisites must be comparable. If the knowledge is only required for extra coursework performed by the graduate students, this difference should be stated explicitly and addressed in the instructional goals, student outcomes and course activities sections of the CCG.

ii. ***Is the course format predominantly discussion- or seminar-based?*** This type of course is not likely to be suitable for stacking, as the discussion level/theoretical base can differ significantly between graduate and undergraduate students. In addition, the ratio between undergraduate and graduate students should be addressed. Courses that are evenly divided may provide a more balanced environment than a course in which only one or two graduate students are present.

iii. ***Is the course format predominantly lecture-based? (Is the main intent of the course to provide a detailed knowledge set?)***

- a. Is the PRIMARY source of information/reading the primary research literature of the field? This course is not likely to be suitable for stacking, as undergraduate students generally lack the knowledge base and experience to derive information from the primary literature.
- b. Is the PRIMARY source of information/reading material derived from textbooks or other less-specialized literature?

This course is likely to be suitable for stacking. However, the performance expectations for graduate students should be explicitly defined, with special emphasis on how these expectations differ from the 400-level students.

Some suggested outcomes/assessments that may be appropriate for 600-level students in a stacked course:

- i.

- iii. 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
- iv. 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