

Graduate School Course Review Committee
Recommended Best Practices

(Created 3/13/2015; Endorsed by the Graduate Council on 5/7 2015, updated 4/11/2023, 5/15/2023)

Graduate Differentiation for 400-level Courses

Below are common differentiations the Graduate Course Review Committee sees and their thoughts regarding weak, unclear, adequate, and too much differentiation.

Weak

Instead of 5-6-page paper, 7-8-page paper and in-class presentation is 10 minutes not 5

Unclear

Project/paper is graded more rigorously.

Better... The attached separate rubric is used for graduate students (clarify the higher expectations)

Adequate

Major project topic must be cleared with professor and expectation is to tackle a more complex issue than undergrads; grads will present a summary of their topic (and undergrads don't).

Additional project or paper that is about 10% of the work

Additional questions on exams/homework and leadership roles in projects

Research paper is expected to be longer (perhaps 25% longer), uses primary sources, includes an annotated bibliography, and synthesizes material from sources into new conclusions

A bit too much

All weekly posts twice as long as undergraduate plus extra questions on exams and an extra project

Grading

Below is language for 400-level syllabi to include regarding necessary specific completion of the "graduate component" to a 400-level course for graduate credit, as proposed by the Graduate Courses Committee.

Instructors might include an asterisk or some other indicator in the grade breakdown for required graduate components on the syllabus, with the following text below as an explanatory note:

*Graduate students enrolled in a 400-level course for graduate credit are required to complete additional components which distinguish their effort from that of undergraduates enrolled in the same course. The instructor shall determine the additional components and the effort required to complete them. To receive credit for the course, graduate students must complete the additional components at a passing level (grade of C or better, or equivalent), as evaluated by the instructor. Students failing to complete the graduate components of the course will earn an "Incomplete" (I) grade until the outstanding graduate components are completed at a passing level within a reasonable and mutually agreed-upon timeframe. Failure to meet these

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criteria will result in the conversion of the Incomplete to a failing grade of F or NC, as appropriate.

The purpose for this statement is to make clear to instructors and graduate students that the graduate component work still stands apart from other requirements in the class, even though it may be described in a parallel grading scheme including all of the other components. Additionally, however, we want to insure that instructors recognize they have full agency over defining what the components are and over assessment of those components.

[Policy 1J1](#) provides info on the grade types and when they're allowed. In particular, note the following.

- Final Project – A, B, C, D, F, DE (reserved for final project courses only) (Standard grade courses in which an I is given and not completed revert to Fs.)
- Cooperative experiences and graduate thesis – S, U, DE
- **DE**--Deferred. Graduate Study and First Professional Degree: Used only for graduate courses and first professional degree of an individual continuing nature such as thesis or research or for internships and practicum lasting longer than one term. A DE grade for course work of an individual nature such as research, thesis, or dissertation is changed to a completed grade when the project has been completed.
- **NC**--No Credit. Used for courses taken under Pass/No Credit option. No credit hours earned.

Suggested Section: Blackboard Maintenance

Note that there are scheduled maintenance times for Blackboard. It is essential that you be aware of those times and make sure that you have submitted any work in progress (e.g. tests, assignments, posts to journal, wikis or discussion boards) prior to the systems being shut down for maintenance. Any work in progress will be lost when the servers go down for maintenance. Visit the Blackboard Maintenance Times (<http://www.siue.edu/its/bb/migration.shtml>) website for specific times.