

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 (*emphases mine*):

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 or discipline, or completion of a significant and related program of studies. Student activities are often self-directed and aimed not only at the formation of supportable conclusions, but also at a clear understanding of the process used in those formations.

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. In general, ANY graduate-level course proposals should include the following justification:

- Clearly indicate required prior knowledge or skills (pre-requisite body of disciplinary knowledge and/or academic preparation).
- Specify “Graduate Standing”
- Describe how the course provides students with opportunities for independent critical thinking.
- Describe how the course meets goals applicable to field of study, for example:
 - a. Competence in a specialized field of knowledge
 - b. Self-directed written research projects
 - c. Analysis and synthesis of primary scholarship or research
 - d. Mastery of theoretical knowledge
 - e. Extensive experience with specialized client relationships
 - f. Application of expert knowledge within a recognized professional practice

Appropriate Courses, Course Design, and Criteria for Stacking:

1. *Course pre-requisites:*

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 syllabus and course proposal.

2. *Seminar or discussion based courses vs lecture-based courses:*

Seminar or discussion based courses are NOT likely to be suitable for stacking, as the discussion level/theoretical base can differ significantly between graduate and undergraduate students. Unless great care is made to design the course for both levels of student, dominantly seminar courses should not be stacked (outstanding undergraduates could always be admitted per instructor permission). Lecture course in which the major goal is to provide advanced or detailed knowledge set, with regular lectures, reading, and exercises are better adapted to stacking.

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 students' 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:

- Extra reading assignments based in the primary research literature, evaluated via written critical reviews and/or oral presentations.
- Extra 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. Grad 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 and be assessed accordingly. NOTE: It is *not* permissible to foist major lecture components of the course onto graduate students (e.g. each grad 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 work and exams. Graduate students should be held to a higher standard in grading all exams 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 more 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**

1. Non-degree and preparatory courses.

001-049: Courses with these numbers are career development courses or community interest courses and are not applicable toward any degree or certificate program, even by petition.

Continuing education units may be awarded for completion of these courses. The number of CEUs awarded is related to the amount of time required to master the material presented, with one CEU typically awarded for 10 hours of active participation in a directed learning environment with an instructor available, or for 20 hours of laboratory or experiential learning where the student's investigation and discovery are largely independent. The number of CEUs awarded is determined by the Chief Academic Officer (dean or director) of the offering unit. Fractional CEUs may be awarded.

050-099: Courses with these numbers provide basic or supplemental preparation for introductory college courses. They may be applicable to some department awarded certificates of completion in accordance with program requirements, but they are not applicable to transcribed certificates or to associate, baccalaureate, or graduate degrees, even by petition. The student's effort is indicated by credit hours (as defined in section 2. below), which are not transcribed as academic credit unless the course includes a component for evaluation of student performance.

2. Academic Credit Courses

Courses with these numbers count toward undergraduate and graduate degrees and certificates as described below. Each course includes a component for evaluation of student performance. Student effort is indicated by credit hours. One credit hour represents three hours of student work per week for a 15-week semester (e.g., one class-hour of lecture and two hours of study or three class-hours of laboratory) for a minimum of 2250 minutes of total student engagement, which may include exam periods. Equivalencies to this standard may be approved by the chief academic officer of the university or community college. Academic credit courses are numbered as follows.

The numbering sequence signifies increasing sophistication in a student's ability to extract, summarize, evaluate and apply relevant class material. Students are expected to demonstrate learning skills commensurate with the appropriate course level, and to meet, prior to registration, prerequisites for all courses as listed with the course descriptions.

a. Lower division courses usually taken by freshmen and sophomores

100-199: Courses with these numbers introduce a field of knowledge and/or develop basic skills and concepts, usually as foundation or survey courses. They are applicable to certificates, and associate and baccalaureate degrees, in accordance with certificate/degree requirements

200-299: Courses with these numbers 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 experience, or develop advanced skills. They are applicable to certificates, and associate and baccalaureate degrees, in accordance with certificate/degree requirement

b. Upper division courses usually taken by juniors and seniors

300-399: Courses with these numbers build upon previous course work and require familiarity with the concepts, methods, and vocabulary of a discipline. They are applicable to baccalaureate degrees and may be applicable to associate degrees, in accordance with degree requirements. These courses are not applicable to graduate degree requirements

400-499: Courses with these numbers require the ability to analyze, synthesize, compare and contrast, research, create, innovate, develop, elaborate, transform, and/or apply course material to solving complex problems, and generally require a substantial background of study in lower-level courses. These courses are applicable to baccalaureate degrees, in accordance with degree requirements. These courses may be applied to graduate requirements for some master's degrees with prior approval of the student's graduate study committee. However, a student may not apply a course to both a baccalaureate and a master's degree.

c. Graduate level courses

600-699: Courses with these numbers demand rigorous analysis, synthesis, and research skills. These courses are applicable to masters and doctoral degrees, in accordance with degree requirements. With prior approval of the major department they may be used to meet degree or graduation requirements for some baccalaureate degrees, but a student may not apply a course to both a baccalaureate and a graduate degree.

3. Professional Development Courses

500-599: Courses with these numbers are designed to provide continuing education for professionals at a post-baccalaureate level. These courses are not applicable to university degree or certificate program requirements, are not interchangeable with credit courses, even by petition, and may not be delivered simultaneously (stacked) with credit courses of similar content.

Courses may be graded Pass/No pass or, if the course includes an evaluation component, by letter grading. The measurement of student effort is indicated by professional development credits. Each professional development credit awarded requires at least 12.5 hours of student engagement in a directed learning environment under the supervision of a qualified instructor. These courses are provided on a self-support basis.

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. In such 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/or 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-developed writing skills, research capabilities and/or mastery of tools and methods of the discipline.

A300-A399: Build upon previous course work and require familiarity with the concepts, methods, and vocabulary of the discipline.

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.

C. Graduate-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 or discipline, or completion of a significant and related program of studies. Student activities are often self-directed and aimed not only at the formation of supportable conclusions, but also at a clear understanding of the process used in those formations.

For graduate-level coursework the justification must:

- i. Address descriptors of 600-699 courses from Chapter 7 of the UAA catalog.
- ii. Specify registration restrictions, e.g. "Admission to **** degree/certificate program" or "Graduate Status" where appropriate.
- iii. State the disciplinary background.
- iv. Specify prerequisites, e.g. "GraduateStatus."
- v. Describe how the course provides students with opportunities for independent critical thinking.
- vi. Describe how the course enables students to meet the following goals when they are appropriate to the field:
 - a. Competence in a specialized field of knowledge
 - b. Extensive experience with specialized client relationships
 - c. Application of expert knowledge within a recognized professional practice
 - d. Analysis and synthesis of primary scholarship or research

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

- I. **Stacking** (if applicable)
- i. Stacked courses are courses from the same prefix but 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 certain 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 all 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. Extra reading assignments based in the primary research literature, evaluated via written critical reviews and/or oral presentations
- ii. Extra writing assignments that evince ability to synthesize research fields (comprehensive scholarly reviews or synthesis of other disciplinary areas with the course material)

- 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 formulation and experimental design, or the ability to interpret raw research data
- v. 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 and be assessed accordingly.