Guidelines for Differentiation among Undergraduate, Graduate, and Professional Courses

Creighton University offers courses at a variety of levels. As is the practice of many universities, some undergraduate courses are cross-listed with select graduate courses and seniors are allowed to complete a few courses at the 500-level to earn graduate credit.

If courses are offered for both undergraduate and graduate credit, syllabi must reflect the learning outcomes for both undergraduate and graduate students. All courses must be reviewed and approved by the curriculum committee in the respective college/school and/or department to assure the integrity of the courses. It is thus important to create guidelines to differentiate undergraduate from graduate and professional courses.

Undergraduate Courses

Courses generally emphasize a broad education in a variety of fields to meet core curriculum requirements. Some undergraduate courses are designed primarily to satisfy general education requirements, but others are not. Some undergraduate courses are introductory, but others are advanced. Some Magis Core Curriculum courses in the Explorations and Integration levels build upon knowledge and skills acquired at lower levels of the Magis Core Curriculum.

Course objectives generally require a lower order level of abstract thought and may include: an ability to describe specific facts, trends, sequences, classifications, categories, principles and generalizations, or theories; an ability to reflect on their learning process; an ability to understand information by stating a problem in their own words or presenting information in another format; an ability to integrate previously learned information in new and concrete situations to solve problems that have a single or best answer.

Courses are generally at the introductory or intermediate level, introducing the basic concepts of a discipline.

Students may have the opportunity to participate in research, but the scope of the project tends to be limited and does not necessarily involve making a contribution to the existing body of knowledge, although some might.

Some undergraduate courses may not involve the reading of primary sources, but others do. The reading material is chosen with an eye to standard practice in the field of study and appropriate attention to the student’s level of preparation and ability. The reading is calibrated to accommodate for approximately 3-4 hours of out-of-class preparation time.
**Writing assignments** generally focus on primary or secondary texts in the content area and are calibrated to offer students effective opportunities to explore core concepts in the field of study. Writing assignments support mastery of defined learning outcomes in the course.

Taxonomy levels most often associated with undergraduate courses are:
- Knowledge (define, describe, identify, label, list)
- Understanding (describe, discuss, estimate, explain, understand)
- Application (apply, assess, develop, implement, participate, use)

Unless otherwise specified in the syllabus, grades assigned are: A, B+, B, C+, C, D, F

**Graduate Courses**

Courses require an advanced level of knowledge of a particular discipline or across different disciplines. The learning experience is marked by a deeper and wider attention to the theoretical framework that informs the content area reading. Graduate level writing should reflect an extended theoretical and synthetic purview, with expectations for active participation in the classroom or online that demonstrates a greater maturity and scholarship than that of an average undergraduate student.

Course objectives generally require a higher level of abstract thought in the discipline (synthesis, analysis, creation). Learning outcomes might include an ability to characterize their learning process in the context of the course; an ability to reflect critically on questions of value in the context of the course materials; the ability to demonstrate an understanding of the complexity of confounding variables that influence the experiences and problems found in the world.

Courses generally emphasize breadth and depth in a discipline. Students should be able to creatively apply prior knowledge and skills to produce a new or original whole. Students search appropriate research and read original articles to get to the depth of the discipline.

Especially at the doctoral level, students are required to contribute an original piece of research/scholarship that adds to the existing knowledge in a particular area of interest within a discipline. Students are expected to begin to demonstrate a professional level of scholarly ability (transition from student to scholar).

Reading material focuses on primary and secondary texts in the content area and in supplementary areas. The materials are calibrated to accommodate for 6-8 hours of out-of-class preparation time. They are chosen with an eye to standard practice in the field of study, but also to challenge students to read and comprehend materials beyond the standard level of preparation both within and beyond the field of study.
Writing assignments focus on the integration of primary and secondary texts in the content area and address core concepts in the field of study in a theoretical and synthetic way. Writing assignments are chosen with an eye to the student’s developing a sophisticated level of preparation to read and comprehend materials needed to write effectively for and appropriately to the methodology of the field. Writing supports mastery of defined learning outcomes in the course.

Taxonomy levels most often associated with graduate courses are:
- Analyze (compare, contrast, correlate, discriminate, differentiate)
- Evaluate (critique, defend, interpret, justify, reframe, support)
- Create (collaborate, develop, individualize, initiate, integrate)

Unless otherwise specified in the syllabus, grades assigned are: A, B, C, F

Professional Courses

Courses require an advanced level of knowledge of a particular discipline or across different disciplines. The learning experience is marked by a deeper and wider attention to the theoretical framework that informs the content area reading. Graduate level writing should reflect an extended theoretical and synthetic purview, with expectations for active participation in classrooms or online discussion boards that demonstrate a greater maturity and scholarship than that of an average undergraduate student.

Course objectives generally require a higher level of abstract thought in the discipline (synthesis, analysis, creation) and are generally mapped to external professional regulatory body standards (i.e., specialized accreditation standards). Courses often include cognitive and psychomotor domain objectives.

Courses generally emphasize breadth and depth in a discipline. Students should be able to creatively apply prior knowledge and skills to produce a new or original whole. Students search appropriate research and read original articles to get to the depth of the discipline.

Some courses may include mentored or supervised experiential learning. Courses generally relate to the provision of a professional service to the public.

Students are expected to be good research consumers to make evidence based decisions.

Taxonomy levels most often associated with professional courses are:
- Analyze (compare, contrast, correlate, discriminate, differentiate)
- Evaluate (critique, defend, interpret, justify, reframe, support)
- Create (collaborate, develop, individualize, initiate, integrate)

Unless otherwise specified in the syllabus, grades assigned are: A, B, C, F.
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<tr>
<th>Student Learning</th>
<th>Undergraduate Degree</th>
<th>Graduate Degree</th>
<th>Professional Degree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate degrees at Creighton University emphasize a broad education in a variety of fields to meet core curriculum and major/minor requirements. Undergraduate degrees are designed to address the University's designated 6 Educational Learning Outcomes. Students learn to become consumers of knowledge.</td>
<td>Graduate degrees at Creighton University emphasize the transition of a student to a scholar through learning experiences that require high levels of thought and creativity. The programs prepare students to contribute to a discipline's body of knowledge, particularly at the doctoral level. Graduate degrees are designed to address the University's designated 6 Educational Learning Outcomes.</td>
<td>Professional degrees at Creighton University are rooted in preparing graduates to serve society through the delivery of a professional service. Professional degrees provide the learning experiences for students to gain professional knowledge and skills; form an identity consistent with the respective profession; and serve as change agents to deliver services in a just and ethical manner. Professional degrees are designed to address the University's designated 6 Educational Learning Outcomes. Students learn to use knowledge and research to make evidence based decisions. Student performance expectations are at the graduate level.</td>
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| Procedures | | |
| Courses are typically 100-500 level. Grades are typically assigned as A, B+, B, C+, C, D, F, unless specified differently in the syllabus. | Courses are commonly at the 500 level or above. Grades are assigned as A, B, C, F, unless specified differently in the syllabus. | Grades are assigned as A, B, C, F, unless specified differently in the syllabus. |

| Processes | | |
| Courses serve as the foundation for graduate or professional degree programs. | Courses require advanced level of knowledge within a discipline or across different disciplines (i.e., interdiscipline). | Professional degrees often include mentored or supervised learning experiences. |