

**Rubric for Dual-Level Courses
MS in Biology and MS in Microbiology
University of Wisconsin Oshkosh**

The degree we offer, the Master of Science, is a research degree; its centerpiece is the original research conducted by the graduate student and the resulting written thesis. In many ways, the best analogy for graduate education in our department is the traditional apprenticeship: students find a master craftsman (the major professor) and attach themselves to that person for a few years so that they may learn through experience. In fact, much of the learning our graduate students experience takes place outside the classroom, in the laboratory and field, in the library and on-line, in seminars and conferences, and in seemingly casual discussions with faculty and fellow graduate students. A premier characteristic of our approach to graduate education is the diversity of ways by which our students learn and grow. Nonetheless, formal coursework also is an important part of our curriculum.

Biology is an extremely broad and diverse discipline, covering everything related to living organisms at the molecular, cellular, organismal, and environmental levels. We simply do not have the resources to cover all the diverse disciplines within biology at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Therefore, approximately half of the credits taken by our graduate students involve dual-listed courses, *i.e.*, those assigned both an undergraduate (300- or 400-) level course number and a graduate (500- or 600-) level course number. In addition to permitting our graduate students to select from a greater array of specialized courses, we believe strongly that dual-listed courses benefit our undergraduates as well, by exposing them to scholastic role models and the overall graduate experience. Learning side-by-side with graduate students may encourage some to consider graduate studies who might not otherwise.

In order to maintain the necessary rigor of the graduate experience, all dual-listed courses in our department will meet the following criteria:

1. The official course syllabus must list specific **objectives** to be met by those enrolled for graduate credit which are **substantially more rigorous** than the objectives to be met by those enrolled for undergraduate credit. Examples might include but are not limited to the following:
 - a. The graduate students will be expected to evince a greater depth of knowledge than the undergraduates.
 - b. The graduate students will be expected to evince a higher level of synthesis than the undergraduates.
 - c. The graduate students will be expected to evince a more sophisticated level of communication, both oral and written, than the undergraduates.

- d. The graduate students will be expected to develop greater proficiency in various skills, and/or a greater array of skills, than the undergraduates.
 - e. The graduate students will be expected to assume a leadership role in the class, providing good models of scholarship for the undergraduates.
2. The official course syllabus must list specific **activities** to be undertaken by those enrolled for graduate credit, by which it will be determined the extent to which they have met the stated objectives. These may be of either of two types, or both:
 - a. Activities not assigned to undergraduates. For example, graduate students might, in addition to the work required of undergraduates, give an oral presentation, write a research paper, or critique a published article.
 - b. Activities similar to those assigned to undergraduates, but which exceed them quantitatively and/or qualitatively. For example, the undergraduate exam might contain 50 questions, the graduate version 75.
 3. The official course syllabus must list a **final grading scale** for those enrolled for graduate credit which is **more demanding** than that designed for those enrolled for undergraduate credit. As a minimum, it will reflect the fact that earning anything less than a C constitutes failing the course.

Degree of Differentiation

The degree to which the undergraduate and graduate portions of a dual-level course are differentiated will be assessed by the following rubric:

- ◆ The course must list at least three specific **OBJECTIVES** that differ in order to be judged **acceptably differentiated**. A course which lists five or more will be judged to be **strongly differentiated**.
- ◆ The course must list at least one specific **ACTIVITY** that differs in order to be judged **acceptably differentiated**. A course which lists two or more will be judged to be **strongly differentiated**.
- ◆ The course must comply with criterion 3 to be judged **acceptably differentiated**. A course whose grading scale differs by more than the recognition that anything less than a C is a failing grade will be judged to be **strongly differentiated**.

This policy was approved by a majority vote of the Graduate Council on September 23, 2009.