

## FAQ: New Policy on Graduate/Professional Students Taking Undergraduate Courses

Effective fall 2018, undergraduate (UG) courses will no longer count for credit toward Duke graduate students' degree requirements or toward graduate students' GPA calculation. This document provides answers to some common questions about this change. This FAQ is being continually updated. If you have questions about this policy change that are not addressed here, contact Erika Lovelace, NSOE Registrar ([nsoe-registrar@duke.edu](mailto:nsoe-registrar@duke.edu)).

We recognize that the timing of this change, though necessary, is inconvenient and disruptive for students, faculty, and staff. We appreciate your patience and understanding as we work to minimize the effects of this transition.

Please note that this document is specific to students in the Nicholas School of the Environment professional degree programs i.e. [MEM](#), [MF](#), and [DEL](#).

### **What was the old policy and why did it change now?**

Graduate students, including professional master's, at Duke previously could have up to two (2) undergraduate (UG) courses (below the 500 level) count for credit toward their graduate degree and toward their GPA. Recently, Duke completed a routine review of our academic policies as part of our ongoing commitment to evaluate the programs that we offer. As a result of this review, current accreditation guidelines require us to implement the new policy immediately.

### **What is the new policy?**

Courses below the 500 level may not be applied toward the required credits needed for a post-baccalaureate degree. With the approval of the department, graduate students may enroll in lower-level courses, but these courses will not count toward any graduation requirement and will not be included in a student's GPA calculation.

*Note: Selected graduate-level courses are offered concurrently with their undergraduate-level counterparts. Graduate students enrolled in these courses are required to complete the requirements and meet the rigor delineated on the graduate-level syllabi which must be distinct from – and more rigorous than – the requirements for UG credit. For additional information, please contact the NSOE registrar and/or the director of professional studies, who will be receiving further guidance from the central registrar's office.*

### **Which students are affected by this policy?**

The new policy applies to masters/professional and Ph.D. students in all Professional and Graduate School programs at Duke.

### **What does this mean for me?**

**Master's students:** Under the old policy, master's students could take up to two (2) UG courses for credit toward their graduate degree, and UG courses counted toward their GPA. Under the new policy, they will no longer get graduate degree credit for UG courses, nor will those courses count toward their GPA. To be considered a full-time student, master's students must be enrolled for 9 graduate-level credits (typically the equivalent of 3 graduate-level courses).

**Ph.D. students:** Ph.D. degree requirements are not based on credit hours, so Ph.D. students can still take as many UG courses as necessary to meet an educational goal defined by them or their faculty advisers, just like before. The change is that UG courses will no longer count toward Ph.D. students' GPA. Note: The new policy also applies to Ph.D. students who are applying for a master's en route to the Ph.D. or switching to a terminal master's. Going forward, graduate students who wish to enroll in courses below 500 must get approval from their DGS and from The Graduate School's associate dean for academic affairs by submitting a [permission form](#). These courses will not, however, count toward graduate credit or GPA.

### **What about UG courses that I have already taken?**

UG courses that graduate students took before fall 2018 will still count toward their degree credit requirements and GPA as allowed under the old policy. The new policy affects all UG-level course registrations in fall 2018 and beyond.

### **I am already enrolled in an UG course for fall 2018. Can I stay in it?**

If you are enrolled in an UG course, you may stay in the course, but you should understand that it will not count toward degree credit or toward your GPA nor may it be used for a program requirement. If you are a masters/professional student, you should also note that to be classified as a full-time student, you must be registered for 9 graduate-level credits.

### **I am enrolled in an UG course for fall 2018 and I needed the credit from that course to help satisfy my graduate degree requirements. What should I do?**

The simplest solution is to dis-enroll from the UG course and enroll in a suitable, existing graduate-level course (500 or higher) instead. You must do this by the drop/add date of September 7, 2018.

If that is not an option, you should discuss your situation with your academic coursework advisor or program chair, who may be able to help you find another solution. The Nicholas School of the Environment is committed to working with its programs to minimize the effect of this policy change on students.

### **The new policy mentions that selected graduate-level courses are offered concurrently with their undergraduate-level counterparts. What does that mean?**

In some cases, the instructor of an UG course may decide to offer a concurrent graduate version of the course, with a distinct, more rigorous set of requirements for graduate students. In such cases, graduate students can take the graduate version of the course for credit toward their

degree and toward their GPA. However, this may not be a feasible option for many or most courses.

Note: For fall 2018, graduate students should refrain from contacting course instructors individually about the possibility of offering a graduate version of an UG course, so that instructors don't get inundated with similar questions. Instead, please discuss with your program chair first, who will then coordinate with the appropriate people to explore this option or suggest another option.

### **Will this change affect my visa status?**

Foreign national master's students will need to maintain 9 credits of enrollment for courses that count toward their degree. Therefore, they will need to adjust their registration if one of their courses for fall 2018 is below the 500 level.

### **Going forward, what steps do I need to take to enroll in an UG course?**

Nicholas School students who wish to enroll in an undergraduate course (below the 500 level) need to complete a [permission request form](#) that must be approved by the NSOE Registrar. If instructor consent is required, consent must be obtained before submitting the [form](#) to the NSOE Registrar. If approved, a graduate student may enroll in UG courses, but those courses will not count toward any graduation requirement and will not be included in a student's GPA calculation.

### **How many courses do I need to take to be considered a full-time graduate student?**

Master's students must be enrolled in at least 9 graded graduate-level credits (usually the equivalent of 3 graduate-level courses) to be considered full-time. There is no minimum credit requirement for Ph.D. students to be considered full-time.

### **How will UG courses show up on my transcript?**

UG courses that you took before fall 2018 will be shown like before, because they still count toward graduate degree credit and GPA. UG courses taken in fall 2018 and beyond will be shown on the transcript with an asterisk next to the grade (e.g., A\*, B\*, C\*, F\*). The asterisk denotes that the course does not count for graduate degree credit and does not factor into your GPA.

### **Who do I contact with questions not addressed here?**

Your first point of contact for questions should be your department i.e. the NSOE Registrar ([nsoe-registrar@duke.edu](mailto:nsoe-registrar@duke.edu)).