UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

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University Council

March 11, 2022

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Undergraduate Student Representative – Matthew Jue
Graduate Student Representative – Sarah Burns

Dear Colleagues:

The attached proposal from the Graduate School for a new graduate-level university-wide requirement, GradFIRST Seminar Series, will be an agenda item for the March 18, 2022, Full University Curriculum Committee meeting.

Sincerely,

Susan Sanchez, Chair
University Curriculum Committee

cc: Provost S. Jack Hu
Dr. Marisa Pagnattaro

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Graduate School
Brooks Hall
310 Herty Drive
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March 8, 2022

Fiona Liken
Associate Vice President for Instruction and Registrar
102 Holmes-Hunter Building
Athens, GA 30602

Dear Fiona,

Please accept this proposal for the GradFIRST seminar series. The GradFIRST seminars are proposed as a university-wide requirement for all incoming, first year graduate students to provide crucial onboarding and preparation for success in graduate studies.

Attached is the proposal, which is pending Graduate Council approval at the upcoming meeting on March 16, 2022. We will provide a timely update on the results of the Graduate Council vote. We have also included, as supporting documentation, the course proposal for GRSC 7001/GRSC 7001E that has been submitted to CAPA and an overview/FAQ document for more information.

We are enthusiastic about this new initiative and its potential to positively impact all graduate students during their transition to UGA.

Please let us know if more information is requested.

Sincerely,

Ron R. Walcott, Ph.D.
Vice Provost for Graduate Education and
Dean of the Graduate School

Anne Shaffer, Ph.D.
Associate Dean
Graduate School

PROPOSAL:

A) Approve a New University-Wide Graduate Requirement

All first-year graduate students who matriculate in graduate programs fall semester 2022 and thereafter must successfully complete one GradFIRST seminar by the end of their first year in residence. This policy excludes students in programs with exemptions granted by the Dean of the Graduate School.

B) Approve a New Course: GRSC 7001/GRSC 7001E
Submitted to CAPA 3/1/2022, see following pages

This seminar will engage first-year graduate students in professional development and transdisciplinary training in areas key to academic success in masters and doctoral programs, and opportunities for engagement with graduate program faculty across campus.

Seminar topics include the ethical conduct of research and scholarship, the development of scholarly writing and communication skills, getting the most out of graduate mentoring, and resources and procedures available to support students with grievances or concerns.

Additional topics will be explored based on faculty expertise and disciplinary focus.

COURSE ID
GRSC 7001/GRSC 7001E

TITLES

Course Title: GradFIRST: First-year Research and Scholarship Training Seminar
Athena Title: GRADFIRST SEMINAR

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This seminar will provide opportunities for professional development and transdisciplinary training for first year graduate students in areas key to academic success, and encourage engagement with graduate program faculty and graduate students across campus.

Seminar topics will include the ethical conduct of research and scholarship, the development of scholarly writing and communication skills, getting the most out of graduate mentoring, and resources available to support students with grievances and other interpersonal concerns.

Additional topics will be explored based on faculty expertise and disciplinary focus.

GRADING SYSTEM

A-F (Traditional)

CREDIT HOURS AND LECTURE/LAB/DISCUSSION HOURS

FIXED

Credit Hours: 1

Lecture Hours per week: 1

NON-TRADITIONAL FORMAT (IF THE LECTURE/LAB HOURS OR THE LECTURE/DISCUSSION HOURS ARE FEWER THAN THE CREDIT HOURS, PLEASE PROVIDE JUSTIFICATION IN THE BOX BELOW.)

N/A

REPEAT POLICY

Course cannot be repeated for credit

EQUIVALENT COURSES

The course will not be open to students who have credit in the following courses:

REQUIRED PREREQUISITES

PREREQUISITE OR COREQUISITE COURSES

COREQUISITE COURSES

PRIMARY DELIVERY MECHANISM (SELECT ONLY ONE)

Seminar

COURSE WILL BE OFFERED

Every Year – Fall and Spring

EFFECTIVE SEMESTER AND YEAR OF CURRENT VERSION OF COURSE

Fall 2022

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REQUIRED FOR THE SYLLABUS

COURSE OBJECTIVES OR EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course will:

- Provide focused professional development and training in transdisciplinary areas key to academic success in masters and doctoral programs
- Promote successful transitions to graduate school through open communication about available campus resources
- Include additional focused topics guided by faculty expertise
- Enhance graduate student-faculty interaction/networking in a small class setting

TOPICAL OUTLINE

All GradFIRST seminars will cover the following transdisciplinary content:

- Ethical conduct of research and scholarship
- Planning your graduate education roadmap
- Getting the most out of graduate mentoring
- Understanding grievance procedures and conflict resolution
- Promotion of mental health and well-being in graduate school
- Career exploration and planning for success after graduate school

Additional topics will vary by instructor expertise.

UNIVERSITY HONOR CODE AND ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY

UGA Student Honor Code: "I will be academically honest in all of my academic work and will not tolerate academic dishonesty of others." A Culture of Honesty, the University's policy and procedures for handling cases of suspected dishonesty, can be found at www.uga.edu/ovpi. Every course syllabus should include the instructor's expectations related to academic integrity.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS RESOURCES

- If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit https://sco.uga.edu. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services.
- UGA has several resources for a student seeking mental health services (https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga) or crisis support (https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies).
- If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit BeWellUGA (https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga) for a list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center.
- Additional resources can be accessed through the UGA App.

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

GradFIRST (First-Year Introduction to Research and Scholarship Training) Seminar Series Overview and FAQs

Introduction:

The GradFIRST seminar series (GRSC 7001) is intended to 1) supplement discipline-specific graduate student education/training with focused professional development in areas key to academic success, 2) provide opportunities for networking with faculty and graduate students across campus, and 3) help to ensure successful on-boarding of new graduate students.

Seminar Content:

GradFIRST seminars will include a specific list of standardized topics with transdisciplinary application to graduate student development and success. For these standardized topics, the Graduate School will provide guidelines, modules, and other instructional materials to support GradFIRST instructors. Faculty will be able to tailor additional content as appropriate to their area(s) of expertise. This list of standardized seminar topics, developed in consultation with graduate students and graduate coordinators, includes:

- Ethical conduct of research and scholarship
- Planning your graduate education and career roadmaps
- Getting the most out of graduate mentoring
- Grievance procedures and conflict resolution
- Promotion of mental health and well-being
- Time management and balancing priorities
- Navigating UGA resources for graduate students

Additional discipline-specific topics to be proposed by faculty instructors could include:

- Science communication
- Grant writing and seeking external funding
- Advocacy/public policy
- Data visualization
- Academic writing and reviewing skills
- Community-engaged research/scholarship
- Other topics based on faculty interest

Expected Outcomes:

The GradFIRST seminar series will help prepare incoming students to successfully navigate their graduate programs. These seminars will also serve the Graduate School's goals of inclusive excellence by engaging in proactive communication about the context and expectations of graduate training, thereby facilitating successful transitions for international students, first-generation students, historically underrepresented students, and other students with limited previous exposure to higher education in the U.S. Ultimately, these seminars will facilitate better student retention and degree completion, and greater levels of student well-being and belonging.

Logistics:

The GradFIRST seminar infrastructure will be modeled after the success of UGA's First Year Odyssey Seminar for undergraduates. Faculty will apply to teach a 1-credit GradFIRST seminar for overload compensation of $3,500, available as scholarly support or extra compensation. This compensation, in addition to $300 per seminar section for meals, will be provided by the Graduate School. GradFIRST seminars may be scheduled for one hour per week or another combination of the number of class meeting times and the duration of the sessions (e.g., five 3-hour meetings) to total 15 contact hours across the semester.

GradFIRST seminars can be offered by any graduate program faculty from any academic unit, and students can register for any GradFIRST seminar. However, GradFIRST seminar instructors may wish to restrict their sections to incoming students in their academic programs by requesting permission of department (POD) in Athena. The Graduate School will establish a website/portal that lists all available GradFIRST seminars to allow first year graduate students to select appropriate sections during orientation and advising.

See below for additional FAQs for instructors, graduate programs, and graduate students. These FAQs will continue to be updated as warranted.

GradFIRST Instructor FAQs

How many students will be allowed in each GradFIRST seminar?

The target enrollment for each GradFIRST seminar section is 12-15 students.

Can non-tenure track faculty teach GradFIRST seminars?

Non-tenure track faculty may teach GradFIRST seminars if they are members of graduate program faculty and have significant experience working directly with graduate students.

I am interested in teaching a GradFIRST seminar, but I am not an expert in/comfortable teaching about the required topics. Will there be resources to help prepare me to teach the required topics?

The Graduate School will collaborate with UGA subject matter experts and campus partners to develop modular content that can be adopted or adapted by faculty instructors to assist with course preparation on key topics (e.g., ethical and academic honesty guidelines, resources and tips for mental health and well-being, overview of UGA resources for graduate students). GradFIRST seminar instructors will also be encouraged to share teaching resources, expertise, and strategies to promote and support graduate education university-wide.

How can I propose a GradFIRST seminar? What should I know about the types of specialized topics that are appropriate to include?

In addition to the standardized seminar content expected for the GradFIRST seminars, faculty are encouraged to develop seminar content that reflects topics related to their expertise, disciplinary focus, or academic interests. Example topics (e.g., science communication, academic writing, data visualization) are presented in the overview; additional topics are welcomed and will be considered during the review process.

Faculty will submit proposals for GradFIRST sections to the Graduate School via the GradFIRST portal and will be notified of approvals in order to schedule section meeting times and classrooms.

How will students enroll in my GradFIRST seminar section?

Students will be advised to enroll in GradFIRST seminars during orientation, and program advisors will have access to topical overviews to guide students to seminars of interest. Students can also review the available seminar sections on the Graduate School's GradFIRST website.

Why are GradFIRST seminars designed with A/F grading rather than S/U?

We expect that graded assignments will increase student engagement and investment in the seminar content. See the sample syllabus for suggested assignments that fit the scope of the 1-credit hour course while providing expectations for student engagement.

Graduate Program FAQs

What will GradFIRST cost our program/department?

Funding for the GradFIRST seminars will be provided centrally, and academic units are not expected to provide funding for this program. GradFIRST instructors will be compensated $3,500 via funds disbursed by the Graduate School. Additionally, $300 will be allocated per section to allow instructors to provide meals for students in their GradFIRST seminar sections.

We already have a seminar like this in our department. Do we have to create a new one?

Your program can determine, in consultation with your department/unit head and/or dean, if it is appropriate to convert an existing departmental seminar to the GradFIRST seminar format. However, we discourage redundancy between GradFIRST seminars and program course offerings.

Note that the GRSC 7770 (Graduate Teaching Seminar) and GRSC 8550 (Responsible Conduct of Research) courses cover their respective content in greater depth than what is intended for GRSC 7001. Therefore, GRSC 7770 and GRSC 8550 will still be required of students with instructional roles and other research-related requirements (students on training grants), respectively.

Will there still be a requirement that all graduate research assistants funded by the Graduate School take GRSC 8550?

Students funded by the Graduate School (e.g., Presidential Graduate Fellows, Doctoral Fellows) will no longer be required to take GRSC 8550, but will be required to complete a GradFIRST (GRSC 7001) seminar in their first year of graduate studies.

Can we reserve GradFIRST seminars for students in our department/program?

GradFIRST seminars are offered by interested faculty and are not required to be offered in every graduate program, as students may enroll in seminar sections taught across campus. However, GradFIRST instructors may reserve a specified number of seats for their own graduate students in their GradFIRST seminar sections.

We don't have anyone in our department/program to teach a GradFIRST seminar. Can our students enroll in a section offered by other faculty?

Yes. GradFIRST seminars are offered university-wide and need not be program-specific. Where appropriate, we encourage students to enroll in GradFIRST seminars in other departments/programs to broaden their exposure to other

academic disciplines and faculty. Graduate coordinators/advisors will have access to the full list of seminars on the GradFIRST website to facilitate placing students in appropriate sections.

Do we need to update our program curriculum to include this requirement? Will the GradFIRST seminar be listed on students' program of study?

The GradFIRST seminar will be a university-wide requirement, though programs may choose to update their graduate handbooks and course planning to include this seminar. GRSC 7001 will be listed on programs of study as a "University Requirement," similar to "Research Skills Requirement" or "Departmental Requirement."

This seminar will place an exceptional burden on our students due to coursework required for accreditation or another unique aspect of our graduate program. Can they be exempt from this requirement? What criteria will be used to determine if students in the program will be exempted from the GradFIRST requirement?

The Graduate School will consult with departments and programs to consider program-level exemptions from the GradFIRST seminar requirement. Please contact gradassociatedean@uga.edu to initiate this request.

The overarching goal of GradFIRST seminars is to benefit students and not to impose burdens. Therefore, if the GradFIRST seminar requirement negatively impacts the achievement of accreditation standards and program quality, or increases costs to students, exemptions will be considered.

Graduate Student FAQs

Am I required to take GradFIRST seminars in my first year of study?

Yes. Most seminars will be offered in fall semester with a limited number available in spring semester to accommodate students who matriculate in spring or could not enroll in the fall seminar due to scheduling conflicts. No summer seminars will be offered.

How can I choose which GradFIRST seminar to take?

Incoming graduate students will be notified about the GradFIRST seminar requirement at orientation and advising in the beginning of their first semester. Graduate Coordinators and/or Graduate Coordinator Assistants will have access to

information on available seminars (GradFIRST website/portal) to guide students to sections that fit their schedules and interests. In some cases, graduate programs may reserve seats in specific sections for members of their incoming cohorts.

How will the Graduate School track completion of GradFIRST seminars?

The Graduate School will develop an internal audit system and will notify departments/programs when students have not completed this requirement.

I'm a DoubleDawg student, am I required to take a GradFIRST seminar?

Students on the DoubleDawg pathway are not required to enroll in a GradFIRST seminar as an undergraduate student. However, upon formal matriculation in a graduate program (i.e., after being admitted to graduate school) they will be required to take a GradFIRST seminar.

Are non-degree seeking students, certificate-only students, or students seeking teacher endorsements required to take a GradFIRST seminar?

No. Only students who are formally admitted to and enrolled in graduate programs are required to complete GRSC 7001.

I transferred from a graduate program at another institution; am I required to take a GradFIRST seminar?

Yes. GradFIRST will prepare students to succeed at UGA.

I'm already required to take a 3-credit Responsible Conduct of Research/Scholarship (RCR/S) course as a funding or program requirement. Do I have to take a GradFIRST seminar?

Yes. The GradFIRST seminar covers content in areas beyond research ethics that are critical to promoting graduate student success. Conversely, the GradFIRST seminar does not necessarily cover content in sufficient depth to qualify/replace as a RCR/S course as required for some graduate funding programs.

Can I be exempt from taking a GradFIRST seminar?

Decisions to exempt students from the GradFIRST requirement are made at the program level, not at the individual student level.

Can I take more than one seminar?

No. The GRSC 7001 course is not repeatable.

I'm a 2+ year student, can I take a GradFIRST seminar?

GradFIRST seminars are reserved for incoming, first-year students.

I am a student in an online graduate program. How can I take a GradFIRST seminar?

Online sections of GRSC 7001 will be reserved for students enrolled in online programs.

I am a student at an extended campus (e.g., Griffin, Tifton, Gwinnett etc.). How can I take a GradFIRST seminar?

Ideally, seminars will be offered by faculty at the extended campuses. If none are available, students will be permitted into an online section of GradFIRST.

I am returning to UGA to earn a second graduate degree or transitioning to a second graduate degree program. If I already took a GradFIRST seminar, do I need to take one again?

No. If GRSC 7001 is on your transcript from a previous UGA degree, you do not need to take the course again.