For most faculty members and graduate students alike, the graduate classroom offers a unique site of intellectual development, exploration, and exchange. The following guidelines are intended to highlight best practices to help instructors plan and run successful graduate courses, and to optimize the learning experience for graduate students. These guidelines supplement the official Policy on Graduate Course Outlines, to which all graduate courses must adhere.

1. In fields that include diverse knowledge bases or skill sets, the instructor may wish to meet with prospective students before the course starts, particularly with students who are from outside the home program or department. Such a meeting might include a discussion of the overall objectives and content of the course, an explanation of the methods of assessment, and a description of the expertise and skill level expected of the student.

2. The graduate course instructor may decide to recruit one or more faculty members or field experts to give special lectures during the course. Such an invitation should be made well in advance of the lecture date. Invited instructors usually are not expected to evaluate the students. However, there may be rare cases in which an invited instructor contributes some aspect of course evaluation. In that event, the official course instructor still bears ultimate responsibility for overall evaluation and course outcome. Accordingly, best practice would be for the invited instructor to receive information, preferably in writing, about evaluation criteria and expectations that are consistent with the course outline. Students also should be informed of the mechanism and mode of evaluation.

3. To receive credit for a course, each student is responsible for confirming on SOLAR that his/her registration status is appropriate for that course. Students are responsible for ensuring that they have formally registered for the course (including any seminar course) through their department or graduate program. Best practice suggests that the instructor should remind students of their responsibilities at the first meeting of the course. If the instructor becomes aware that a student is not listed on the grade sheet, or that the grade sheet includes the name of a student who has not been attending the class, the instructor should inform the department/graduate program.
4. As noted in the *Policy on Graduate Course Outlines*, the course instructor is responsible for providing each student with evaluations of the student’s academic performance at various stages during the course, and, whenever possible, a list of due dates. It is best practice in graduate courses for each student to receive at least one written evaluation prior to the ‘drop’ date so that students can have the chance to withdraw from the course without academic penalty. Such an evaluation could take any of a number of forms (e.g., evaluations of a seminar presentation, a written assignment, or a collaborative work).

5. At the graduate level, students normally are expected to actively participate in courses (i.e., contribute to discussion, be encouraged to ask questions), and instructors often award marks for participation. Participation marks typically amount to a relatively minor proportion (e.g., 5-20%) of the final grade. Some students, particularly those whose first language is not English, may be reluctant to participate in a discussion in class. Best practice suggests that these students should be recognized early and, whenever possible, tactfully drawn into the discussion by the instructor. The ultimate aim of any graduate course is not only to convey information to and exchange information with students, but also to equip students with the confidence and ability to exchange information with others, both in the spoken word and in writing.

6. Although instructors are required to provide written course outlines at the beginning of courses, the *Policy on Graduate Course Outlines* also provides instructors with the opportunity to alter a course’s content to reflect shifting research interests as long as the students are informed of such changes promptly and *in writing*. Even in the case of changing content, best practice is for instructors to adhere to the original course outline in terms of the amount of work expected from the students, the schedule of assignments, due dates, and the evaluation scheme.

7. Best practice suggests that instructors should calculate and provide final grades to the School of Graduate Studies for *all students* by the date stipulated in the Graduate Calendar. Final marks also should be provided to the students in a timely manner. Although there may be rare instances in which the instructor may need to report grades before all work is complete for a student, instructors should be aware that a grade of “incomplete” will be converted to an “F” and recorded on the student’s transcript.