

Key Assignments and Learning Outcomes for Graduate Courses

The Graduate Council has oversight responsibility for the quality of graduate course offerings. In order to assess this quality, the Graduate Council reviews course descriptions, course learning outcomes, and key assignments for graduate courses. When developing course descriptions, course learning outcomes, and course key assignments, faculty should consider the accreditation standards from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU).

Accreditation Standards

NWCCU accreditation standard 2.C.12 states the following: “Graduate programs are consistent with the institution’s mission; are in keeping with the expectations of their respective disciplines and professions; and are described through nomenclature that is appropriate to the levels of graduate and professional degrees offered. They differ from undergraduate programs by requiring greater depth of study and increased demands on student intellectual or creative capacities; knowledge of the literature of the field; and ongoing student engagement in research, scholarship, creative expression, and/or appropriate high-level professional practice.”

NWCCU accreditation standard 2.C.15 states the following: Graduate programs intended to prepare students for research, professional practice, scholarship, or artistic creation are characterized by a high level of expertise, originality, and critical analysis. Programs intended to prepare students for artistic creation are directed toward developing personal expressions of original concepts, interpretations, imagination, thoughts, or feelings. Graduate programs intended to prepare students for research or scholarship are directed toward advancing the frontiers of knowledge by constructing and/or revising theories and creating or applying knowledge. Graduate programs intended to prepare students for professional practice are directed toward developing high levels of knowledge and performance skills directly related to effective practice within the profession.

Graduate course program outcomes, graduate course descriptions, graduate course learning outcomes and graduate course key assignments should comply with these accreditation standards.

Course Learning Outcomes

Graduate course learning outcomes shall be at a graduate level. When developing graduate learning outcomes, the faculty may want to consider focusing on developing student skills in the top three domains of Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy: Creating, Evaluating, and Analyzing. Faculty may also want to develop key lower Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy domain skills such Applying, Understanding, and Remembering at a mastery level.

Course Key Assignments

Graduate course developers shall provide the Graduate Council at least one key assignment for each graduate course. The graduate course key assignment should link to one or more of the graduate course’s learning outcomes. The key assignment should develop graduate level skills which can be used for assessment purposes.