

Graduate Course Requirements and Outcomes

We have had many discussions in the past about whether our course system achieves what we want. We have touched on questions like, Do our course requirements impede research, or are the current requirements essential to a good research foundation? Are our breadth requirements sufficient, or do they allow students to skate through with only "easy" courses? Is the way we partition graduate courses into field committees the right approach for the scale of our department, or does it cause issues? Despite lots of talk on all sides of these and other issues, our course systems mostly stays as-is except for small tweaks whose consequences are hard to understand.

I propose that we form a committee that measures the outcomes of the current course system and its achievements, and, ultimately, helps us determine if the current system is the best choice or whether changes could result in improvements. The charge of the committee would be to: (1) determine a range of outcomes we expect from our courses; (2) measure what outcomes are achieved, and to what extent; and (3) make recommendations regarding the course system. The committee should report its findings to the faculty for feedback, following the completion of each sub-task.