

Graduate Council Recommendations on Creating a Syllabus for 299 Courses
Santa Cruz Division
November 28, 2023

UC Santa Cruz graduate students take Independent Study and Thesis Research (a.k.a. “299”) courses as they work towards academic goals in producing scholarly work. Graduate Council (GC) encourages faculty mentors and mentees to set quarterly quantitative and/or qualitative goals for academic and research progress, in writing, to help clarify expectations and set priorities. Goals in 299 courses should be developed to help students make timely progress towards their degrees, whether or not they are employed or otherwise supported financially as part of their academic work (i.e. as a GSR, TA, graduate fellow, etc.). Quarterly goals should be ambitious and reasonable, taking into account the aggregate of obligations that a student may have, including employment that may be distinct from their academic studies. In addition to helping manage expectations and goals quarter by quarter, 299 syllabi can assist with annual evaluation and reporting of graduate student progress.

GC recognizes that research and scholarly work advances unevenly at times, and varies considerably across disciplines and from quarter to quarter. The crafting of a syllabus for a 299 course should allow for this variability, maintaining flexibility and preserving the autonomy of faculty mentors in guiding student research as best fits the discipline and circumstances. A well-crafted syllabus will allow for delays and changes in plans, new creative approaches, and mistakes that are commonly part of rigorous research and scholarly activities. Good communication, including regular meetings, is important to help assure research progress. Quarterly progress could include production of ideas, analyses, samples, data, reports, papers, or other materials, eventually including thesis/dissertation chapters or other products that lead to completion of a graduate program and awarding of a degree.

GC encourages that graduate departments, programs, and mentors develop and use a simple syllabus to aid in clarifying 299 course expectations. An example template follows this statement—please adapt and modify as appropriate.

When developing a 299 syllabus, please consider including these topics (and others that may be applicable):

- timing and duration of expected interactions between faculty and students (office hours, individual meetings, reading groups, etc.)
 - participation in lab or group activities (including presentations at lab or group meetings)
 - anticipated academic outputs stemming from research in lab, field, archive, or other environments
 - development of data analyses, scholarly activities, or progress in writing
 - participation in scholarly events such as presentations at seminars, conferences, workshops
- quality of scholarly or creative works

Syllabus for Independent Study/Thesis Research 29X

(Please modify to align with student, mentor and/or program needs)

Professor:

Student:

Objective:

Overview of plans to make academic progress towards the completion of [Graduate Degree].

Mentor/Mentee meetings:

	Bi-weekly
	Weekly
	Every other week
	Monthly
	Other (SPECIFY)

Expectations:

SPECIFY (The expectations vary with the department/area of research/year in the program. For example, at the end of the second year of the Ph.D. in XXX, students must present a research paper. During the third year, they take the XXX exam. Expectations aligned with program objectives are encouraged.)

Hours/Schedule:

(Hours should match the credits received, with a rough conversion of 3 hours effort for each unit of credit).

Grading:

Independent Study/Thesis Research courses are generally taken:

S = Satisfactory

U = Unsatisfactory

[299 Syllabus Examples](#)