

GUIDELINES FOR BGS STUDENT REGISTRATION, 01/03/2000

These guidelines have been revised in connection with the BGS student funding structure implemented in September 1997. They replace the registration policies described in the BGS Coordinator Manual.

General

In years 1 and 2, BGS students take a combination of didactic courses, seminars, laboratory rotations, and independent studies. In general, they take the equivalent of 4 "course units" in the Fall and Spring semesters and 2 "course units" in the summer semesters. In year 3 and beyond, students work full-time in the laboratory of their dissertation advisor. Since Fall 1997, BGS student registration on the University's Student Records System (SRS) has not reflected certain academic activities.

In SRS, BGS students in years 1 through 5 are registered for 3 course units in the Fall and Spring semesters and are not registered in the summer sessions. Thus, they are registered for a total of 30 course units in the first 5 years. In general, their coursework is reflected in SRS registration, while some of their lab rotations and independent studies are not. Transfer credit from other institutions or other schools at Penn is counted towards the 30 course units. Upon the completion of the first two years of training, students are enrolled for 3 course units of independent study (999-999 in SRS) with their dissertation advisors in the Fall and Spring terms. *Beginning in year six or upon reaching 30 course units (whichever comes first), students are registered for dissertation (995 in SRS).*

(Under the old system, students were registered for 4 course units in the Fall and Spring semesters of the first two years, and for 2 course units in each of the first two summers, for a total of 20 course units. They were enrolled for dissertation [995] thereafter.)

One of the benefits of the current system is that it can allow students to continue to take courses after the first two years without incurring additional tuition charges. For example, a 3rd year student (or any student who has not reached 30 course units) who wishes to take an additional BGS course may do so with the permission of his/her graduate group chair and dissertation advisor. S/he is registered for 2 cu of independent study and 1 cu for the course.

One of the drawbacks of the new system is that it requires graduate group coordinators to keep very careful records of student registration independent of SRS. For example, while 1st and 2nd year students take the equivalent of 4 courses in any given Fall or Spring semester, they are registered for only 3 course units in SRS. The 4th course is usually an independent study or lab rotation. Consequently, coordinators must be sure to do the following:

- record the 4th cu of each Fall and Spring semester for the student's academic file (for example, Jane Doe's 4th cu is an Independent Study with Dr. John Smith in Spring 2000)
- record details of summer laboratory rotations and independent studies for the student's academic file
- record the name of the dissertation advisor beginning in year 3 (under the old system, each advisor had a designated section number in SRS; now all students are registered under a common section number, 999)

When the 4th Course Must Be Reflected in SRS

There are occasions when a student wants an accurate representation in SRS of his or her course enrollment. This is particularly justified for those semesters in which a student took 4 actual courses and no independent studies or laboratory rotations. There are two ways to handle such requests for students who are in the 1st or 2nd year:

- a) Wait until the student reaches dissertation status in the 3rd year and, instead of registering him or her for 3 course units of 999, register him or her for 2 course units of 999 and the missing course. The course and grade will then appear on the student's transcript, albeit not in the semester in which the student took the course.

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b) Register the student for the 4th course unit in the semester the student is taking it and have the graduate group chair write a note to the Director of BGS explaining that it was necessary to register the student for 4 instead of 3 course units. (A consequence of this is that additional tuition will be charged for that semester.)

As stated above, students in years 3 through 5 (who have not reached 30 course units) may be registered for a course simply by dropping the 999 to 2 course units and adding the other 1 course unit with the permission of the graduate group chair and dissertation advisor.

Enrollment in Non-BGS Courses

It is expected that students will enroll in non-BGS courses only on a very limited basis, as BGS is not credited for tuition paid towards non-BGS courses. If BGS faculty members are involved in teaching a course sponsored by another school, and if BGS students are likely to take the course, then the course should be crosslisted in BGS. When a course is crosslisted with another school, BGS students must be registered in the *BGS section* of the course.

Deadlines

Coordinators are responsible for the appropriate registration of their students in SRS. BGS staff will generally request that coordinators complete the registration of their students approximately 1 to 2 weeks before the close of drop/add. BGS staff then will audit registrations and make any necessary corrections so as to avoid billing problems. After the close of registration, coordinators' registration access is suspended in SRS (if for some reason a coordinator still has access after the cutoff date, s/he should not register any students). BGS will make any necessary changes after the drop/add deadline with the permission of the course director and approval of the graduate group. As BGS staff must perform a manual billing adjustment after the close of drop/add (a student's billing will not adjust automatically to a change in course load after that date), deadlines *must* be strictly observed.

Auditing

Under the old system, full-time (1st and 2nd year) students could audit a 5th cu (or a 4th cu if they were a Teaching Assistant) without incurring additional tuition charges. However, auditing was rare because if a course was approved as a part of a student's curriculum, it was to be taken for credit - and a grade. Under the new system, auditing is generally not permitted. Audit registration under the new system inevitably incurs additional tuition charges. Students who wish to "sit in" on a course may do so with the permission of the course director (and the student's dissertation advisor, if applicable).

Combined Degree Students

Combined degree students are registered for approximately 16-18 course units of graduate courses over their first 4 years and then dissertation (995). In addition, they normally receive approximately 14 units of transfer credit from basic science courses in medical or veterinary school. It should be noted that combined degree students are billed for 4 years of professional school tuition regardless of their graduate school registration during those first 4 years. Combined degree students are required to meet with a graduate advisor twice per year beginning in their first year of medical school. The graduate advisor must sign off on the combined degree student's course selections, including the selection of a rotation advisor, prior to registration. Generally, combined degree students are enrolled in one graduate course or independent study in the 1st year, usually in the Spring, and one graduate course or independent study in the Fall of the 2nd year (while concentrating on medical school). They also generally perform a lab rotation between the 1st and 2nd year for which there is no registration. Beginning in year 3, they usually work full-time towards the PhD and are registered for *4 course units* (as opposed to the 3 course units taken by regular PhD students) in the Fall and Spring terms until they complete graduate coursework (reaching 30 course units, or slightly more). Actual coursework, as opposed to thesis work for which they receive course unit credits, is usually complete by the end of the 3rd year but occasionally extends into the 4th year; nevertheless, combined degree students generally are registered for 4 course units per semester in both years 3 and 4. After passing the prelim before or during the 4th year, combined degree students generally continue to function as full time graduate

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students until the dissertation is complete, usually but not necessarily midway through the 6th or 7th year. In years 5 on, combined degree students are registered for dissertation (995). Coordinators register combined degree students for graduate courses in years 1-3. The Combined Degree office registers them for graduate courses in year 4-on.

Post-Professional Students

Some BGS students enter the program having already earned an M.D. or V.M.D. degree. These students are not provided with a BGS fellowship. Some are University employees and are eligible to receive the faculty-staff tuition benefit. Others are residents in the Clinical Investigator Graduate Degree Program (CIGDP) who may or may not be eligible for faculty-staff benefits. Some of these students apply for and receive individual postdoctoral NRSAs or K awards from NIH. Funding for post-professionals is arranged through the academic department in which they are appointed.

Please be aware that students who are receiving faculty-staff tuition benefits should be registered for 2 course units in the each semester, including the summer semester, for a maximum of 6 course units per year. The purpose of this arrangement is to avoid billing these students for tuition not covered by the faculty-staff benefit and to reflect their part-time student status.

Because they receive intellectual credit for their medical training over and above the 8 transfer credits allowed by the university, post-professional students are registered for only 20 course units before moving to dissertation registration (995).