

GLS Students in non-GLS courses

A Variety of Program Types/Scenarios

A. 4-year liberal arts college with a single graduate program in Graduate Liberal Studies (or just a few other graduate programs, often professionally-oriented terminal masters degrees, in addition to the GLS program, e.g. education, nursing, etc.)

GLS Students in non-GLS courses: Students generally take all their courses within the GLS program.

B. Medium or large university with GLS program housed in a "university college" or continuing studies division, i.e. not in the "regular" graduate school

Observation: Some prestigious research-oriented universities "differently house" (segregate) the GLS program away from their "real" (Ph.D.) graduate programs.

GLS Students in non-GLS courses: Students generally take all or most of their courses within the GLS program, but are sometimes permitted to take a few courses in other graduate programs with intense vetting. Many students do not take advantage of this because they prefer the communal atmosphere of adult interdisciplinary learning in their GLS courses over the highly professionalized and competitive atmosphere in departmental graduate courses.

C. Medium or large university with GLS programs housed along with other graduate programs

Observation: Public and private universities that are more teaching- than research-intensive are more likely to have their GLS programs situated as departments in their graduate divisions rather in separate divisions.

GLS Students in non-GLS courses: Students generally take more of their courses outside of GLS than in A or B. Sometimes students take a limited core of 2-4 courses in GLS and the remainder as field concentration or electives in other departments. Sometimes students take a core plus a few electives within GLS but must take the remainder of their courses in the departments because the GLS program is not large enough to support a full array of GLS courses. Sometimes non-GLS courses are cross-listed, sometimes not.

Underlying problems:

- Fundamentally different orientation between GLS programs and conventional departmental programs. This plays out in a number of ways. Often, GLS programs stress development of intellectual skills across the curriculum and growth in cultural literacy while the departmental programs are focussed on a canonical body of knowledge and the development of theory about that knowledge. Departmental graduate programs are professional apprenticeships, while GLS programs are explorations in the liberal arts. To some non-GLS faculty, the GLS approach may seem "soft."
- Prejudice from faculty not familiar with program
- Lack of disciplinary preparation on part of students, including:

- theory, methodology
- familiarity with literature
- writing conventions
- Differing expectations about amount and nature of work involved in a graduate course
- Departmental sociology (GLS students inserted into an already existing cohort or community)

What can go wrong:

- Unprepared or insufficiently talented students can crash and burn.
- Non-GLS departments or faculty ban GLS students from their courses and create a negative buzz about your program among faculty and administrators.

What can go right:

- Well-prepared and talented students succeed and broaden their sense of intellectual adventure and of the "academic project." (Breaking out of the GLS "cocoon")
- Successful students encourage others in the program to take courses outside the program.
- Non-GLS faculty are impressed with the maturity and hard work of the GLS students, become open to being more involved with your program, perhaps as core faculty, perhaps as thesis directors.

Strategies:

- **Build a purposeful conception of your program and use this conception to educate faculty and administrators** in the institution, as well as your own students: "This is not graduate school *light*; this is graduate school *different*." Decide what your "different" is (rhetoric, interdisciplinary methodologies, etc., etc.) And on this foundation **make GLS core courses more rigorous** (work load, kinds of reading, introductions to theory, etc.), including theory/methods boot-camp.
- **Get faculty from resisting departments to teach in your core** (and thus act as ambassadors).
- Instructor/student contracts (IUS "Application for Graduate Credit")
- **Provide individual evaluation and advisement** on a course-by-course basis.
 - Encourage students with no background to take a more introductory course in the discipline (e.g. an advanced undergraduate course) before taking the graduate course with the sexy content or title they have their eyes on.
 - Encourage students to contact instructors, obtain syllabi weeks or months before course begins.
 - Have students ask instructor about background readings to be completed before course.
 - Do some hard thinking/planning with students about the theory-and-methods component. Will it be included as part of the course content, or will the instructor expect the students to have had exposure to it before they come in?