

Guidelines for Freshman Seminar Proposals for Area B

Over thirty years of research have shown the freshman seminar to be a high impact practice that can help first-year students to transition successfully to college, engage them in academic experiences that reflect college-level expectations, and allow them to work closely with an instructor and other students in small classes¹. The seminar should reflect the needs of the individual institution and its goals for Area B². The purpose of this outline is not to limit creative designs but to help institutions avoid designs that would preclude the course from being acceptable in Area B.

An appropriate freshman seminar in the core curriculum is not

- an extended orientation course (i.e., institutional rules and regulations; introduction to institutional resources and campus facilities)
- a basic skills course for remediation (i.e., time management, study skills, reading comprehension)
- a venue for completing institutional requirements such as a plagiarism awareness activity, MAP-Works survey, or online library orientation.

This model is often used as a vehicle to improve academic skills for students assigned to learning support, or who are deemed at risk for dropping out for other reasons. It can be offered as an elective in certain degree programs, but is not appropriate for inclusion in Area B.

However, an Area B freshman seminar could include some of these items in the context of a robust academic experience. For instance, a course that includes a significant research component would logically include instruction about plagiarism and using Galileo. It is the inclusion of these skills *as the curriculum itself* that would make the course ineligible for Area B.

Proposals for freshman seminar courses in the core must follow these general guidelines:

1. Content and learning outcomes must be at college level.
2. The course must reflect the institution's Area B goals/learning outcomes.
3. The course may carry 1 or 2 credit hours.

There is a wide spectrum of models for the freshman seminar³. USG institutions electing to propose the course in Area B are encouraged to develop creative course designs that engage students in active learning.

Some of the better freshman seminars use some or all of the following principles:

1. They work well when issue-oriented covering a wide range of knowledge and/or engaging issues or topics.
2. They should be methodologically self-conscious in the sense of focusing on how scholars pose problems, discover solutions, resolve controversies, and evaluate knowledge.
3. They should involve active learning and enable students to take responsibility for producing knowledge.
4. They should refine students' communication skills.

¹ Kuh et al. 2008. J. Higher Educ. 79:540-563.

² USG Academic Affairs Handbook 2.4 Core Curriculum
(http://www.usg.edu/academic_affairs_handbook/section2/C738/)

³ AAC&U (<https://www.aacu.org/leap/hips>)