

November 6, 2017

TO: Twin Cities Undergraduate Deans (Marilyn DeLong, Na'im Madyun, Christine Mueller, Ascan Koerner, Raj Singh, Bob Stine, Paul Strykowski, John Ward, Michael White)

CC: Collegiate curricular contacts
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Bryan Mosher, Chair, Campus Writing Board
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Jennifer Reckner, Undergraduate Education

FROM: Leslie Schiff, Associate Dean, Office of Undergraduate Education

Re: 2018-19 Freshman Seminar Course Proposal Information and Deadlines

We are pleased to outline below the Freshman Seminar process for 2018-19. Please read the following information and contact the Office of Undergraduate Education (OUE) at oue@umn.edu if you have any questions.

Freshman Seminar Submission Process

Last year, Freshman Seminars (FSems) were transitioned to regular courses in ECAS, which significantly streamlined the submission and approval process. The new FSem attribute added to ECAS made these courses easily identifiable and searchable in the online course catalog.

All 2017-18 FSems have been deactivated in ECAS effective Summer 2018 in order to prevent the course catalog from showing FSems that will not be taught in 2018-19. Please reactivate only the courses that will be taught in the coming academic year.

Frequently Asked Questions

We need to use more course numbers now since each Freshman Seminar requires its own unique number. How should courses be numbered?

- A. Departments may use any 1xxx course numbers available within their departments. FSems are now identifiable by the Freshman Seminar attribute in ECAS, and are not required to include the words “Freshman Seminar” in the title.

New regular courses usually require Campus Curriculum Committee (CCC) review. Do brand new Freshman Seminars have to be reviewed by the CCC?

- A. No. FSems are one of a few types of courses exempt from CCC review.

Regular course proposals in ECAS require a syllabus, but non-LE/WI Freshman Seminars have not previously required a syllabus to be submitted. Is that changing?

- A. No. FSems proposed for LE/WI must include a syllabus in the ECAS proposal, but non-LE/WI courses are not required to do so. Many FSems have been taught previously, so we recommend including a previous syllabus as a best practice. New non-LE/WI FSems are encouraged to include reading lists, weekly topics, or other available information if a syllabus has not yet been finalized.

Some information previously requested for Freshman Seminars isn't automatically collected in ECAS. Do we still have to include that, and where?

- A. Yes, some additional information still needs to be collected to create the *Freshman Seminar Brochure* that gets distributed to incoming students during Orientation, but we are committed to keeping the FSem proposal process streamlined, and confined within a single ECAS proposal. Accordingly, please include the following information in the ECAS **Editor Comments** section:

Semester the course will be offered

Faculty instructor name

Home department of the faculty member teaching the seminar

Three-sentence biography of faculty member teaching the seminar

It is not necessary to label each item, so a typical entry might look like this:

Fall 2018

Leslie Schiff

Microbiology

Leslie Schiff is a virologist and professor of microbiology. When she isn't grading papers or watching one of her son's swim meets, she enjoys playing with her German shepherd, Gunnar, and debating with colleagues about the extraordinary merits of the University curriculum. Leslie loves working with undergraduates, and enjoys handing out plush viruses when students answer a question particularly brilliantly.

Please note that, based on feedback, days/times and campus location are no longer being requested. Please remove this information from any FSems being reactivated from last year.

What information will be included in the *Freshman Seminar Brochure* this year?

- A. OUE recently requested feedback on the information included in last year's *Freshman Seminar Brochure*, to ensure that it continues to optimally serve student and advisor needs. Based on feedback, the following items will be reinstated in the 2018-19 *Brochure*:

Semester offered

LE/WI designation

Number of credits

Do we still need to include the enforced prerequisite, “001475 - Freshman and FRFY for Freshman Seminar Courses” in the ECAS proposals now that we have the Freshman Seminar attribute?

- A. Yes. Using this specific prerequisite code ensures that FSems remain accessible only to first-year students, while not inadvertently denying access to first-year students who entered the U of M with enough AP/PSEO credits to technically be considered sophomores. It also allows for full-year registration of FSems, meaning that freshmen can sign up in the fall for a spring FSem if they already know they want to take it.

If a Freshman Seminar has been previously approved for LE/WI, does it need to be recertified?

- A. If an FSem has previously been approved for LE/WI within the last five years, it does not need to be recertified. Simply note the most recent semester of previous approval in the **Proposal Changes** section in ECAS, and include the current syllabus in the **Syllabus** section. Because FSems are now regular courses, that documentation stays in ECAS and no longer requires annual approval.

Won't all of these courses clog up the online course catalog and make it confusing to determine which will be available each semester?

- A. OUE will continue to deactivate all Freshman Seminars after each academic year, so departments don't need to worry about a course rolling over automatically in the course schedule or showing up erroneously in the online catalog. Departments can easily reactivate FSems as needed for subsequent semesters. If an FSem is canceled, departments should notify OUE by emailing oue@umn.edu.

Funding and Collegiate Freshman Seminar Obligations

The formal collegiate FSem obligations were established based on allocated faculty positions when the FSem program was founded. Here are the individual collegiate credit obligations:

College	FS Credit Obligation
CBS	12
CCE	0
CDES	12
CEHD	12
CFANS	12
CLA	135
CSE	56
CSOM	0
Nursing	0
VET	0

Unfortunately, due to stringent budget cuts, OUE is unable to offer set amounts of ad hoc funding to colleges this year in support of FSems. We are optimistic that this funding will become available again in the future. In the meantime, there is still a small budget for funding, which will be distributed equitably among colleges based on the number of credits each college offers beyond its formal obligation.

By the end of June 2018, each college will receive a memo indicating the amount of FSem funding it has been allocated for 2018-19. Those funds will be transferred in Spring 2019 after verification of the number of FSems that were offered.

Characteristics of Successful Freshman Seminars

Experience over the past eighteen years has provided strong evidence that the most successful FSems have the following characteristics:

- they are taught by faculty who have a genuine interest in engaging with undergraduate students and who are willing to connect with students on issues not directly related to the course materials;
- they explore subjects that are meaningful and accessible to first-year students;
- they are designed to encourage discussion and writing;
- they take place in an in-person classroom setting;
- and they give students real coaching in developing skills that will help them be successful in college (analysis, research, speaking in class, contacting the professor, using the library, writing). These skills are consciously honed and not just implicit in class assignments.

FSems are not survey courses and should not strive for “coverage.” They should not have a comprehensive final examination. Enrollment limits should be set no higher than 20, and University policies regarding [Expected Student Academic Work per Credit](#) and [Instructional Time per Course Credit](#) must be followed.

Freshman Seminar Submission Deadlines

All FSems being proposed for Liberal Education (LE) or Writing Intensive (WI) designation for 2018-19 must be submitted to the Provost level in ECAS by **February 1, 2018**.

All Freshman Seminars being proposed for a **Liberal Education theme** must meet the LE criteria and be approved by the Council on Liberal Education (CLE). The LE criteria can be found at <http://asr.umn.edu/training-and-support/course-proposal-guidelines>

All Freshman Seminars being proposed for **Writing Intensive** designation must meet the WI criteria and be approved by the Campus Writing Board (CWB). The WI criteria can be found at <http://www.undergrad.umn.edu/cwb/definition.html>

All non LE/WI FSems that will be offered for 2018-19 must be submitted to the Provost level in ECAS by **March 1, 2018**. FSems submitted by this time (including those submitted earlier for LE/WI) will be included in the *Freshman Seminar Brochure* to be distributed to all first-year students during summer 2018 Orientation. The 2017-18 *Freshman Seminar Brochure* is available for your reference at <http://www.ofyp.umn.edu/more/first-year-programs/freshman-seminars>

Thank you again for your contributions to the success of our first-year students and for providing them with an exceptional first-year experience in these high-impact Freshman Seminar courses.