

Freshman Seminars at UHD: Basic Facts
April 30, 2021
Maintained by UHD GEC

Role in the Curriculum

Freshman Seminars (UHD 13XX) are courses that satisfy a requirement in the UHD state-mandated 42-hour core curriculum; specifically, UHD has chosen to allocate three hours from the “option area” (09 area) to the seminar. As such:

- The general idea is that faculty will identify areas of their interest and academic expertise that they believe will interest/attract students to engage in the academy in thought-provoking and challenging ways. The topics do not have to be aligned with specific major or program requirements.
- **All new seminars and changes to seminars must be reviewed and approved via the curricular process** before they can be offered (with a review by the UHD General Education Committee prior to UCC review). The process includes a review of syllabi and teaching strategies to address specific core learning outcomes starting at the department level.
- **All seminars must address the outcomes of one of the core foundational areas** (numbered 1-8); this requires that they be based in an academic discipline appropriate to that area (e.g., life and physical sciences, social sciences, etc.). **Seminar design and content must be approved** via the curricular process.
- All seminars **must be academically focused** and engage students in ways consistent with other core courses in the foundational area.
- The UCC has required that all freshman seminars **be proposed and taught by full-time faculty**.

In Support of the QEP

Freshman Seminars support the UHD Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP): Academic Achievement through Community Engagement (A+CE), meeting the “awareness” level or higher. QEP link: <https://www.uhd.edu/academics/sacscoc/qep/Pages/default.aspx>

- **All seminars must include one of the QEP outcomes** in their list of course outcomes (in addition to all core-mandated ones):
 - ✓ A+CE Student Learning Outcome (SLO) 1: Students will be able to analyze community issues with respect to different perspectives, theories, or solutions.
 - ✓ A+CE SLO 2: Students will be able to identify or design creative strategies to address an aspect of a community issue.
- All seminar instructors **must design and administer an A+CE Signature Assignment** to address one of the two QEP outcomes.
- These **assignments must be at least 10% of the total course grade** and must be **approved** by the QEP review committee. [NOTE: these signature assignments would also meet requirements for the critical thinking in the general core assessment as well.]
- Student signature assignments must **be submitted every semester** via the process described by the QEP staff.

In Support of Student Success and Retention Initiatives

Freshman Seminars are a focal point of contact for our FTICs in their first semester. As a result, they have a unique role, and instructors take on additional responsibilities by participating in seminar-related strategies:

- All seminars include **a shared outcome on student success and the GEC has recommended that at least four hours of the course be dedicated to this focus:** *Research and define academic and career goals within the discipline and develop learning strategies to support academic success and attainment of academic and career goals.*
- As part of the effort to create a shared emphasis on the success outcome noted in the previous bullet, we have identified some key areas of content and created **a video library with access for seminar instructors.**
- Each seminar section is assigned **a peer mentor.** Peer mentors will attend all class periods and serve as model students in addition to developing relationships/communication with students outside of class, in addition to a range of other support for instructors and students. Seminar faculty should communicate with their peer mentors regarding expectations for the semester. [Jason Holiday, Associate Director of the Gator Success Center is the Peer Mentor Program Supervisor and can address any questions about scope and opportunities for peer mentors.]
- **Many seminars are linked to English 1301** sections to provide a cohort effect. This may or may not have an impact on student interactions. There is no expectation that seminar instructors will connect with ENG courses in terms of content or otherwise.
- Freshmen are a vulnerable population. Seminar Faculty are encouraged to submit **concerns in the UHD “early alert” system** to generate outreach to students by coaches and advisors.
- Seminar Faculty will be asked to attend one or more workshops each year, respond to surveys, engage advising and peer mentors, and share information with their students related to institutional issues.