


# **A Template for First-Year Seminars at IUPUI**

**IUPUI**

This guide, developed by the University College Curriculum Committee, defines and describes the common curricular and pedagogical elements to be incorporated in all sections of UCOL-U 110 and equivalent first-year seminars offered by other academic units.

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## Overview

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### National Context

Faculty on campuses nationwide have become increasingly aware of the need to provide entering students with a wide range of services supporting their transition to the college environment. First-year seminars have been widely proven to be an effective mechanism for facilitating this transition. These seminars introduce students to collegiate-level expectations, establish connections to peers and faculty, and provide resources to support student learning and engagement. National data show that even students who appear to be academically well prepared for college benefit from a course that develops the skills and qualities needed to successfully undertake college-level work. For first-generation, nonresidential, and academically under prepared students, comprehensive interventions aimed at helping students make the necessary adjustments as they begin college are truly critical to their persistence and academic success.

### IUPUI Context

Using the findings of a persuasive body of national research and the experience of institutions that serve students with similar backgrounds, a group of IUPUI faculty has worked collaboratively to develop a model for a first-year seminar that is uniquely responsive to the needs of IUPUI students.

All units that offer undergraduate courses at IUPUI have been encouraged to develop their own versions of the first-year seminar for entering students admitted to their respective unit, school, or department or for students who have indicated an intention to seek admission to these units, schools, or departments. These seminars, while addressing all the critical elements needed for success in college, may also include discipline-specific content. Units may either use their own course numbers to teach first-year seminars or use the UCOL-U 110 designation.

## First-Year Seminar

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Entering students are required to enroll in a first-year seminar to facilitate their successful transition to college. In addition to introducing key information and skills needed to succeed at IUPUI, the first-year seminar provides freshman students an opportunity to connect with faculty, advisors, librarians, and students as they explore the academic culture of the campus and to establish a foundation for lifelong learning. First-year seminars are taught by an instructional team that is anchored by a faculty member and includes an academic advisor, a librarian, and a student mentor.

### General Characteristics

General characteristics of the IUPUI first-year seminars include the following:

#### *Common Learning Outcomes*

Faculty representing the various units on campus have agreed upon a common set of learning outcomes for all IUPUI first-year seminars. These outcomes are consistent with the IUPUI Principles of Undergraduate Learning, which are described in a subsequent section of the template.

### ***Instructional Team***

Each first-year seminar is designed and facilitated by an instructional team, which is led by a faculty member who sets academic goals and serves as the team leader, an academic advisor who provides information on academic policies and procedures and works with students to begin academic planning and major/career decision making, a librarian who introduces library resources and helps build information literacy skills, and a student mentor who serves as a role model and peer guide for the transition to college. Other qualified university staff may be included as appropriate. The instructional team is, by purpose and design, a fully collaborative group in which all members make significant contributions to the content and facilitation of the course. The specific role of each member of the instructional team is described in further detail later in this document.

### ***Academic Emphasis***

Faculty at IUPUI have determined that first-year seminars, whether taught under the UCOL-U 110 course number or under specific designations for units, schools, and departments, will provide fundamental support for the academic enterprise. The range of campus resources, effective use of technology, and time management skills are addressed comprehensively in the first-year seminar, with the focus consistently on practicing and applying those skills to enhance academic learning at the college level.

### ***Critical Thinking***

A central responsibility of all first-year seminars is to introduce students to this foundational dimension of learning and inquiry. Instructional teams introduce students to multiple aspects of critical thinking that they can expect to apply and demonstrate as they progress in their academic work, including developing solutions to challenging problems; analyzing complex issues and making informed decisions; synthesizing information; evaluating the logic, relevance, and validity of data; and using knowledge and understanding to raise new questions.

### ***Communication***

Success in the academic environment requires communication skills in a variety of contexts, including writing for multiple audiences; speaking in small and large group settings; interacting with faculty, advisors, librarians, and other professionals within and beyond the campus community; seeking information in response to particular questions; and collaborating in peer groups. Teaching and learning strategies in the first-year seminar provide opportunities for students to practice these skills. Writing in the seminar includes an introduction to the variety of written assignments and expectations students will encounter at the college level, writing style requirements, and the meaning of plagiarism and the importance of avoiding it. Students may be guided through the use of reflective writing (e.g., journals and one-minute papers) to process their learning experience in the first-year seminar. Campus resources for gaining additional or advanced communication skills are identified. These resources may include the University Writing Center, the Speaker's Lab, and the Bepko Learning Center as well as university courses.

## ***IUPUI Principles of Undergraduate Learning***

The IUPUI Principles of Undergraduate Learning (PULs) are the essential framework of the undergraduate educational experience at IUPUI. A campuswide plan has been developed to evaluate student attainment of the PULs. The rating of student performance on a designated PUL(s) will occur in first-year seminars.

### **Variation**

Variation among individual first-year seminars is expected and encouraged. Content and format are tailored to fit the specific requirements or constraints of the units, schools, or departments that offer them.

### **Content**

Individual seminars develop the pedagogical and curricular components in ways that reflect the particular nature of each instructional team and the specific units, schools, or departments represented as well as the unique needs of the enrolled students. For example, University College designs UCOL-U 110 to serve first-year students who are either undecided about their majors, exploring several options, or are decided about their majors but cannot be scheduled into or do not meet the criteria for admission to a major-specific seminar in the first semester.

### **Format**

The format of a first-year seminar is flexible. Format can include the class meeting schedule and location as well as the credit hour value and how it fits into a particular program. The different types of first-year seminars include:

- First-year seminars (stand-alone): Some first-year seminars are not linked to another course or set of courses.
- Online first-year seminars: To meet the needs of students while responding to scarcity of classroom space, University College offers several sections of UCOL-U 110 in a hybrid online format. These sections follow the same curricular guidelines and learning outcomes as traditional first-year seminars, with each section taught by an instructional team, often using assignment modules created to augment student learning and orientation to college life.
- First-year seminars linked to other courses: Some first-year seminars are linked to another course or set of courses, thereby becoming informal learning communities. This cross-course connection facilitates students' introduction to various disciplines and provides interdisciplinary as well as discipline-specific learning experiences. These linkages are designed to build interpersonal relationships among students with similar academic and professional interests. The linked courses and first-year seminar are carefully coordinated to complement each other's content and learning activities.
- Themed connections: Some first-year seminars are offered as part of a themed learning community (TLC). TLCs are composed of three to five courses, connected by a content theme, in which students co-enroll. Each TLC includes a first-year seminar course. TLC faculty, including the first-year seminar's instructional team, work together to coordinate the set of courses through active and collaborative learning strategies such as co-curricular activities, service learning, and reflective assignments connected and focused on the designated theme.

## ***Credit***

The credit hour value of a seminar is set by the unit, school, or department offering it and ranges from 1 to 3 credits.

## ***Meeting Schedule***

The meeting schedule of first-year seminars is flexible. Some seminars meet only the first 10 or 11 weeks of the semester while others continue into the second semester. Although most seminars meet weekly for one to two hours per week, some meet twice a week or every other week.

## ***Administrative Withdrawal Policy***

Many first-year seminars at IUPUI participate in the administrative withdrawal policy. Under this policy, students missing more than half of the class meetings within the first four weeks of the semester may be administratively withdrawn from the course. Administrative withdrawal may have academic, financial, and financial aid implications. Administrative withdrawal takes place after the full refund period, meaning that students who are administratively withdrawn from a course will not be eligible for a tuition refund. (Additional information available at <http://registrar.iupui.edu/withdrawal-policy.html>.)

## **Curricular Components**

### ***Personal Development Plan***

A requirement for students in first-year seminar courses is completion of a personal development plan (PDP). Making a personal development plan enables a first-year student at IUPUI to understand, implement, and mark progress toward degree and career goals. A personalized development plan is open to revision and re-evaluation every semester at IUPUI in conjunction with an academic advisor.

### ***IUPUI Principles of Undergraduate Learning***

These principles provide a conceptual framework for all students' undergraduate education. They also set outcome expectations that all undergraduate students will be able to demonstrate before graduation. The pedagogy and curriculum of the first-year seminars provide an introduction to the six Principles of Undergraduate Learning:

1. Core communication and quantitative skills
2. Critical thinking
3. Integration and application of knowledge
4. Intellectual depth, breadth, and adaptiveness
5. Understanding society and culture
6. Values and ethics

## ***RISE***

An introduction to RISE is incorporated into first-year seminars and later into degree programs. The RISE to the IUPUI Challenge initiative was designed to engage students more deeply in their learning and to contribute to their intellectual and professional development in unique ways. Each undergraduate student is challenged to complete at least two of the four types of RISE experiences: **R**esearch, **I**nternational, **S**ervice learning, and **E**xperiential learning.

### ***Information Literacy Competencies***

Information literacy is the set of knowledge and skills that enable students to find, retrieve, analyze, and use information effectively. A set of standards have been identified for first-year students:

1. Information Resources
  - a. Students will be able to differentiate between open and restricted Web sites and explain the difference.
  - b. Students will be able to evaluate a Web site based on evaluation criteria.
  - c. Students will be able to differentiate between popular and scholarly information sources and to describe the characteristics of scholarly literature.
  - d. Students will be able to identify which sources are most appropriate for a particular assignment.
2. University Library
  - a. Students will be able to describe and use basic services and resources offered by University Library.
  - b. Students will know how to request help or advice from University Library, either in person or online.
3. Citation Elements
  - a. Students will be familiar with IUPUI's definition of plagiarism and recognize whether a particular piece of information needs to be cited to avoid plagiarizing.
  - b. Students will be able to identify the elements of a basic citation such as author and title for several types of resources (e.g., a book, a journal article, a Web page) in order to avoid plagiarizing.

## **Foundational Goals**

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In support of establishing high expectations and strengthening academic content of first-year seminars, six overarching goals have been defined for these courses:

1. Provide students with an introduction to the purposes and values of higher education
2. Facilitate students' exploration of multicultural perspectives
3. Challenge students toward attainment of academic excellence and persistence
4. Encourage students to explore academic majors and career options
5. Assist students in the development of their personal development plan (PDP)
6. Support students' transition into the university and their academic majors



# Learning Outcomes

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Specific learning and student transition outcomes have been identified for the first-year seminar, incorporating the IUPUI Principles of Undergraduate Learning. Individual sections of the seminars may develop, emphasize, and assess these differently, but all will address each of them. Pursuit of these learning outcomes is expected to enhance the likelihood of academic success for all IUPUI students, regardless of level of academic preparation as they enter University College or their intended majors.

## Goal 1

**Provide students with an introduction to the purposes and processes of higher education**

### *Learning Outcomes*

Students will explain what is involved in critical thinking as a fundamental process of the academic community as well as comparing the multiple ways of knowing that exist among the academic disciplines by:

1. Identifying and practicing appropriate academic behavior, including practices of academic integrity
2. Identifying the multiple levels of critical thinking that they will be expected to demonstrate as they progress in their academic work
3. Applying critical thinking strategies to a seminar project or activity
4. Applying evaluation criteria to determine credibility of information
5. Applying IUPUI's Principles of Undergraduate Learning to educational experiences
6. Discussing how an integrative and interdisciplinary approach to undergraduate learning fosters intellectual engagement

## Goal 2

**Facilitate students' exploration of multicultural perspectives**

### *Learning Outcomes*

Students will increase their abilities to recognize cultural traditions, appreciate the diversity of the human experience, and make sound decisions with respect to individual conduct and citizenship by:

1. Explaining what multiculturalism and globalization means
2. Practicing scholarship as part of a dialogue with cultural, religious, economic, societal, and global interests
3. Distinguishing and applying the use of multiple ways of seeing and knowing about the world
4. Assessing their own development of multicultural perspectives
5. Exploring problems and issues from multiethnic, multiracial, multicultural, and multireligious points of view

### **Goal 3**

#### **Challenge students toward attainment of academic excellence and persistence**

##### ***Learning Outcomes***

1. Students will develop the communication skills necessary for academic success by:
  - a. Demonstrating civility in communications with faculty and advisors
  - b. Communicating effectively and efficiently utilizing technology
  - c. Communicating with faculty, advisors, and peer mentors on issues related to academic progress
  - d. Participating in active learning assignments such as small and large group discussions and projects
2. Students will implement effective learning strategies by:
  - a. Interpreting and completing academic assignments in a thorough and timely fashion
  - b. Identifying and utilizing learning styles
  - c. Utilizing technology in support of learning
  - d. Analyzing and utilizing strategies for successful completion of assignments, note taking, classroom participation, and examination preparation
  - e. Developing effective organizational and time management skills
  - f. Establishing a financial management system supportive of continued academic engagement
3. Students will cultivate a supportive and positive university learning experience by:
  - a. Utilizing campus and University College resources (e.g., technology, University Writing Center, Bepko Learning Center, Speaker's Lab, and Mathematics Assistance Center) in support of academic success
  - b. Connecting with student organizations and co-curricular activities
  - c. Interacting with library professionals to explore information literacy, including but not limited to the identification of library resources, Web credibility, electronic databases and articles, and scholarly publications
  - d. Exploring RISE activities in support of academic engagement

### **Goal 4**

#### **Encourage students to explore academic majors and career options**

##### ***Learning Outcomes***

Students will establish connections between their academic objectives and future professional careers by:

1. Exploring how their interests, talents, and educational abilities align with specific majors and careers of interest
2. Determining requirements for admission to selected major(s) (unit, school, and departmental certification)
3. Determining courses, requirements, and skills required for specific majors

4. Identifying distinctions and relationships among academic disciplines
5. Utilizing university informational resources to increase knowledge of career options related to academic majors of interest
6. Identifying employment opportunities that reflect personal career objectives
7. Articulating meaningful career objectives and goals

## **Goal 5**

### **Assist students in the development of their personal development plan (PDP)**

#### ***Learning Outcomes***

Students will develop a personal development plan (PDP) by:

1. Identifying the aspirations and strengths they already have as well as other skills they need to build to support their success in college
2. Developing and evaluating a major and career vision by utilizing their major and career research (as accomplished above in Goal 4) as the basis of informed and realistic decision making
3. Connecting a larger sense of personal values and life purpose to the motivation and inspiration behind their academic and career goals
4. Identifying long-term and short-term goals
5. Identifying and locating programs, people, and opportunities to support and test goals
6. Identifying and fulfilling requirements for the plan of study
7. Analyzing academic progress over the semester in terms of academic and career success strategies

## **Goal 6**

### **Support students' transition into the university and their academic majors**

#### ***Learning Outcomes***

Students will prioritize and identify strategies to accomplish in the second semester and subsequent years for their general education and their successful transition to their majors by:

1. Determining action steps that will support their academic success for transition into their majors
2. Continuing their relationship with a University College advisor and/or a school-based advisor
3. Communicating with faculty or advisors on matters related to course or academic plans
4. Identifying appropriate ways to balance school, work, and co-curricular activities

## Classroom Environment

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National and local experience with first-year seminars indicates that particular classroom environments promote successful learning outcomes. The use of the term “seminar” is intentional, for although these students are at the very beginning of their academic careers, the classroom climate of the first-year seminar should be modeled upon the collaborative, interactive, and collegial atmosphere of the traditional upper-division seminar.

### Collaborative and Active Learning

First-year seminars maintain classroom climates of cooperation and collaboration in an effort to foster an environment of active learning. Significant portions of class time should be allocated to group discussions and other activities that encourage students to develop peer relationships, collaborate on academic activities, and practice oral communication. Each seminar should require a student project that uses library or other information resources and addresses multiple learning outcomes. The collaboration of the instructional team in planning and implementing the course should be made obvious to students to serve as a model for effective collaborative work.

### Civility and Conduct

First-year seminars provide students the opportunity to understand and practice behaviors that support their learning and that of others within an atmosphere of mutual respect. This should include expectations related to respect for the rights of others, acceptance of one’s responsibilities as a member of a community of learners, and the practice of academic integrity, including the following from the IUPUI *Student Code of Conduct* (2006):

The purposes of Indiana University include the advancement of knowledge, the pursuit of truth, the development of students, and the promotion of the general well-being of society. As a community, we share a dedication to maintaining an environment that supports trust, respect, honesty, civility, free inquiry, creativity, and an open exchange of ideas.

Individual rights are best protected by a collective commitment to mutual respect. A student who accepts admission to Indiana University agrees to:

- Be ethical in his or her participation in the academic community
- Take responsibility for what he or she says and does
- Behave in a manner that is respectful of the dignity of others, treating others with civility and understanding
- Use university resources and facilities in appropriate ways consistent with their purpose and in accordance with applicable policies (p. 2)

## Academic Integrity

There are five fundamental values that this academic community expects: honesty, fairness, respect, responsibility, and trust. It is important for students to be aware of the expectations of IUPUI regarding individual course work, including Oncourse assignments and examinations. Students should be aware of the norms that govern their behavior both on and off campus. Students should be aware of the consequences of making poor choices. They should be informed that instructors have tools available through Oncourse that enable monitoring of their activity within the virtual classroom and that these tools can provide evidence of academic misconduct. Academic and personal misconduct by students is defined and dealt with according to the procedures specified in the *IUPUI Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct* (available at [www.iupui.edu/code](http://www.iupui.edu/code)).

## Classroom Etiquette

The first-year seminar is structured as a time and place for learning. Inappropriate talking, eating, or working on other course work during the class session should be discouraged. Policies addressing cell phones and text messaging should be developed by each instructional team and shared with the students. Inappropriate student behavior not conducive to the proper functioning of the class should be identified and dealt with immediately. Examples of such instances include, but are not limited to, behavior that appears to be dangerous or threatening to oneself or others; bizarre or strange behavior such as acting “out of touch” with reality; angry, hostile, or abusive behavior; and other behavior that is inappropriate, worrisome, or disruptive. In some cases, there may be no violation of campus rules, as such, but the behavior may evoke alarm or concern among involved persons. A Behavioral Consultation Team has been created to coordinate resources of the IUPUI community in order to help students maintain satisfactory academic progress and function successfully within the campus environment. Additional information and a concerned person’s referral form are available at <http://life.iupui.edu/rights/sbct.html>.

## Campus Connections

Each seminar develops activities and assignments designed to establish positive connections between students and elements of the campus community crucial to their academic success. These should include, but are not limited to, the major academic unit, library resources, academic and career counseling, co-curricular activities, IUPUI Honors College, Division of Student Life, Bepko Learning Center, and financial aid. Students should be given the opportunity to learn about specific resources at IUPUI available to support their personal growth and needs. These resources should include honors study, RISE (including research, international experiences, service learning, and experiential learning), recreation, and participation in student life organizations. Opportunities are provided in first-year seminars for self-assessment and reflective thinking about nonacademic obstacles to success at the university (e.g., stress and time management skills and identification of campus resources to assist in these areas). Other student services and organizations can be introduced, depending upon student interest.

## Small Class Size

Section size is limited to a maximum of 25 students to ensure that students have the opportunity to be known individually by instructional team members, to work collaboratively, and to develop learning community peer relationships.

## Attendance and Punctuality

The instructional team should make it clear to students that prompt, consistent attendance in all courses, including the first-year seminar, is expected and absolutely necessary to academic success at IUPUI. Procedures should be put into place in the first-year seminar to ensure that students understand the importance of attendance and punctuality and are held accountable for them.

## Syllabus

Each instructional team will provide students with a detailed syllabus that includes, but is not limited to, an introduction to the course; specific requirements, including due dates and grading policies; name, campus location, phone, and e-mail of instructional team members; access to student journals and confidentiality aspects; policies, including attendance and punctuality, civility and conduct, academic integrity, plagiarism and cheating, and class etiquette; and important dates on the academic calendar.

## Best Practices

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Based on research on good teaching and learning documented in institutions of higher education, Chickering, Gamson, and Poulson (1987) identified seven principles to improve teaching and learning. Their *Seven Principles for Good Practice* encourages the following:

1. Contact between students and faculty
2. Reciprocity and cooperation among students
3. Active learning
4. Prompt feedback
5. Time on task
6. High expectations
7. Respect for diverse talents and ways of learning

These principles utilize a variety of powerful tools in education. Among them are activity, expectations, cooperation, interaction, diversity, and responsibility. Either singularly or in totality, these principles form a foundation on which to strengthen the academic content of first-year seminar courses.

## Instructional Teams

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Each first-year seminar is planned and presented by an instructional team, which is anchored by a faculty member and includes an academic advisor, a librarian, and a student mentor. The team members' roles differ, but complement each other in addressing the transitional issues of first-year students.

### Faculty Role

Faculty shape the learning environment and in many ways serve as the human bond to the academic dimension of the university. Faculty model the scholarly enterprise and can best convey to students the calling, expectations, and commitment of academic learning in general, and their disciplines in particular. The central participation of faculty in the design, presentation, and assessment of each seminar is essential. Faculty are expected to take the lead in organizing, planning, and teaching the first-year seminar, while working collaboratively with the other members of the instructional team to ensure that the course is well planned and well executed. Ideally, the faculty member meets in a 25-student section for all contact hours and serves as mentor. Specific faculty responsibilities include:

1. Schedule, organize, and conduct a meeting of the instructional team prior to the beginning of the semester
  - a. Review the roles and responsibilities for each member of the instructional team
  - b. Identify the instructional team resources that are available
  - c. Determine which members of the instructional team might best be suited to lead particular classroom discussions, workshops, icebreakers, and collaborative learning activities
  - d. Create, design, and revise the syllabus in collaboration with the instructional team
  - e. Coordinate development and assessment of the student personal development plan (PDP) with the academic advisor
2. Facilitate and support the work of the instructional team members
  - a. Solicit feedback on classroom activities
  - b. Encourage communication between members of the instructional team
  - c. Encourage involvement in class and experiential activities
  - d. Provide guidance, encouragement, and assessment of the student mentor
  - e. Solicit input in planning for projects such as field trips
  - f. Respond to correspondence from instructional team members in a timely fashion
  - g. Encourage communication and input on student progress
  - h. Complete a formative and summative evaluation of the student mentor
3. Support student learning
  - a. Develop student engagement opportunities in collaboration with the instructional team
  - b. Provide students with opportunities for face-to-face interactions
  - c. Be accessible to students

- d. Communicate with members of the instructional team on a regular basis
  - e. Encourage communication and early identification of student concerns and needs
4. Organize, coordinate, and lead appropriate classroom discussions and workshops
    - a. Utilize instructional team members for appropriate activities and discussions
    - b. Support student mentors in their leadership role conducting icebreakers
    - c. Secure necessary release forms for off-campus activities when appropriate
    - d. Plan for technology and photocopying needs
  5. Perform assessment, evaluation, and grading
    - a. Complete early warning and administrative withdrawal forms as appropriate
    - b. Solicit input from members of the instructional team on student progress
    - c. Utilize instructional team members, as appropriate, in the assessment of student progress and assignments
    - d. Consolidate assessment and evaluation input from instructional team members
    - e. Coordinate assessment of the PDP
    - f. Determine Oncourse access for student mentors, especially as related to student confidentiality
    - g. Assign grades for assignments
    - h. Assign and submit the final course grades

## Advisor Role

The academic advisor is an integral component of the first-year seminar instructional team structure. This model ensures that students have the opportunity to develop an ongoing relationship with an academic advisor who is familiar with the transition to college.

In the classroom, advisors provide students with the opportunity to learn more about and to value the role of University College academic advisors as well as advisors in their major fields of study. Students are taught to use information about academic planning, registration, schedule adjustments, admission to the major, and academic policies via online resources such as *The Navigator*, the Office of the Registrar Web site, and unit, school, and departmental Web sites. All first-semester students are required to meet with their advisors to develop a program plan and to schedule courses for the following semester as well as define and set goals.

Advisors also help coordinate the personal development plan (PDP) process in the first-year seminar and provide follow-up with students in subsequent semesters. Advisors work with students who receive early warnings through additional communication and meetings. Skills that advisors bring to the instructional team include active listening skills, knowledge of student development theory, ability to help students develop and expand their academic and career goals, familiarity with degree requirements across majors, knowledge of university procedures and resources, and ability to instruct students in basic study skills.



Through pre-semester meetings, class preparation, and ongoing dialogues with the instructional team, the academic advisor can serve as a resource, guide, and teacher for the concerns of the first-year students. Specific expectations for academic advisors include:

1. Assist in the planning and evaluation for the course to ensure that it includes the critical information about the university needed by all students
  - a. Include information on relevant policies, particularly the University College Freshman Dismissal Policy, other dismissal policies, and the University College Freshman Drop Policy (or other unit, school, and departmental policies, as appropriate)
  - b. Meet with the instructional team as part of the ongoing planning for the class prior to the semester, during the semester, and after the conclusion of the semester for evaluation
  - c. Participate in the development of the course syllabus
  - d. Participate in the evaluation of the course
2. Lead, or arrange for someone else to lead, class sessions on topics such as time and stress management, major and career exploration, learning styles, study skills, goal setting, jobs and school, “Plan B” conversations, financial management, majors/careers and the PULs, and a solid academic plan
3. Identify and advise students exhibiting high-risk behaviors and make referrals for students with specific concerns to places such as financial aid, mentoring, writing center, psychological counseling, and other faculty or advisors (including students who receive early warning or administrative withdrawal notices.)
4. Maintain active involvement in the seminar in the following ways:
  - a. Help coordinate the personal development plan (PDP) for the class by leading and facilitating related class presentations to support completion of the PDP
  - b. Meet with each student in the class to review his or her progress and to make plans for the next semester
  - c. Teach students how to fully benefit from interaction with their academic advisors
  - d. Keep students informed of special campus academic opportunities
  - e. Participate in classroom discussions as appropriate
  - f. Assist in classroom instruction as determined appropriate given the skills and interests of the various members of the instructional team

Because of the relationship advisors develop with each student, advisors should not participate in the grading of course assignments, projects, or final grades. It is appropriate, however, for the faculty member to ask the advisor for feedback on certain graded components or to provide input on various final projects and presentations.

## Librarian Role

The librarian is also an essential component of the first-year seminar instructional team structure. Librarians introduce students to important information literacy concepts such as information credibility, source evaluation, and plagiarism. These concepts map well to the “culture of the academy” in terms of the importance of information and honesty in the scholarship process. In addition, librarians introduce relevant academic information resources and library services available to students to help them succeed throughout their undergraduate careers. Each unit, school, and department has an assigned subject librarian who works with the first-year seminar for that discipline. The librarian’s knowledge of the research process and experience with information resources is a significant benefit to first-year students. In the first-year seminar, the librarian will guide, support, and provide leadership in the following ways:

1. Assist in planning course content to ensure inclusion of critical information literacy competencies for first-year students
2. Lead, or arrange for someone else to lead, class sessions on topics such as:
  - a. Navigate the University Library building and services
  - b. Determine appropriate information sources for academic assignments
    - i. Distinguish between popular and scholarly sources
    - ii. Differentiate between the open and restricted Web
    - iii. Evaluate Web sites and provide students with a framework and criteria
  - c. Avoid plagiarism
    - i. Understand IUPUI’s definition of plagiarism
    - ii. Recognize when and why particular pieces of information need (or do not need) to be cited
    - iii. Identify the elements of a basic citation for a variety of information resources
  - d. Obtain relevant information
    - i. Locate relevant library services and collections (in person or online)
    - ii. Learn how to request help or advice from library staff (in person or online)
3. Meet with the instructional team as part of the ongoing planning for the class prior to the semester, during the semester, and after the conclusion of the semester for evaluation
4. Provide support for information-related needs of the instructor
5. Participate in the development of the course syllabus
6. Assist in the development of the course research project, ensuring that sufficient credible information resources are available to allow students to have a positive learning experience
7. Create, assign, and assess student work related to one or more of the information literacy topics covered in the course
8. Participate in the evaluation of the course

Librarians are not expected to attend every session of the course, but rather those sessions directly related to introducing, enhancing, or evaluating students' information literacy skills. The presence of the librarian in class and his or her contribution to course content should be negotiated with faculty well in advance of the start of the semester.

## **Mentor Role**

The role of the student mentor within the first-year seminar instructional team is to serve as an academic role model for new students, sharing personal successes and setbacks in developing study habits, taking advantage of campus resources, managing time, and navigating the campus. Mentors also assist the team by acting as an information channel between new students and the other instructional team members. Through pre-semester meetings, class preparation, and ongoing dialogue with the instructional team, the student mentor serves as an advocate for the interests, needs, and concerns of the first-year students. Specific responsibilities of the student mentor include:

1. Act as a positive role model
  - a. Arrive early and stay after class
  - b. Demonstrate active learning and active listening
  - c. Engage in and encourage respectful behavior
2. Identify campus resources
  - a. Make referrals
  - b. Encourage and initiate involvement in activities
  - c. Be aware of where services for students are located
  - d. Maintain a familiarity with campus layout
  - e. Be able to find answers to student questions
3. Demonstrate skills for academic success
  - a. Share personal experiences regarding successes and setbacks in developing study and time management skills
  - b. Arrive prepared and participate in class discussions
  - c. Offer insights on class content
  - d. Demonstrate appropriate ways of asking questions for clarification
  - e. Share positive experiences
4. Know the students as peer individuals
  - a. E-mail students on a regularly basis with pertinent campus information
  - b. Recognize signs of stress in students as well as disengagement, absenteeism, and confusion
  - c. Stay in regular contact with the students
  - d. Be a confidant for students
  - e. Follow through on questions and concerns of students

Mentors should volunteer to take responsibility for organizing and facilitating certain lessons. Mentors have been trained and have resources for many topics covered in the first-year seminars such as Oncourse, time management, campus involvement, and PULs. Mentors are undergraduate students and therefore not qualified to grade any course work. While expected to have an active role in the instructional team, mentors still need the faculty member's support and attendance while facilitating activities. Since mentors have a vast knowledge of campus resources and services, they may assist in the planning of any projects, field trips, etc., but should not be solely responsible for planning or implementing such activities.

### **Instructional Roles for Hybrid Online First-Year Seminars**

Recognizing that in some situations the model of traditional face-to-face faculty-student contact may not be possible, alternative models that facilitate student engagement with faculty may be developed. Among these models are hybrid online first-year seminars for which most work is done online, but which also require students to attend several in-class sessions. Such alternative models should demonstrate:

1. The instructional team model
2. An increased advisor role, especially as related to evaluation and grading
3. Opportunities for students to interact face-to-face with faculty and other members of the instructional team
4. Mechanisms that make faculty and instructional team members accessible to students
5. Faculty involvement with all curriculum development, assessment, and collaboration with other members of the instructional team

## **Assessment**

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Comprehensive assessment activities are necessary to plan, implement, and continuously improve first-year seminars. Assessment should be regarded as a fundamental and consistently implemented feature of the first-year seminar, thus formative (using assessment for improvement) and summative (demonstrating the worth and value of a program) assessments should be developed and integrated. The assessment and evaluation of first-year seminars must take into account the multiple academic and social interactions at work in the seminar environment. Thus, assessment should measure cognitive, affective, behavioral, and social outcomes. Assessment methods should be employed to assess students' learning outcomes associated with the Principles of Undergraduate Learning (PULs) and goals articulated in this template, levels of achievement and retention, career decision-making self-efficacy levels, and transitions to IUPUI. Instruments such as end-of-course evaluations should also be designed to determine students' levels of satisfaction with their learning experiences.

## **Student Achievement and Classroom Assessment**

### ***Student Achievement***

The quality of student achievement can be assessed in a wide variety of ways: traditional testing, oral presentations, group presentations or projects, model portfolio development, writing assignments, or other assessment procedures appropriate to the nature of the seminar. In particular, formal rubrics designed to facilitate evaluation of student work and to enhance student understanding of the critique of their work should be employed wherever appropriate.

### ***Classroom Assessment Techniques***

Classroom assessment techniques should be employed by instructional teams to determine what students are learning in the classroom and how well they are learning it. These techniques allow for close observation of students in the process of learning. Techniques such as the minute paper, the muddiest point, and the one-sentence summary are valuable tools to assist in determining student learning in the classroom.

### ***Student Learning Outcomes***

Within the context of first-year seminars, the PULs should be introduced, and students should begin to understand them, but the goal and the ability to measure substantial results over time may be limited due to the fact that students move quickly from University College into the units, schools, and departments that include their major fields of study. Thus, the approach toward learning outcomes assessment may be distinctive from other academic units and may involve programmatic collaboration with other units, schools, and departments. The University College Assessment unit, however, will employ a variety of methods to assess indirect learning outcomes as well as direct student learning outcomes in the context of the first-year seminars (beginning and intermediate levels of learning outcomes associated with the PULs). Alumni, employer, or student surveys and focus groups are examples of indirect measures of student learning that may provide important information about what students are attaining from first-year seminars. Indirect indicators or criteria may include types of knowledge, skills, behaviors, and attributes. They may be quantitative measures or qualitative judgments and descriptions. Indirect measures provide evidence that students are probably learning, but the evidence of what they are learning is less clear (Borden & Banta, 1994). It is noteworthy that indirect measures may be employed in process assessments to help enhance understanding of how students perceive particular course or program components.

### ***Direct Measures of Student Learning***

These direct measures require students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. They provide tangible, visible, and self-explanatory evidence of what students have and have not learned as a result of the first-year seminar. Examples of direct student learning measures include objective tests, essays, presentations, and classroom assignments. Collecting data on students' learning during the first year of college and comparing students' learning outcomes at later stages in their college careers is necessary to determine if students' educational experiences are value added. Thus, the first-year seminar instructional teams play a fundamental role in understanding what educational experiences and courses contribute to students' attainment of key institutional learning objectives. Learning goals for beginning levels of the PULs in first-year seminars have been specified. First-year seminar syllabi should contain statements of expected learning outcomes for students that incorporate the PULs. Course-embedded, authentic assessment approaches should be employed to assess direct learning outcomes. Evaluation of PULs of major or moderate emphasis will be conducted at the end of the designated semester. The American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU) VALUE rubrics (available at [www.aacu.org/value/metarubrics.cfm](http://www.aacu.org/value/metarubrics.cfm)) may be appropriately used to assess students' learning outcomes. Instructional teams may also develop local rubrics to assess the assignments, written reflections, etc. based on the PULs.

### ***Student Satisfaction***

Students can indicate their level of satisfaction through informal means such as quick writes, chat rooms, discussion forums on Oncourse, focused surveys developed by the instructional team, or more formal or summative surveys developed by the University College Assessment unit or other outside agencies.

### ***Instructional Team Performance***

Team performance can be measured by such instruments as student evaluations, peer evaluations, and self-reports from the teams. Near the end of the semester, student evaluation forms should be provided for all students to complete. It is the responsibility of the faculty member to facilitate appropriate time for completion of the evaluations in an environment supportive of confidential and anonymous completion by the students.

### ***Program Effectiveness***

The impact of first-year seminar effectiveness should be assessed using a combination of these approaches as well as formal evaluations by various accrediting or overseeing agencies and by institutional analysis of aggregate data reflecting such issues as student achievement (e.g., cumulative grade point averages) and retention rates. Instructional teams and students should recognize the need to assess the content, activity, effectiveness, and outcomes of first-year seminars frequently and honestly.

## Program Evaluation and Assessment

### *Quantitative and Qualitative Methods*

Mixed method designs that employ qualitative and quantitative approaches should be used to comprehensively assess the impacts of dynamic and complex first-year seminars. Quantitative assessments can produce critical information about the worth and value of programs (summative or accountability assessment), while qualitative assessments can be valuable for making data-driven improvements (formative assessment). Based on qualitative assessments, faculty can learn what pedagogical strategies and course activities have the most impact on students' learning and academic achievement levels.

### *Assessing Student Participation and Seminar Impacts on Academic Success Performance and Retention*

Quantitative approaches can be employed to investigate what populations are served and if individuals are being served in expected numbers. In an effort to ascertain if first-year programs are positively impacting all student participants, quantitative analyses (multivariate analyses of variance and logistical regression) can be employed to determine if the programs are having differential impacts on diverse groups of students (e.g., underprepared or at-risk conditional admits, first-generation students, and underrepresented students).

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## Additional Resources

Additional information for instructional teams, including rubrics, policies and procedures, sample syllabi, campus referrals and contacts, and other first-year seminar resources are available at <https://resources.uc.iupui.edu>.

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## References

- Borden, V. M. H., & Banta, T. W. (1994). *Using performance indicators to guide strategic decision making*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
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- Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis. (2006). *Student code of conduct*. Indianapolis, IN: author.

For further information concerning IUPUI First-Year Seminars, please contact

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