General Instructional Guidelines for Faculty

While an FYW incorporates the professional subject area expertise of the instructor, the objective of the FYWs is to encourage students to develop, and cultivate an excitement for, the habit of logically defensible and rigorous thinking in writing. Thus, the writing process is the primary focus, with subject matter content providing a shared body of knowledge which students will explore and critique in various writing genres and formats, and through an introduction to college level research.

MISSION: to create a stimulating intellectual environment, first-year writing seminars

- foster a dynamic process in which ideas and knowledge are communicated and discussed in a reflective, critical, and engaging manner;
- enhance the intellectual skills necessary for analyzing and solving complex issues and problems in writing;
- inspire a passion for learning and intellectual pursuits.

PRACTICES: the main goal of writing seminars is to teach students how to write more effectively through the following pedagogical practices:

- limiting enrollment to up to twelve students to facilitate more personal attention.
- teaching critical thinking and logical argument through expository and argumentative writing, working from the premise that writing is a form of thinking, and that ideas are inextricable from their written expression.
- encouraging offerings on any topic by faculty members in any department. In keeping with the emphasis on written expression, students will be required to produce a total of twenty pages of graded formal writing appropriate to the topic of each seminar.
- educating students about plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty in accordance with university-wide policy.
- addressing analytical strategies, organizational methods, and grammatical correctness, within the context of the genres and formats of the writing of the course.
- incorporating a composition textbook and reference handbook as teaching texts.
- employing the resources of the Center for Teaching and Learning, the Writing and Media Lab, and the Director of Writing Programs.

INFORMATION FLUENCY: a critical part of the writing process, in addition to expressing one’s own ideas clearly and effectively, is locating, evaluating, and incorporating information from scholarly sources, as well as giving proper credit to these sources. With this in mind, each writing seminar includes an information fluency component which culminates in a research project. The research project need not be long or complicated but should be enough for students to get a sense of how the academic literature is structured and to understand the basic types of sources and their uses. Overall, the information fluency component provides students with the foundational skills essential for research in other courses.

To effectuate the information fluency component, a member of the library faculty is paired with each writing seminar. Library faculty understand the objectives of the seminar and assist the
instructor as he or she outlines potential research projects. The seminar library faculty serves as a resource for students throughout the semester, and conducts information fluency sessions during class time for students.

**Pedagogical Support**

FACULTY WRITING FELLOWS: this program is open to all instructors in any course who want to improve their writing pedagogy and join a growing community of teachers and scholars interested in the teaching of writing. The FWF meet for a week in the summer in an intensive seminar to develop courses, assignments, and discuss current writing pedagogy, and follow that up with monthly topic discussions during the school year. Fellows are compensated throughout the year based on active participation. Fellows currently in the cadre also act as mentors to other faculty for individual assistance.

TWO-DAY WORKSHOPS: faculty who cannot for whatever reason participate in the FWF may attend periodic two-day “quick and dirty” syllabus and assignment workshops to get them started.

INDIVIDUAL CONSULTATIONS: Margaret Oakes, the Director of Writing Programs, Jean Schwab, the Coordinator of the Writing and Media Lab, and the WML student consultants, Betsy Craig, the ESL and Writing Specialist, and current members of the FWF community are all available for individual consultation on course proposals, textbook selection, syllabus design, individual assignment development, and in-class activities.

CLASS RESOURCES: syllabi, assignments, and class activities from current FWYs are available in another Box folder.

**First Year Seminar Oversight Committee**

As outlined in the Faculty Constitution, the First Year Seminar Oversight Committee is primarily responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the first year seminar program. The committee’s role is to encourage, foster, and oversee all first year seminars. Specific responsibilities include:

COURSE RECOMMENDATION: the committee examines FYW course proposals and make recommendations for approval to the Curriculum Committee and the Academic Policies Committee. Proposals that are not approved by the committee are returned to the faculty member proposing the seminar with recommendations for resubmission. Proposals approved by these committees are presented to the faculty for final approval.

COURSE DEVELOPMENT: the Committee makes recommendations and provide advice to faculty interested in offering first year seminars. Such advice and recommendations might include developing a course proposal, arranging contacts with other faculty who have taught first year seminars for clustering or other cooperative ventures, and suggestions for consultation with the Director of Writing Programs, Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) or the library faculty about pedagogical or information fluency concerns.
SCHEDULING: the committee and the Director of Writing Programs works with the Associate Dean and University Registrar and department chairs to ensure that a sufficient number of faculty are available to staff the seminars on an ongoing basis. The goal is to involve faculty from all academic departments and maintain advance planning for up to four years for any given academic year.

PROGRAM EVALUATION: the committee and the Director of Writing Programs works with the Assistant Vice President of Assessment & Institutional Effectiveness construct and administer appropriate instruments of evaluation for effectively monitoring the overall strength of the program.

FUNDING FOR PROGRAM SUPPORT: with funds provided annually by Academic Affairs, the committee will construct a budget through which to fund, with stipends and other resources, the support activities outlined above. It also makes funds available for the development of individual, team-taught or clustered seminars that participating faculty may apply for via procedures established by the committee.

All FYW faculty have access to funding every semester for social events with their FYW classes. Additional funding is available by application for larger events (trips off campus, etc.).

Assignment Practices

New students, both incoming first year and transfer students (when applicable), will be assigned to a seminar during their first year at Furman based on preferences established through the summer orientation process. Enrollment in the FYW is limited to twelve students. Exceptions are permissible however, with instructor consent, on an individual student basis. Participation in first year seminars will typically be limited to new students.

Students may switch seminar assignments through the Add-Drop period early in the semester before the published deadline.

Students who do not successfully complete the first-year writing seminar during their initial semester at Furman will be assigned to an appropriate seminar the following semester in consultation with their academic advisor.

Clustering

Because seminars will model the inter-dependent nature of the scholarly community, instructors may create interplay or “clusters” among seminars that are thematically complementary. These clusters could involve short periods of curricular collaboration or team-teaching with other seminar faculty. They will also foster multidisciplinary approaches, innovative teaching, and integrative thinking. For instance, a historian teaching a seminar on World War II might address the topic of the Holocaust by coordinating with a faculty member in Religion whose seminar focuses on moral implications; a psychologist teaching seminar on the cultural impact of contemporary psychopharmacology could work with a philosopher studying the mind-body
problem or a Theatre professor focusing on the relation between the concepts of “tragedy” and “character.”

**Scheduling Dynamics**

FYWs will not ordinarily be taught by adjunct faculty and no first year seminar may be taught as an overload or in any term during which the faculty member is teaching an overload.

The responsibility for the scheduling of seminars in a given academic year and the assignment of students to particular seminars will be shared by the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean, the Senior Associate Academic Dean and the Associate Dean and University Registrar, department chairs, and the First Year Seminar Oversight Committee.