

Student Directed Seminars Program

Faculty Sponsor FAQ

How did this program develop?

The Student Directed Seminars (SDS) program is modeled after a similar program at the University of California at Berkeley and is an expansion of the directed studies option offered by most departments. UBC's SDS program has grown significantly since its inception in 1999.

What are the benefits of sponsoring a seminar?

Sponsoring a Student Directed Seminar is a great opportunity to:

- Work collaboratively with a motivated student to create a student-directed peer learning environment for undergraduates;
- Cultivate a student's academic development by offering mentorship and guidance;
- Explore an integrated or interdisciplinary topic.

What is my role as a faculty sponsor?

As Faculty Sponsor, you will guide the student coordinator(s) in the various academic processes required for seminars, including: developing the course syllabus, generating reading lists, and presenting grading options. To further assist in ensuring a high level of academic rigor, you may agree to mark, or read and comment on, the academic material produced by students in the class. While you are not expected to attend class meetings, you will need to be available to the student coordinator(s) for guidance, solve any problems that may arise, and meet with participants in the seminar, if needed. You are also required to sign-off on and submit final marks.

How much time is involved with being a faculty sponsor?

The time commitment depends on the seminar, and will vary accordingly. In many cases, you will be most involved in supporting the implementation of the key administrative and logistical details of the course. These tend to require attention at the beginning and end of the semester.

Because 2022W will be a pilot year for this program, we are hoping to find faculty sponsors that are flexible and willing collaborate with the FASS Dean's Office and the Advisory Committee on any challenges or unexpected scenarios that may arise.

Do faculty sponsors earn teaching credit?

Faculty member's contribution to the SDS program will be recognized by their department Heads according to each department's workload guidelines. Please check with your Department Head to determine how they recognize this contribution.

If I am a visiting or sessional instructor, am I eligible to sponsor a seminar?

All student directed seminars are to be supervised by tenured or tenure-stream faculty members. This requirement may be reconsidered in future years once the program has been implemented and reviewed.

Are Student Directed Seminars academically rigorous?

Yes. Student Directed Seminars are based on the same academic principles that guide other classes at UBC and have been approved by the UBC Senate's curriculum committee. A committee of faculty members, staff and students reviews all seminar proposals for approval. Student Coordinators are given training from CTL and are prepared for facilitating a seminar. The students' passion for the subject and potential future plans for graduate level study make these seminars considerably more challenging than traditional courses.

If there is no 'instructor', how are students evaluated?

Most SDS courses are evaluated on the standard alpha-numeric scale. On occasion, courses will be graded on a pass/fail basis. The grading system for each course is determined by the coordinator and the participants, with support and approval from the faculty sponsor, and applies to both participants and the student coordinator.

Final responsibility for assigning grades to all students, including the coordinator, rests with the faculty sponsor, however, rigorous peer grading for a good portion of the assignments and class activities is expected. Faculty sponsors may agree to mark final papers or assignments.

How many students can register for a seminar?

The minimum enrollment of each seminar is eight; the maximum is fifteen.

Is there a limit on how many times a seminar can be offered at UBC?

Seminars may only run once. Students who would like to revive a previously-offered seminar will need to clearly demonstrate how the second offering is different in approach, scope, and content. Additionally, seminars should not replicate a course that is currently offered at UBC.

When do classes run?

Until the program has had a chance to be reviewed, all student directed seminars will run during the January-April term. September to December is used to complete student coordinator training, order textbooks, prepare syllabi, create reading lists and grading rubrics, recruit students into the seminars, and secure course numbers and rooms.