



FSEM Committee

Request for the Ability to Approve Course Proposals

2024-2025 FSEM Committee

- 2025 Bridgette Dennett, Chair (Assistant Professor, CAS)
- 2025 Marcus Leppanen, Secretary (Assistant Professor, CAS)
- 2026 Gary Richards (Professor, CAS)
- 2027 Virginia Macintosh (Associate Professor, CAS)
- 2027 Ginny Morriss (Assistant Professor, CAS)

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS

- April Wynn, Director of the FSEM Program

The First-Year Seminar Committee is asking for the ability to approve course proposals directly, without needing them to subsequently go through the UFC approval. Currently, the committee's ability to approve FSEM curriculum is inflexible, with the approval process necessitating extra steps which have been impacted by recent adjustments to the UFC materials deadline. This proposal advocates for granting the First-Year Seminar Committee the authority to approve course proposals directly, with the hopes of streamlining the process, matching what already occurs in similar committees, and grant more flexibility in working with faculty colleagues.

1. Changes to the UFC Materials Deadline

In 2023, the deadline to submit materials to the UFC for inclusion in upcoming meetings shifted to two weeks before the scheduled meeting date. For most business in the committee, this is incredibly workable. The issue that we run into is when we need to work to get approvals through CIM in order to schedule courses for upcoming semesters. As it is, our committee has a very tight turnaround in order to get submissions approved in the fall semester, which make it difficult to allow flexibility when working with faculty who have proposed courses. If we were to have the ability to approve FSEM courses, this would remove an extra step in needing UFC approval both through the meetings and via CIM. Making this adjustment would allow us as much as an extra month in the proposal development process. The cumbersomeness of this process is a large complaint by faculty and negatively impacts the proposal approval process.

2. Comparison to the Process for other Course Designations

Other designations (WI or SI or AMW, for example) are currently able to approve courses and are able to have entire departments approved to teach that course as designated. In the existing process, they don't require faculty to individually submit proposals – they can fold under the already approved course and designation. With the FSEM “add instructor” approval path, our committee currently asks for higher scrutiny but it seems like there is no need for these approvals to need UFC approval in addition to the FSEM Committee.

As for the new course proposals – these are all just different sections of FSEM 100 which any tenure, tenure track, or lecturer should have the qualifications upon hiring to teach, so we are asking if we need UFC approval for these? Is there a case that we need a blanket approval upon hiring that goes through the UFC and then allow the section specific approval come from the FSEM Committee? Could we allow teaching of the FSEM to be activated for faculty when in their second year and they are granted advisor status?

3. Support in the Faculty Handbook

From §2.4.2: In most matters, these committees report to the UFC (see §2.4.3.4), and their actions become final upon approval by the UFC. When a committee's charge so specifies, its decisions in carefully defined areas are binding unless overruled by specific action of the President, the UFC, or a decision in a meeting of the general faculty (see §2.1).

We wondered if this is a case where "when a committee's charge so specifies, its decisions in carefully defined areas are binding."

If we receive course approval from the UFC, then we are able to work with the Faculty Handbook Working Group to make sure that all relevant language in Section Two reflects current practice. If the UFC votes in favor, we will draft language to reflect their recommendation and have it included in the current updates.

Thank you,
2024-2025 First Year Seminar Committee