



STUDENT DIRECTED SEMINARS

APPLICATION GUIDE

2019-2020

This guide contains program information and instructions about the application process for prospective Student Directed Seminars Coordinators.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

SDS Philosophy

The SDS Program gives students the opportunity to extend and deepen their education by turning a traditional university classroom into a rich, peer-based learning environment. Student Coordinators and their peers undertake a democratic exploration of a topic of their choice through a range of learning activities, assignments, and discussion. Similar to a senior capstone class or directed studies, in both depth and academic rigour, students together take the lead in building, facilitating, and grading their work, with Student Coordinators creating the framework for the course and ensuring that the group upholds the ethos and practice of a truly peer-led learning environment.

Role of the coordinator

The Student Coordinator is not an instructor, teacher or content expert. The Coordinator's role is that of a facilitator. They are responsible for organizing the learning resources (e.g., guest lectures, reading materials, and films) to be used in the class, and sets the parameters of course content, structure, and evaluation procedures, in conjunction with the Faculty Sponsor. Coordinators should not position themselves as leading or lecturing in every class throughout the term. Coordinators must also complete the same coursework and assignments as all participants.

Students in their third year of study or above can apply to coordinate a Student Directed Seminar. Coordinators are selected by the Advisory Committee based on the quality of their proposal and the suitability of the student to be a Coordinator, including their academic record.

Evaluation and credit

Most SDS courses are evaluated on the standard alpha-numeric scale used in other UBC courses. Occasionally, courses can be set up to be graded on a pass/fail basis but this is not common. The grading scheme and allocation of grades 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 Coordinator. Coordinators should not be grading the work of their peers unless the responsibility is being shared with all participants and grading is fully peer-based.

Final responsibility for assigning grades to all students, including the Coordinator, rests with the Faculty Sponsor but most seminars will undertake rigorous peer grading for a good portion of the assignments and class activities. In some cases, Faculty Sponsors may agree to mark final papers, projects or assignments.

Coordinators and participants earn upper-level credit, either through a department or through an interdisciplinary Arts credit option (ASTU). Decisions on whether a seminar can be used to fulfill specific program or degree requirements (i.e. major/minor credits), for coordinators or other participants, are made by the students' program department.

Seminar guidelines

Seminars can only run once. Students who would like to offer a course similar in content to a previously-offered seminar will need to clearly demonstrate how their offering is different in approach, scope, and content. Additionally, seminars should not replicate a course that is currently offered at UBC. Potential coordinators should research to ensure that the course doesn't overlap with a current UBC course.

While Student Directed Seminars can run during both semesters of the Winter Session, most are offered during the January-April term. September to December is used to complete coordinator training, prepare a syllabus, create grading rubrics, recruit students into the seminars, and obtain a course number. If a course is given approval to run in September, then the preparatory work needs to be done from May-August and coordinators will be required to attend training in August.

Registration

Seminars will be listed on the SSC once they are open for registration. Coordinators can choose to have open registration, in which students register themselves directly, or they can pre-select the students by asking them to submit a statement of interest. In the latter case, once students are selected they would then be registered into the course by either the SDS Program or the Department. The minimum enrolment for each seminar is eight; the maximum is fifteen. Student coordinators have to pay for their seminar as they would for any other UBC course.

APPLICATION COMPONENTS:

Course Proposal

The Course Proposal will outline the content of the course and describe to the selection committee how the course will be delivered, including details such as course flow, grading, and assignments. Details of the course proposal are outlined on page 4 and 5 of this document.

Faculty Recommendations

The faculty recommendation serves to provide support for the coordinator's ability to organize and facilitate a seminar. It is important for coordinators to choose a faculty member who has a good understanding of the candidate's suitability to take on a leadership role within a peer-based academic setting. A potential Recommender should be provided with information about the SDS Program and the Faculty FAQs to help them understand the program and speak to the candidate's suitability as a Coordinator.

Faculty Sponsors

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, they may agree to mark, or read and comment on, the academic material produced by students in the class. Sponsors are not expected to attend class meetings but do need to be available for guidance, solve any problems that may arise, and meet with participants in the seminar, if needed. Sponsors are also required to sign-off on and submit final marks to the appropriate administrative contact. Sponsors will need adequate time (months, not weeks) to review your proposal so be sure to approach sponsors early. Coordinators are required to provide the Faculty FAQs to any sponsor approached, to ensure that they have all the information about the role and their responsibilities.

PROPOSAL GUIDE

In building your seminar proposal, make sure to consider and address the following topics. Your proposal should be no more than 5 pages in length (single spaced, 12 pt. font, Times New Roman), including any supporting documents, syllabi, course plans, or sample reading lists. We have not included a template for this portion of the application as we want you to take this opportunity to present your ideas in the most effective way possible for your proposal. Please do be creative while ensuring you cover the information we are requesting.

1. Course Content and Rationale

- What is the academic focus of the course?
- What is the academic context of this course within the discipline?
- What are the broad research theories that have influenced this topic?
- Why would you like to see this course offered at UBC? What gap do you see this course filling?
- How does the course reflect the overall philosophy of the SDS program?

2. Course Structure and Plans

- When will the course meet? Once a week for 3 hours or twice a week for 90 minutes?
- What role will you play in the course? How do you envision participants taking a leadership role in the class? Will everyone have a chance to lead or facilitate a class? What will you do as a facilitator to help create a democratic learning environment?
- What will the first two weeks of class look like? Provide a course plan that demonstrates the flow of the course, the connection between various topics, and any supporting readings or theories that are essential to building the course. You should consider including:
 - Proposed topics of study
 - The structure of the class – what will various weeks look like (eg. lectures, films, field trips, community service project, discussions, case studies, debates etc.)
 - The identification of possible guest lecturers
 - The proposed flexibility which will allow participants to co-create the experience with you. Identify what elements students will allow for class input – assignments, grading, rubrics, readings?
- Provide a sample of representative readings. How do these support the academic purpose of the course and the flow of the course plan?

Remember that the course is an exploration with other students and a democratic process. Be prepared to seek input from your seminar participants during the first week of classes and expect changes to this section during your initial class meetings. It is vital to get the course marking scheme and criteria for assessment finalized in the first week of classes.

3. Grading and Evaluation

- What are the assignments?
- What form will the assignments take? (E.g. collaborative research projects, class presentations, essays). Keep in mind that these are 4th year classes - assignments must be at the 4th year level.
- How do you propose the assignments will be evaluated? (E.g. by faculty sponsor, peer evaluated, through an expert in the field) and what is the breakdown of marks?
- On what else do you propose the students are evaluated? (E.g. participation, facilitation of a class etc.)
Please note that attendance is not a permissible portion of the grade. If you choose to include grades for participation, the allocation must fall between 0-10% of the overall grade.
- How will you ensure your seminar is sufficiently academically rigorous?

4. Student Recruitment and Selection

- What types of students, and from which disciplines, might be interested in the course?
- What kind of demand do you anticipate for this course? Why?
- How will you select and recruit students into your course?
- Will interested registrants need to have prerequisite courses or submit an expression of interest? Why are these prerequisites needed? If you choose to select students, what criteria will you use?
- Are you hoping to position your course within a specific department? If so, which department and why? Or do you hope to access an ASTU course code from the SDS Program?

5. Coordinator Suitability (for Co-Coordinators, please ensure you address all questions for both students)

- How has your previous experience, within or outside of the classroom, prepared you for coordinating and facilitating a Student Directed Seminar?
- What do you hope to learn from the process of facilitating a Student Directed Seminar?
- What challenges do you expect to encounter as a seminar Coordinator and how might you plan to overcome those challenges?
- Have you taken an SDS before? If yes, which one? What learning will you bring forward from that experience to your seminar?
- If you are proposing a course with a Co-Coordinator, how will you navigate sharing coordination and facilitation with a peer?
 - o What do you anticipate will be the challenges to joint facilitation and how you expect to overcome those challenges?

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Students interested in applying to coordinate a seminar are encouraged to begin preparing your application materials early, to ensure you have enough time to research, revise and develop your application. We recommend beginning the process in January/February to have enough time to meet the April deadline.

It will also take time, once you have developed your idea, to secure a potential Faculty Sponsor. You should have your idea well developed before approaching a sponsor and it is essential that you leave plenty of time for a potential sponsor to read and critique your proposal.

APPLICATION COMPONENTS

A. COORDINATORS SUBMIT THE FOLLOWING THROUGH OUR ONLINE FORM:

If you are coordinating a course with a Co-Coordinator you will only submit one application and need to attach grades for both Coordinators along with one copy of your proposal.

1. Seminar Proposal – maximum 5 pages, 12pt Times New Roman font.
2. Grades Summary – downloaded from the SSC. If you are proposing a seminar with a Co-Coordinator, you will each need separate Grades Summaries. To access your grades summary:
 1. Login to SSC
 2. Click the Grades & Records option from the upper horizontal menu bar
 3. Choose “Your Grades Summary” from the drop down menu
 4. Click “Print” in the upper right corner
 5. Save the document as PDF.

If you have grades from other colleges or universities, please provide an unofficial transcript for those grades as well.

B. FACULTY MEMBERS SUBMIT THE FOLLOWING BY EMAIL TO: student.seminars@ubc.ca

These documents come directly from your Faculty Recommender and Sponsor to our program office.

3. Faculty Sponsor Form – 2-page fillable PDF. Coordinators are also expected to provide a copy of the Faculty FAQs to potential Sponsors.
4. Faculty Recommendation Form – 3-page fillable PDF. If you are proposing a seminar with a Co-Coordinator, you will each need separate recommendations. This is preferably from your Faculty Sponsor but can be completed by another faculty member if they are better able to comment on your suitability to be a Coordinator.

All application materials can be downloaded individually from the SDS website: students.ubc.ca/success/student-directed-seminars/your-seminar.

Application deadline: Sunday, April 7th, 2019 by 11:59pm.