

First-Year Seminar Taxonomy

This taxonomy is intended to provide a framework for First-Year Seminar instructors to maximize the positive impact that First-Year Seminar Courses of Exceptional Quality have on their students. Instructors can self-evaluate how they are impacting students within each of the six elements below and then make incremental changes to improve that impact.

1. Significant time and effort by students over an extended time

High Impact	Higher Impact	Highest Impact
Students submit formative assignments on a regular basis and receive timely feedback from their instructor	Students also have the opportunity to submit revised versions of assignments based upon feedback from the instructor	Student also develop a meaningful, semester-long project with timely and periodic feedback from the instructor and their peers

2. Substantive interaction with the instructor, mentor, and peers

High Impact	Higher Impact	Highest Impact
Students have the opportunity to share their ideas in class through discussion and activities	Students also meet individually with their instructor and mentor in office hours or conferences	Students also meet outside of class with their instructor, mentor, and/or peers to attend community or campus events

3. Real-world applications for relevance of learning

High Impact	Higher Impact	Highest Impact
Student activities and assignments are framed in a way that demonstrates how the work of the course will impact their future academic, professional, and/or personal lives	Students also engage in assignments and activities that specifically address real-world issues that are meaningful to the students' academic, professional, and/or personal lives	Students also engage in real-world, problem-solving activities that require them to apply their learning in a way that has a discernible impact on the campus or local community

4. Public demonstration of competence

High Impact	Higher Impact	Highest Impact
Students present the work of a low-stakes assignment in class to their instructor, mentor, and peers	Students present the work of a final project in class to their instructor, mentor, and peers	Students present the work of a final project at the First-Year Seminar Symposium or a large public venue

5. Periodic, structured opportunities for reflection

High Impact	Higher Impact	Highest Impact
Students have the opportunity to discuss in class how assignments and activities impact their learning in the course	Students also submit formal reflective journal entries throughout the semester that consider their intellectual growth in the course	Students also demonstrate how their self-reflection has impacted their work in specific, meaningful, and measurable ways

6. Culturally-relevant knowledge that promotes equity-mindedness

High Impact	Higher Impact	Highest Impact
Students engage in discussions and activities that validate the cultural backgrounds, knowledge, and identities of diverse students	Students also engage in discussions and activities that allow them to learn and exchange knowledge about their cultural background and communities	Students also have opportunities to engage in interactions that focus on solving meaningful real-world problems that have a discernible influence on the campus, local communities, or their lives

UWM's First-Year Seminar Taxonomy has been informed by the [IUPUI Taxonomies for High-Impact Practices](#), [AAC&U's High-Impact Practices: Eight Key Elements and Examples](#), and [the National Institute for Transformation & Equity's Culturally Engaging Campus Environments \(CECE\) Model](#).