

First Year Seminar AY 23/24 and 24/25 Pause Frequently Asked Questions

Overview

In 2015 UW instituted the current University Studies Program (USP 2015). The USP 2015 requirements total 30 credit hours. As part of USP 2015, a First Year Seminar (FYS) is required for all true first-year college students who have earned fewer than 30 credit hours post-high school graduation. Typically, approximately 82 sections of FYS are required per academic year. Ongoing faculty staffing challenges have necessitated a partial pause of the FYS program for AY 23/24 and 24/25. University programs may use an USP elective to meet Higher Learning Commission general study requirements.

On **October 3, 2022** Provost Carman included the following news item in his weekly column "Straight From the Provost" - "As a reminder, although FYS will not be required in Academic Year 2023-24 (and 2024-2025), departments and programs that have sufficient instructional capacity may continue to offer their FYS classes and students may choose to take those courses for their general education requirements, or, departments may also have the option of choosing an alternative course with similar student learning outcomes to meet the requirement."

On **Nov 21, 2022** Provost Carman provided follow up guidance in his weekly column "Straight From the Provost:" I'd like to offer some guidance on the FYS pause and hopefully clarify some confusion.

To answer some of the questions my office is receiving, it helps to clarify a logistical component that will have the most impact on how departments decide to handle the USP requirement. To accommodate the FYS requirement in our Banner system, the Office of the Registrar will make the USP FYS requirement an **elective**, which will allow for any of the three-credit hour USP courses to count as the FYS requirement. Per our HLC accreditation requirements, each program must maintain 30 credit hours of USP coursework, and each program must have a minimum of 120 credit hours of coursework. This provides departments the flexibility to assist students in selecting a USP course that fulfills the requirement and positions them for success in the program.

While we have been flexible on how programs wish to proceed in the pause to either provide the FYS course or options for the USP requirement, departments have asked if they can require students to take a specific course to meet their program requirements. While I support faculty and departments in selecting options for students that best meet curriculum expectations, the simple answer is that due to our system restraints, any USP course a student chooses to take during this pause will count toward their FYS requirement. Our common goal during this time is student success, and I know that each department has this in mind while creating a plan for students. If department heads have any questions about their FYS pause plan, please email me at provost@uwyo.edu and our team will assist. In the meantime, the FYS/FYE subcommittee will be having its first meeting soon, and plan to review and address questions relating to the pause. I will have more information and will announce the members and charge of that committee next week."

On **January 14, 2023** the Office of the Registrar reported:

FYS Pause and the 2023-2024 Acalog Catalog. The FYS pause changed the overall requirements of the USP studies section of each degree program in the Acalog Catalog. For that reason, the Office of the Registrar standardized the language for all the degree plans and has made the switch to the new USP requirements. Departments do not need to do anything regarding the FYS pause and the 2023-2024 Acalog Catalog except to check over any applicable degree plan(s) and make sure everything looks correct. Per Higher Learning Commission (HLC) accreditation requirements, the USP must total 30 semester credit hours as a minimum. Every bachelor's degree will have USP requirements that look like this:

University Studies Program

This degree requires that [The University Studies Program 2015](#) requirements are met before graduation. Some of the courses required for this major fulfill USP requirements, but not all. Students should check their degree evaluations and consult with their assigned academic advisor to discuss their specific course plan.

- [C1 - Communication 1](#) Credits: 3
- [C2 - Communication 2](#) Credits: 3
- [C3 - Communication 3](#) Credits: 3
- [Q- - Quantitative Reasoning](#) Credits: 3
- [PN- - Physical and Natural World \(1\)](#) Credits: 3
- [PN- - Physical and Natural World \(2\)](#) Credits: 3
- [H- - Human Culture \(1\)](#) Credits: 3
- [H- - Human Culture \(2\)](#) Credits: 3
- [V- - U.S. & WY Constitution](#) Credits: 3
- [FYS or USP Elective- - Any 3-credit hour FYS or 3-credit hour USP elective](#) Credits: 3

Note: This is just during the FYS pause. We do not recommend doing a discontinue course proposal in Curriculog to remove the FYS courses at this time.

Student FAQs

- **Q:** What will current freshmen (matriculating in the AY 22-23) who do not take an FYS need to take?
 - **A:** On October 10, 2022 the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Programs sent out the following:

Dear Colleagues (Department Heads, Associate Deans, Advising Managers),
With Advising for Spring 2023 starting, Academic Affairs wanted to provide guidance regarding the First Year Seminar for current matriculated freshmen.

- Provost Carman has reiterated the First Year Seminar outcomes remain an important component of the overall University Studies Program. Our regional accreditor, the Higher Learning Commission, requires a general studies program of 30 semester credit hours. Therefore:
 - Freshmen matriculating in AY22-23 will be required to complete the USP requirements of their matriculation year.
 - Petitions to withdraw from the FYS will **not** be approved.
 - Students failing the FYS in Fall 2022 or those who have yet to take the course will register for the FYS for Spring 2023 or Fall 2023. FYS courses are scheduled for students in Fall 2023.
 - Students may petition to replace the FYS requirement with another USP course for documented extenuating circumstances. Students should use the University Studies Petition process at:
https://www.uwyo.edu/registrar/undergraduate_students/Forms_and_Petitions.html
 - With careful consideration and consultation with their academic advisor, students may request to move to a newer catalog year at:
https://www.uwyo.edu/registrar/undergraduate_students/Forms_and_Petitions.html
 - A change of catalog year will not be granted to simply avoid the FYS requirement.
- **Q:** Which students does this pause affect? How does it affect them? If students decide to opt out of the FYS in F23, would a resumption of the requirement mean that they have to take the FYS in the future, or would a substitute course be sufficient to take care of the requirement?
 - **A:** The FYS Pause is for freshmen matriculating in AY 23-24 and AY 24-25. If the FYS requirement is reinstated for future academic years a student matriculating in AY 23-24 or AY 24-25 would not be required to complete the FYS. A student completes the degree requirements in place for their year of matriculation.

Faculty FAQs

- **Q:** During the FYS Pause, a three-credit hour USP elective will replace the FYS credit hour requirement. What guidelines are available to programs for determining an appropriate USP elective?
 - **A:** Guidelines:
 - To accommodate the FYS requirement in our Banner system, the Office of the Registrar will make the USP FYS requirement an **elective**, which will allow for any of the three-credit (or more) hour USP 2015 courses to count as the FYS requirement. This provides departments the flexibility to assist students in selecting a USP course that fulfills the requirement and positions them for success in the program.
 - While we have been flexible on how programs wish to proceed in the pause to either provide the FYS course or options for the USP requirement, departments have asked if they can require students to take a specific course to meet their program requirements. While the Provost supports faculty and departments in selecting options for students that best meet curriculum expectations, the simple answer is that due to our system restraints, any USP 2015 course a student chooses inside or outside the department to take during this pause will count toward their FYS requirement. Our common goal during this time is student success, and we know that each department has this in mind while creating a plan for students.
 - While departments can not require a specific course to fulfill the FYS requirement, they can provide recommendations to what courses might be best for their students based on their particular area of study. This would happen within the advising component instead of the catalog component.
 - To maintain HLC accreditation each program must maintain 30 credit hours of USP coursework.
 - To maintain HLC accreditation each program must have a minimum of 120 credit hours of coursework.
 - Programs with external professional accreditation must follow program change procedures for the accreditation body.
- **Q:** Can programs still provide an FYS during the pause?
 - **A:** The pause is optional. Programs may elect to provide and staff an FYS; however, the program can not require students to take the FYS. Furthermore, the FYS must be available to all students.
- **Q:** In the olden days (pre-2015), we allowed a course to "double-count" for 2 or even 3 USP designations at the same time (like Writing 2+Human Culture, say). But you're not talking about double-counting here, right? A student must take a course beyond the other requirements in order to meet the elective—is that right?
 - **A:** We are still required by HLC to have 30 credits in the USP. Double-counting a course would result in us having fewer than 30 credits and therefore would not be allowable.
- **Q:** Can ANY existing USP 2015 designated course be used as the USP elective? If I understand things right, I think a student who takes two COM2s or COM3s would be able to count the second of these as their "elective." Right?
 - **A:** Correct.

- **Q:** Can a course transferred from another institution with a USP 2015 attribute be used for the USP elective:
 - **A:** Yes.

- **Q:** Is there room during this pause to tag a course (without a current USP designation) as a "USP-E," say? This could allow space for thoughtful, targeted pilots. If, say, SoC wanted to scramble to offer a USP-E focused on Digital Literacy, maybe that would help provide some useful insights for gen-ed revision. Another example: I know that PHIL has a critical thinking course they'd like to move toward USP designation. If there is a perception (apparently) that FYS doesn't consistently/adequately teach critical thinking outcomes, then tagging PHIL's critical thinking course as "USP-E" might allow the university to learn something about how students respond to their approach to critical thinking.
 - **A:** We would need input from the USP Committee on this, we would not want to allow any course to count toward the USP unless it has been approved by the USP Committee. We recommend the department apply for one of the USP categories using established procedures.

- **Q:** The Provost explicitly states three credit USPs. Does the rule actually mean to say that, or would a four credit hour USP (statistics or extra sciences) work?
 - **A:** Any USP 2015-designated course of three or more credit hours may be used to satisfy the USP elective.

- **Q:** We are wondering if we must substitute a USP approved course (FY, H, etc.) for the course we currently list as FYS or if we can just say "elective 1-3 credits" since we currently have 122 in our Program of Study.
 - **A:** The total number of credits that come from USP must reach a minimum of 30 hours. Thus, electives can actually be any number of credits, but the student must reach a minimum of 30 hours of USP to graduate. Also, overall our degree programs must have at least 120 semester hours of credit. Both of these are Higher Learning Commission requirements.

- **Q:** My program has a number of additional USP courses (e.g. math and science courses) not counted in the USP 30 credit hour total. Can we use one of these courses as a USP elective and thereby reduce the overall credit hour total for the degree program.
 - **A:** Yes, students can use additional USP 2015 courses as their USP elective. For our Higher Learning Commission (HLC) accreditation we are required to have a minimum of 30 credit hours in our General Studies (USP) Program. Also, overall our degree programs must have at least 120 semester hours of credit. Programs with external professional accreditation must follow program change procedures for the accreditation body.

- **Q:** Will the FYS be removed and replaced in the AY 23-24 catalog?
 - **A:** As described earlier the Registrar's Office has standardized the wording for all programs in the upcoming catalog.

- **Q:** Will replacement courses have to meet the six FYS student learning outcomes?
 - **A:** The purpose of the FYS is to develop critical and creative thinking skills with freshmen students. The student learning outcomes for the FYS are:
 - Critical and Creative Thinking (FYS) (3 Credits) Students will critically examine and evaluate evidence, claims, beliefs, or points of view about meaningful, relevant issues. Students will be introduced to active learning, ethical reasoning, and individual and collaborative processing of ideas through the First-Year Seminar curriculum. These skills will be reinforced throughout the baccalaureate experience. In First-Year Seminar courses, students will:
 - Access diverse information through focused research, active discussion, and collaboration with peers.
 - Separate facts from inferences and relevant from irrelevant information and explain the limitations of information.
 - Evaluate the credibility, accuracy, and reliability of conclusions drawn from information.
 - Recognize and synthesize multiple perspectives to develop innovative viewpoints.
 - Analyze one's own and others' assumptions and evaluate the relevance of contexts when presenting a position.
 - Communicate ideas in writing using appropriate documentation.

Ideally, the student learning outcomes should be incorporated into the USP elective and other program coursework. The FYS/FYE committee is developing guidelines to assist programs with this task on what the first year experience will look like moving forward.

- **Q:** How will academic support units (e.g. UW Libraries) know what courses to target for supports we currently offer specifically to FYS courses, such as information literacy instruction/learning objects? Will there be an official list of the first-year course substituted in for FYS for each program that's dropping the requirement?
 - **A:** The FYS/FYE committee has compiled a spreadsheet indicating how different colleges are using the USP elective.
- **Q:** We have a number of dual students at our area high schools that can/will take our FYS courses, but the counselors would want to know whether these classes will transfer to UW as a FYS. Here's a message I received from an Academic Support Aide at Cody High School: "Last spring, when I attended the CDE Annual Meeting [NWC's Concurrent and Dual Enrollment meeting that we require our concurrent instructors to attend], I had mentioned that the University of Wyoming told me that the 1st Year General Studies Seminar taken with NWC would not fulfill their credit for that class. They told me students would have to take it again if as a Freshman the student attended UW."
 - **A:** FYS courses taken prior to high school graduation do not fulfill the UW 2015 USP requirement.
- **Q:** My colleague and I have been strategizing about the effect of the FYS pause on the library instruction program, and we have a question for you. The memo says, "During the AY 23/24 FYS pause, each academic program will have a three-credit hour USP elective in place of the FYS." How will we be able to find out what course each program will use for this, or if they will offer a program-specific FYS? Will there be a list on the USP website? The reason we ask is that the Research & Instruction librarians have developed a range of information-literacy (IL) supports for the FYS,

including a suite of tutorials that can integrate into WyoCourses, as well as research workshops tailored to the disciplinary inquiry assignments in the FYS classes. If there is no common course number for the courses, it will be challenging to let instructors know what supports we have available.

- **A:** To accommodate the FYS requirement in our Banner system, the Office of the Registrar will make the USP FYS requirement an **elective**, which will allow for any of the three-credit hour USP courses to count as the FYS requirement.
- **A:** The FYS/FYE committee is developing guidelines to assist programs with this task.
- **Q:** The FYS is one of four courses in USP 2015 with information literacy-specific learning objectives (COM 1-3 are the others). Without an FYS, many students will have no direct instruction in information literacy during their first year, as many come to us having already satisfied the COM 1 through dual/concurrent enrollment, AP credit, or IB. The library faculty believes strongly in providing an IL scaffold for students and will of course continue to offer library instruction, but having a streamlined way to market our services to the right first-year courses would help us meet our student learning mission.
 - **A:** The FYS/FYE committee is developing guidelines to assist programs with this task.
- **Q:** From Provost Carman: In my regular meeting with Ben Moritz, I mentioned that we would be suspending FYS for the 2023-24 academic year. He raised the interesting point that CC students come to UW under the catalog of the year that they started at their CC. Thus, students who started at a CC in fall of 22 or earlier would come to UW under a catalog that required FYS. Obviously, we can waive the requirement, but it would seem prudent to be sure that academic advisors are anticipating this and that we keep this in mind as we recruit transfer students.
 - **A:** Information on the FYS pause will be shared throughout the UW community and with the academic advisors. In consultation with their academic advisor, students have the option to change to a newer catalog year.