

AP Seminar Provides Students with Essential Workforce Skills

According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, employers across all industries report that students are leaving high school “unprepared to succeed in the workforce because they lack the foundational ‘soft skills.’” As the Chamber’s report explains, “the importance of these skills is widely acknowledged, yet they are not taught with consistency or given prioritization.”ⁱ The essential workforce skills students are lacking include problem solving, communication, and teamwork.

AP Seminar is a foundational course that prioritizes these workforce skills that employers require. AP Seminar is a project-based course – which includes research, presentations, and a performance-based essay exam – that teaches students how to solve problems, work in teams, manage complex projects, and communicate findings. The course framework provides flexibility for students to align projects to their own interests, giving students an opportunity to explore future careers while potentially earning college credit.

Overview

AP Seminar is an exploratory course, where students investigate real-world issues from a variety of perspectives. In practice, students cultivate their own perspectives in written essays and develop and deliver visual presentations – individually and as a team.

Unlike traditional AP courses, the AP Seminar assessment has three parts – two performance tasks completed over the course of the year – and the end-of-course exam, comprised of only essay questions.

Students learn how to become critical consumers of information, think in a structured way, present information, and manage projects while exploring topics and careers that interest them.

AP Seminar students learn how to:

- Read and analyze articles, studies, and other texts
- View an issue from multiple perspectives
- Gather and combine information from sources
- Craft arguments based on evidence

Soft Skills Defined by Georgetown’s Center on Education and the Workforce

- **Problem solving and complex thinking:** Workers will spend more time on higher-order tasks requiring interpretation, creativity, and flexibility.
- **Communication:** Workers must communicate with clients and colleagues to complete collaborative tasks, fulfill clients’ needs, and adapt to changing demands.
- **Leadership:** Organizations need individuals who can coordinate, negotiate, and manage personnel to use resources well to get the job done.
- **Teamwork:** Workers must collaborate to complete shared tasks and to meet mutual goals.

AP Seminar: Giving Students the Workforce Skills They Need to Succeed

AP Seminar helps students learn essential workforce skills that will prepare them for postsecondary education, training, and the workforce. A variety of sources – including the Georgetown University Center on Education (CEW) and the Workforce,ⁱⁱ Burning Glass,ⁱⁱⁱ and the World Economic Forum^{iv} – find the most in demand skills include **problem solving and complex thinking, communication, leadership, and teamwork.**

The following table outlines how AP Seminar teaches students these skills that employers need.

CAREER READINESS SKILL	AP SEMINAR
<p>Problem solving and complex thinking</p>	<p>Students solve problems and think critically through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Contextualizing and identifying complexities in issues – Formulating and posing questions and seeking out various perspectives – Evaluating credibility of sources – Gathering information and analyzing lines of reasoning in arguments using inductive and deductive reasoning – Synthesizing data and information from various perspectives and sources – Evaluating potential solutions to problems
<p>Communication</p>	<p>Students cultivate written and verbal communication skills by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Designing and delivering oral and visual presentations individually and as a team – Proposing one or more solutions to real-world issues and defending their arguments – Asking questions through verbal sharing and writing – Summarizing text arguments and acknowledging counterarguments – Describing trends and relationships
<p>Leadership</p>	<p>Students practice leadership by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Posing questions and seeking out answers that reflect diverse perspectives – Attributing knowledge and ideas accurately and ethically

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Fostering constructive team environments – Understanding the value of diverse talents and skills within their teams
Teamwork	<p>Students develop teamwork skills by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sharing perspectives and drawing on their team’s diverse perspectives, skills, and backgrounds to address complex problems – Providing individual contributions to overall team efforts – Fostering constructive teamwork like resolving conflicts, engaging in teambuilding activities and practicing consensus building and negotiation

Find more information at <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-seminar/course>

ⁱ “Bridging the Soft Skills Gap: How the Business and Education Sectors Are Partnering to Prepare Students for the 21st Century Workforce,” > <https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/sites/default/files/Closing%20the%20Soft%20Skills%20Gap.pdf>

ⁱⁱ “Workplace Basics: The Competencies Employers Want,” > <https://1gyhog479ufd3yna29x7ubjn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/cew-workplace-basics-fr.pdf> and “The Power of Transportable Skills,” > <https://www.burning-glass.com/wp-content/uploads/ThePowerOfTransportableSkills.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ The New Foundational Skills of the Digital Economy > https://www.burning-glass.com/wp-content/uploads/New_Foundational_Skills.pdf

^{iv} “The Future Jobs Report 2020,” > http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Jobs_2020.pdf