Core Curriculum Assessment Updates

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What We're Doing This Spring

Pause on Critical Thinking and Communication Skills assessment (will start fresh with a 3-year cycle in Fall 2025)

Still need to report on last year's assessment if you haven't already done so; the GEC will provide feedback

If you are behind on assessment, you still need to catch up (ask Mauricio)

Focus on improvement of core assessment plans for all required core SLOs

Recommitting Ourselves to Core Teaching & Learning

Need to ensure everyone is actually *teaching* the required core SLOs, not just treating and assessing them as an afterthought

Focus on how teaching those SLOs can help students learn the course content better

Raising standards for assessment plans

Engaging faculty in meaningful use of what you're learning through assessment and student feedback

Purpose of the Core Curriculum

- Core curriculum courses:
  - Suitable for all majors
  - Provide broad-based, foundational knowledge for future learning
- Courses not appropriate for the core:
  - Major/Profession-specific courses
  - Courses with a narrow scope
  - "Skills" courses (painting, orchestra, etc.)
  - Advanced, upper division courses

Through the Texas Core Curriculum, students will gain a foundation of knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world, develop principles of personal and social responsibility for living in a diverse world, and advance intellectual and practical skills that are essential for all learning.

—Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

THECB Core Areas & Required Objectives

Foundational Component Area	SCHs	Required Core Objectives
Communication	6	Critical Thinking, Communication Skills, Teamwork, & Personal Responsibility
Courses in this category focus on developing ideas and expressing them clearly, considering the effect of the message, fostering understanding, and building the skills needed to communicate persuasively. Courses involve the command or oral, aural, written, and visual literacy skills that enable people to exchange messages appropriate to the subject, occasion, and audience.		
Mathematics	3	Critical Thinking, Communication Skills, Empirical & Quantitative Skills
Courses in this category focus on quantitative literacy in logic, patterns, and relationships. Courses involve the understanding of key mathematical concepts and the application of appropriate quantitative tools to everyday experience.		

THECB Core Areas & Required Objectives cont. 1

Foundational Component Area	SCHs	Required Core Objectives
Life & Physical Sciences	6	Critical Thinking, Communication Skills, Empirical & Quantitative Skills, and Teamwork
Courses in this category focus on describing, explaining, and predicting natural phenomena using the scientific method. Courses involve the understanding of interactions among natural phenomena and the implications of scientific principles on the physical world and on human experiences.		
Language, Philosophy, and Culture	3	Critical Thinking, Communication Skills, Social Responsibility, and Personal Responsibility
Courses in this category focus on how ideas, values, beliefs, and other aspects of culture express and affect human experience. Courses involve the exploration of ideas that foster aesthetic and intellectual creation in order to understand the human condition across cultures.		

THECB Core Areas & Required Objectives cont. 2

Foundational Component Area	SCHs	Required Core Objectives
Creative Arts	3	Critical Thinking, Communication Skills, Teamwork, & Social Responsibility
Courses in this category focus on the appreciation and analysis of creative artifacts and works of the human imagination. Courses involve the synthesis and interpretation of artistic expression and enable critical, creative, and innovative communication about works of art.		
American History	6	Critical Thinking, Communication Skills, Social Responsibility, and Personal Responsibility
Courses in this category focus on the consideration f past events and ideas relative to the United States, with the option of including Texas History for a portion of this component area. Courses involve the interaction among individuals, communities, states, the nation, and the world, considering how these interactions have contributed to the development of the United States and its global role.		

THECB Core Areas & Required Objectives cont. 3

Foundational Component Area	SCHs	Required Core Objectives
Government/Political Science	6	Critical Thinking, Communication Skills, Social Responsibility, & Personal Responsibility
Courses in this category focus on consideration of the Constitution of the United States and the constitutions of the states, with special emphasis on that of Texas. Courses involve the analysis of governmental institutions, political behavior, civic engagement, and their political and philosophical foundations.		
Social & Behavioral Sciences	3	Critical Thinking, Communication Skills, Empirical & Quantitative Skills, and Social Responsibility
Courses in this category focus on the application of empirical and scientific methods that contribute to the undertaking of what makes us human. Courses involve the exploration of behavior and interactions among individuals, groups, institutions, and events, examining their impact on the individual, society, and culture.		
Component Area Option: Integrative & Experiential Learning	6	See below
Courses in this area must meet the core area definition and required SLOs tied to one of the other foundational component areas. At UTRGV, we have designated an additional criteria—that courses be integrative and/or have an experiential learning component.		

UTRGV's Core Student Learning Outcomes

THECB Objective	UTRGV's Corresponding Student Learning Outcome
Critical Thinking	Students will demonstrate comprehension of a variety of written texts and other information sources by analyzing and evaluating the logic, validity, and relevance of the information in them to solve challenging problems, to arrive at well-reasoned conclusions, and to develop and explore new questions.
Communication Skills	Students will demonstrate the ability to adapt their communications to a particular context, audience, and purpose using language, genre conventions, and sources appropriate to a specific discipline and/or communication task.
Empirical & Quantitative Skills	Students will be able to make and communicate informed conclusions and predictions based on the interpretation, manipulation, and analysis of empirical and/or quantitative data.
Teamwork	Students will collaborate effectively with others to solve problems and complete projects while demonstrating respect for a diversity of perspectives.
Social Responsibility	Students will recognize and describe cultural diversity, the role of civic engagement in society, and the link between ethics and behavior.
Personal Responsibility	Students will demonstrate an awareness of the range of human values and beliefs that they draw upon to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making.

Best Practices: Identifying Artifacts of Student Learning of Core SLOs

- What are the key learning moments in your curriculum where you're teaching the skills associated with the core SLOs?

- What are the artifacts students produce––a piece of writing, a project deliverable, an exam response, etc.––which showcase evidence of their achievement of the core learning outcomes?
    - Ask yourself whether the artifact you plan to assess actually gives you direct evidence of achievement of the full range of what's required for a given SLO?

- Is there an opportunity to use a single project as an artifact of all or multiple required core SLOs?

Best Practices: Common Assignments

- Faculty should be using a common assignment across all sections of a course to assess specific core SLOs.
  - If there is no common assignment, you will need to show that there are at least common criteria for assignments from which you draw student artifacts.
  - Data drawn from student work that varies widely from one instructor to another does not provide usable information about student achievement across sections.
  - For assessment of a given SLO, there must be confidence that students are being asked to do reasonably the same amount and kind of work (at the same level of difficulty) across sections.

Best Practices: Common Rubrics & Multiple Measures

- You are required to use the institutional rubrics for the purposes of institutional assessment of core SLOs (*it is <u>not</u> required to use them for <u>teaching</u> purposes*).
  - You may contextualize the language in the individual boxes of the rubric to reference your specific assignment, but you cannot make substantive changes to them or add/change the major criteria listed on the left-hand side.
- It is best practice, when possible, to use multiple measures to assess a given SLO.

Best Practices: Assessment Process

- A team of faculty who teach the course should conduct the assessment.

- Each student artifact should be assessed by 2 faculty. 3rd readers are consulted if there is a significant split in scores.

- Core assessment is a separate process from teaching the course.
  - Faculty should not be assessing their own students' work as part of the core assessment process.
  - When individual faculty assess their own students, it introduces a level of unreliability and inconsistency with no system of checks and balances.

Best Practices: Required Calibration

- All faculty who are assessing student work should participate in a calibration session.
- Why? Not everyone will interpret and apply the rubric in a similar way
  - Calibration ensures there's relative agreement among the scoring faculty about the quality of student work and how that aligns to each score point
  - It leads to productive conversations about what you value in student work and how you need to design assignments and assessments to reflect those values.
  - This reflective practice helps us align our interpretations of the rubric and our evaluations of evidence before the actual assessment takes place.

Best Practices: How to Calibrate

- Before you meet, pick out 3-5 samples of student work that you think are representative of high end, low end, and "tipping point" scores.

- Convene your assessment team and review the rubric, coming to agreement on what key terms mean, particularly with respect to the assignment students were responding to. Make small tweaks to language in the rubric boxes, if necessary, to better reflect this meaning.

- Score the samples individually and discuss what scores each person gave, focusing especially on noticeable disagreements. Work towards consensus.

Data Collection

- Sampling: If you have a lot of sections of a course with high enrollment, you only need to assess an appropriate sample. More info to come when we re-start core assessment in Fall 2025.
    - If you only teach one or a few sections of a course, you will likely need to assess work collected from every student.
- Several platform transitions will be happening in the coming months, and training will be provided in advancement of the next core assessment cycle in 2025-2026.
    - Ex: from Blackboard to Brightspace, from TK20 to PSS, addition of Watermark for juried assessment management
- Beginning Fall 2025, we will no longer accept the submission of rosters.

Best Practices: Using the Data to Answer Your Questions

- You can ask for your data to be disaggregated in a variety of ways, guided by the questions that your faculty have about performance of your student

- Examples:
    - By campus, faculty type, student classification, # core hours completed, course repeater status (1st time taking the course or multiple attempts), underserved student population characteristics (1st gen, pell eligible, etc.)

Faculty Responsibilities

Teach the Required Core SLOs

- Ensure that core SLOs are being taught explicitly as a meaningful part of the course, not as an afterthought

Development of Common Assignments

- Work together to design common assignments (or at least common assignment criteria) for use across all course sections

Development & Revision of Core Assessment Plans

- Work with the core coordinator to design a comprehensive assessment plan to assess all required core SLOs and revise, as necessary, over time.

Analysis of Assessment Results

- Engage in sensemaking of assessment results on a yearly basis
- Work together to determine questions that will drive additional inquiry into student performance

Improvement of Core Teaching & Learning

- Work together to determine what changes need to be made to better address the teaching and learning of core SLOs for your courses.
- With the chair, ensure action is taken based on these improvement plans and that you save evidence of changes made.

Core Coordinator Responsibilities

Assessment Process Coordination

- Coordinate calibration of faculty for assessment of student artifacts.

Assessment Plans & Reports

- Coordinate writing of the comprehensive assessment plan and yearly SLO assessment reports.
- *These should not be the sole responsibility of a core coordinator/chair.*

Documentation

- Maintain records of discussions of assessment results which can be uploaded as evidence of faculty involvement.
- In particular, document actions taken to address results or changes in assessment process (before and after examples of project redesign, etc.)

Point of Contact

- Communicate regularly with Student Success on behalf of department/school/program faculty teaching in the core

Department & College Leadership Responsibilities

Value of Teaching Core Courses

- Communicate regularly with core coordinators and department/school faculty about the value and importance of teaching, learning, and assessment of core courses
- Ensure your best faculty are teaching in the core.
- Regularly review student success data of core courses and work with Student Success to bring faculty together with us to design supports and interventions where necessary.

Assessment Plans & Reports

- Review and provide feedback on assessment plans and reports (accountability and responsibility)
- Ensure you're aware of where each program is in the assessment cycle

Faculty Needs

- Communicate faculty needs for professional development relative to the core curriculum, including development of assessment, course redesign, etc. to deans and Student Success.

Institutional Support & Oversight for the Core

Office of Student Success

- Monitor submission of assessment plans & reports (Mauricio)
- Communicate regularly with core coordinators & leadership regarding core assessment expectations

  (Jonikka & Mauricio)

General Education Committee

- Review & provide feedback on assessment reports
- Analyze core assessment data for trends & recommend actions to improve

More details on logistical support for core assessment to come.