Revising the State Core Curriculum: A focus on 21st century competencies

Executive Summary

The Undergraduate Education Advisory Committee (UEAC) was established in November 2006. In January 2009 it completed work on its first report, *Designing Texas Undergraduate Education in the 21st Century.* One of the recommendations the committee made was to review the Texas Core Curriculum and determine whether revision was necessary. The current Core Curriculum was implemented in 1999. During the decade of its existence, several factors have combined to make a revision worthwhile, including increased attention to general education (core curriculum) by the regional accrediting organization, and new legislation limiting the number of semester credit hours appropriate for a baccalaureate degree in Texas. The UEAC was charged with conducting the review.

In the pages that follow, the rationale for, the process used in, and the recommendations stemming from that review are presented. The committee began with the basic question. "Does the existing Core Curriculum adequately serve the needs of students?" Given the rapid evolution of necessary knowledge and skills and the need to take into account global, national, state, and local cultures, does the Core Curriculum ensure that students will develop the essential knowledge and skills they need to be successful in college, in a career, in their communities, and in life? Given recent changes in legislation, does the Core Curriculum in its current structure still serve the needs of students? In other words, does the existing Core Curriculum facilitate student success and excellence, or act as an unintended barrier to achieving those goals?

After much discussion, the UEAC is confident that, while the existing Core Curriculum has much to recommend it, it does not adequately address the kinds of knowledge and skills students need to be successful in the 21st Century. It also does not necessarily serve students in terms of ensuring a seamless transition from Core Curriculum completion to degree completion. In the interest of providing workable solutions to improving the Core Curriculum in Texas, the UEAC has divided its work into two phases. Phase I deals with those recommendations that can be accomplished within the existing legislative framework. Those recommendations include:

- Purpose of the Core Curriculum – Recommend a new purpose statement;
- Six Core Curriculum Objectives – Recommend that the current Basic Intellectual Competencies, Perspectives, and Exemplary Educational Objectives be replaced with six Core Objectives: Communication Skills, Critical Thinking Skills, Empirical and Quantitative Skills, Teamwork, Social Responsibility, and Personal Responsibility;
- Foundational Component Areas – Recommend eight content-related component areas and an institutional option that define subject matter content for the Core Curriculum;
- Core Objective Mapping – Recommend required and optional Core Objectives to be addressed in each Foundational Component Area;

- Allocation of Semester Credit Hours (SCH) by Component Area – Recommend a distribution of SCH across the Foundational Component Areas of the Core Curriculum to ensure breadth of knowledge;
- Assessment of each institution's Core Curriculum, and the reporting mechanisms required in legislation; and
- Development and approval timeline and guidelines for revised institutional Core Curricula.

Once the Coordinating Board has acted to officially revise the Texas Core Curriculum, a definitive timeline for the re-development of core curricula by individual institutions and the phased-in implementation of the revised Texas Core Curriculum should provide appropriate time for the redevelopment to proceed as a faculty-owned process, and for the transition from one curriculum to another to be implemented in a student-centered process.

Phase II will further review the Core to determine whether changes in the governing legislation may be necessary.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Establish the Statement of Purpose of the Core Curriculum.

Purpose: Through the 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.

Recommendation 2: Establish six Core Curriculum Objectives.

- ***Critical Thinking Skills*** to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.
- ***Communication Skills*** to include effective written, oral, and visual communication.
- ***Empirical and Quantitative Skills*** to include applications of scientific and mathematical concepts.
- ***Teamwork*** to include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal.
- ***Social Responsibility*** to include intercultural competency, civic knowledge, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.
- ***Personal Responsibility*** to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.

Recommendation 3: Revise Foundational Component Areas.

1. Communication
2. Mathematics
3. Life and Physical Sciences
4. Language, Philosophy, & Culture
5. Creative Arts
6. American History
7. Government/Political Science
8. Social and Behavioral Sciences
9. Institutional Option

Recommendation 4: Map Core Curriculum Objectives to Foundational Component Areas.

Any course developed and approved for use in an institution's core curriculum must address at least three of the Core Objectives, mapped to specific Foundational Component Areas (see Table 1, page 14). Institutions must include the required objectives designated for a particular Foundational Component Area, and may include any additional objectives (designated as optional on the chart) for that component area.

Recommendation 5: Establish allocation of semester credit hours for each Foundational Component Area to total 42 semester credit hours.

1. Communication with six semester credit hours
2. Mathematics with three semester credit hours
3. Life and Physical Sciences with six semester credit hours
4. Language, Philosophy, & Culture with three semester credit hours
5. Creative Arts with three semester credit hours
6. American History with six semester credit hours
7. Government/Political Science with six semester credit hours
8. Social and Behavioral Sciences with three semester credit hours
9. Institutional Option with six semester credit hours

Recommendation 6: Establish an assessment reporting process to the THECB for institutions that is aligned with SACSCOC practices.

Recommendation 7: Establish a timeline and guidelines for development and approval of revised institutional Core Curricula.

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INTRODUCTION

In January 2009, the Undergraduate Education Advisory Committee (UEAC) submitted to the Coordinating Board a report with recommendations entitled *Designing Texas Undergraduate Education in the 21st Century*. The report stated clearly that higher education must transform itself to meet the needs of a changing, global society, as well as the social and economic needs of Texas and the United States.

Further, the report identified four major areas for improvement: 1) improving students' access and success; 2) improving quality through enhancing the learning process; 3) assuring excellence through evaluation and assessment; and 4) strengthening funding for undergraduate education. It is within the second area -- improving the quality of undergraduate education through enhancing the learning process -- that the UEAC recommends reconsideration of the Texas Core Curriculum to ensure that it reflects current and future demands on student knowledge and skills.

As soon as the report was accepted by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the UEAC began its next phase of work, planning how to implement the recommendations from the report. One of the first recommendations to be implemented was the call to reconsider the statewide Texas Core Curriculum.

RATIONALE

The Texas Core Curriculum was last revised over 10 years ago with the aim of creating a common statewide framework for general education and specifying certain content requirements to facilitate the transfer of credit. However, the basic intellectual competencies of reading, writing, speaking, listening, critical thinking, and computer literacy specified in the 1999 Core Curriculum have become insufficient to the task of educating students for the 21st Century. The competencies of reading, writing, listening, and speaking continue to be necessary to a well educated, well rounded person, but are incomplete in preparing students for work, fulfilling civic responsibilities, and leading meaningful lives. In addition, with the massive transformation in technology, "computer literacy" in the year 2010 and beyond is not the same as what was needed in the late 1990's.

Considering the new and ever shifting global economy and a population in Texas that is also changing, the current core curriculum is simply outdated and unwieldy. Assessing the core curriculum in any meaningful way at the institutional level and across the state is also cumbersome. Therefore, the time is right for Texas to reconsider its core curriculum, which makes up about a third of the requirement for a baccalaureate degree.

DESIGNING THE TEXAS CORE CURRICULUM IN THE 21ST CENTURY

UEAC urges a paradigm shift in the focus of the Core Curriculum. Too often the Core Curriculum is regarded as a set of individual courses to be taken in between and around the discipline-area coursework. The focus of the Core Curriculum as a coherent knowledge unit is easily lost amidst discussions of transfer credit and semester credit hours. UEAC wants to ensure a focus on the Core Curriculum as a whole while at the same time recognizing the procedural ramifications of its decisions.

UEAC members fully understood that six Core Objectives should drive the creation of the Core Curriculum, not just the content: Communication Skills, Critical Thinking Skills, Empirical and Quantitative Skills, Teamwork, Social Responsibility, and Personal Responsibility. Moreover, because both Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and Texas statute outline the parameters for general education in which the current and proposed Core Curriculum fit, the current Core Curriculum has become mired with complexity as the purpose has shifted to assessment of student learning. The pedagogical decisions, assessment role and procedural aspects of the Core Curriculum as a whole must defer to the Curriculum's main purpose – for students to 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.

Existing Parameters

Two specific sets of requirements constitute the parameters of the new Core Curriculum, and shape its boundaries. First, regional accreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) dictates certain requirements. Under the SACSCOC Core Requirement 2.7.3, associate degrees must include a general education requirement of at least 15 SCH, while baccalaureate degrees must require a minimum of 30 SCH of general education. These credits are also to be drawn from and include at least one course from each of the following areas: humanities/fine arts, social/behavioral sciences, and natural science/mathematics. Core Requirement 2.7.3 also states that coursework used to fulfill general education requirements must not "… narrowly focus on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession." Comprehensive Standard 3.5.1 requires each institution to identify "… college-level general education competencies and the extent to which graduates have attained them."

The Texas Legislature has mandated other requirements. In Section 61.821 of the Education Code, the core curriculum is defined as "the curriculum in liberal arts, humanities, and sciences and political, social and cultural history that all undergraduate students of an institution of higher education are required to complete before receiving an academic undergraduate degree." Section 61.822 specifies a minimum of 42 semester credit hours, "… including a statement of the content, component areas, and objectives of the core curriculum." Moreover, Sections 51.301 and 51.302 require colleges and universities to ensure that each student has

completed at least six semester credit hours (SCH) of Government and Political Science (including "consideration of the Constitution of the United States and the constitutions of the states, with special emphasis on that of Texas"), and another six SCH of American or Texas History, before awarding a baccalaureate or lesser degree or academic certificate.

The Current Core Curriculum: Range, Assumptions, Defining Characteristics, Perspectives, Components, and Exemplary Educational Objectives

One problem with the current Core Curriculum is its complexity. Although it looks simple on paper, six Basic Intellectual Competencies, eight Perspectives, and thirty-seven component-area-related Exemplary Educational Objectives associated with the Core Curriculum make this a very daunting task to assess and account for student success. The Core Curriculum itself consists of a minimum of 42 SCH but can range from 42 to 48 SCH. Within those parameters, institutions have 36 SCH of their Core Curriculum requirements designated in common, with 6 to 12 additional SCH as individual institutional options.

The Core Curriculum is fully transferable among Texas public institutions of higher education that offer undergraduate degrees. Requirements completed at one college or university must be accepted and substituted for those of the institution receiving the transfer student, even if the sending institution's Core Curriculum is not an exact match for that of the receiving institution.

In addition, if a student successfully completes the 42-hour Core Curriculum at one institution, the entire block of credits must be substituted for the receiving institution's core curriculum. Students may not be required to take additional Core Curriculum courses unless the Board has approved a larger Core Curriculum at the receiving institution. Students who transfer without completing the Core Curriculum shall receive academic credit in the appropriate component area for each area successfully completed in the Core Curriculum of the sending institution.

THE PROPOSED CORE CURRICULUM REVISION

Resources Used

The UEAC developed a comprehensive list of resources to guide its discussions and deliberations. First, the regulations and statutes that govern the Texas Core Curriculum were reviewed. The committee examined the purpose and content of other statewide general education requirements. UEAC members also surveyed the core curricula of a number of public and private colleges and universities across the U.S. to better understand the variety of different curricular models and to identify promising practices in general education. Most importantly, the Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) initiative of the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) was considered carefully. The AAC&U has been working on reforming general education for almost 30 years, not only for general undergraduates but also for transfer students. To assist with assessment, the LEAP project

includes a set of sample rubrics normed at more than 80 colleges and universities, as part of the Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) assessment guidelines.

Guiding Parameters

After a detailed review of the current Core Curriculum, and exploration of available resources, including an assessment of other core curricula in various public and private institutions across the United States, especially those that center on student learning and student success, the UEAC drafted four guiding parameters as it underwent discussions in reshaping the existing Core.

I. Statutes and THECB Rules

First and foremost, the UEAC understands that legislation and the corresponding administrative rules are a political process not necessarily subject to quick or easy change. Therefore, in formulating the revised Core Curriculum, UEAC adopted an approach that encompasses a two phase process. In Phase I, all recommendations are crafted with the notion of improving the Core Curriculum, while staying within the current statutes and rules. In Phase II, UEAC would consider altering the number of semester credit hours and other statutorily mandated characteristics of the Core Curriculum, issues of transferability and applicability, and the inclusion of capstone or orientation courses.

II. Alignment

One of the major problems with the current Core Curriculum is the assessment and evaluation of all the Basic Intellectual Competencies, Perspectives, and Exemplary Educational Objectives. In addition, the SACSCOC has mandated that the assessment of student learning outcomes at the program and course level must be an integral part of every institutional effectiveness plan. Therefore, the second guiding parameter is a better alignment of the new Core Curriculum with program and course-level student learning outcomes, with SACSCOC general education outcomes, and with each institution's general education objectives. To that end, the UEAC has worked very closely with the Accountability System Peer Groups as those groups spent eighteen months considering how to measure "value-added" components of general education; UEAC members invited two representatives of those Peer Groups (one two-year and one four-year) who are both assessment professionals to assist them as they continued the process of deliberation and discussion.

III. Pedagogy

The third guiding parameter is pedagogy. While subject matter content is important, how the content is delivered is at least as important to ensure increased student engagement and learning. Therefore, the new Core Curriculum must directly affect how faculty members incorporate the new objectives into the classroom, to encourage students to learn actively in a participatory manner that allows them to take charge of their education.

IV. Assessment

Finally, the success of any process lies in the results. In the case of a more beneficial and productive Core Curriculum, the assessment of student learning and success must be considered as an intrinsic part of any revision to the current Core Curriculum. The assessment process itself needs to be meaningful and improvement-oriented. Each institution also needs their faculty members to be active partners in this process. The committee's recommendations regarding assessment are discussed later in this document. In crafting those recommendations, the UEAC was guided by three principles: (1) recognition that students can benefit from a common foundation of knowledge and skills, but also recognizing that institutions have different student populations with different needs, different cultures, and different missions; (2) institutions must satisfy demands for institutional effectiveness from many different sources, including the federal-level Department of Education, the state-level Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, SACSCOC, and institutional governing boards; and (3) there are multiple ways to assess and evaluate that each institution could develop based on available resources and expertise.

THE REVISION PROCESS

The UEAC went through a series of meetings and deliberations, including the designation of subcommittees, to reach the recommendations of this report.

February 2, 2009:

- Discussion of core curriculum and formation of subcommittees

April 24, 2009:

- Review of current core laws, rules, and documents; SWOT analysis by subcommittee

September 18, 2009:

- Discussion of process for recommending changes and of purpose statement

November 13, 2009:

- Discussion of roles of institutions, the Coordinating Board, and legislation
- Motion approved stating: "All institutions will require a minimum number of core curriculum hours for a baccalaureate degree and a lower number of hours for an academic associate degree. The baccalaureate degree shall include the same number of hours as the associate degree core at the lower level. The remaining hours may be taught at the upper level."

February 26, 2010:

- Discussion of six new Core Objectives

April 16, 2010:

- Motion approved to accept revision of Core Objective of Communication to state: "Communication Skills, to include effective written, oral, and visual communication."
- Motion approved to word empirical objective to state: "Empirical and Quantitative Skills, to include application of scientific and mathematical concepts."
- Motion approved on Core Objective for Social Responsibility: "Social Responsibility, to include intercultural competency, civic knowledge, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities."
- Motion approved to define final Core Objective on Personal Responsibility to state: "Personal Responsibility, to include the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making."
- Motion approved to maintain the component areas in the current core (Communication, Mathematics, Life and Physical Sciences, Humanities, Visual and Performing Arts, U.S. History, Government/Political Science, and Social and Behavioral Science).
- Motion approved to accept the proposed chart mapping the six Core Objectives into the foundational component areas.

June 11, 2010:

- Motion approved to keep same distribution of semester credit hours per component area as reflected in the current core curriculum.

September 24, 2010:

- Motion approved to accept the definitions for the component areas. The definitions include three aspects: focus of the component area, focus of courses for use in the component area, and the Core Objectives or each course developed to fill the component area requirement.
- Motion approved to accept the number of semester credit hours (SCH) for each component area.

February 25, 2011:

- Motion approved to exclude unique needs courses as part of the core curriculum.
- Motion approved to limit the core curriculum to 42 SCH with THECB approval for any institution requesting a core over 42 SCH. Careful academic advising is vital to student success and is strongly recommended.
- Motion approved to retain the practice of allowing institutions to award academic associate degrees with a field of study curriculum or transfer compact agreement without core completion. This does not relieve a transfer student of the requirements to complete the core for a bachelor's degree.
- Motion approved to not impose a limit to the number of courses an institution may submit for approval. Data from Texas Core Web Center to show a wide range in the

number of courses in similar component areas at each institution. There is little correlation to the enrollment to the number of courses offered. Institutions do not seem to be limiting the number of courses currently. Institutions are urged to self-limit the number of courses based on available resources and faculty requirements based on SACS guidelines.

- Motion approved to adopt the selection and approval of Core Curriculum courses as follows: once approved by the institution, the courses and supporting documentation are forwarded to the THECB for final approval. The subcommittee further recommended that institutions should develop a faculty-based approval process for institution approval and should use the AAC&U VALUE rubrics as guidelines for core objective assessment. Institutions are responsible for maintaining the appropriate level of achievement for each core objective.
- Motion approved to begin work toward statewide articulation agreements for all institutions rather than general area tracks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The UEAC recommends the reformation of the Core Curriculum for state supported institutions be developed in two phases. In Phase I, UEAC addressed the purpose and definition of the core curriculum, the revision of core competencies, component area definitions, and assessment. During Phase II, UEAC would consider the number of semester credit hours and other statutorily mandated characteristics of the Core Curriculum, issues of transferability and applicability, and the inclusion of unique needs and capstone or orientation courses.

Phase I recommendations include:

1. Establishing the purpose of the Core Curriculum;
2. Establishing six Core Curriculum Objectives to replace the Assumptions, Perspectives, Core Competencies and the Exemplary Educational Objectives;
3. Revising the existing component areas titles and definitions;
4. Mapping the Core Curriculum Objectives to the revised foundational component areas;
5. Designating the number of semester credit hours for each component area;
6. Establishing an assessment reporting process to the THECB for institutions that is aligned with SACSCOC practices; and
7. Establishing a timeline and a set of guidelines for the development and approval of the revised institutional Core Curricula.

Recommendation 1: Establish the Purpose of the Core Curriculum.

Purpose: Through the 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.

Recommendation 2: Establish six Core Curriculum Objectives and Corresponding Definitions.

1. ***Critical Thinking Skills -*** to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information
2. ***Communication Skills -*** to include effective written, oral, and visual communication
3. ***Empirical and Quantitative Skills -*** to include applications of scientific and mathematical concepts
4. ***Teamwork -*** to include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal
5. ***Social Responsibility -*** to include intercultural competency, civic knowledge, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities
6. ***Personal Responsibility -*** to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making

Recommendation 3: Revise Foundational Component Areas.

Revise the existing component areas to clearly define the content, skills and Core Objectives.

1. Communication

Courses in this category focus on developing and expressing ideas clearly, fostering understanding, and the potential for effecting change.
Courses involve the command of oral, aural, written, and visual skills that enable people to exchange messages appropriate to the subject, occasion, and audience.
The Core Objectives of critical thinking skills, communication skills, teamwork, and personal responsibility are addressed by each course in this component area.

2. Mathematics

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 mathematical tools to the everyday experience.
The Core Objectives of critical thinking skills, communication skills, and empirical and quantitative skills are addressed by each course in this component area.

3. Life and Physical Sciences

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 human experiences.
The Core Objectives of critical thinking skills, communication skills, empirical and quantitative skills, and teamwork are addressed by each course in this component area.

4. Language, Philosophy, and Culture

Courses in this category focus on how ideas and values reflect and impact human experience.
Courses involve the exploration of ideas that foster aesthetic and intellectual creation in order to understand the human condition across cultures.
The Core Objectives of critical thinking skills, communication skills, and social responsibility are addressed by each course in this component area.

5. Creative Arts

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.
The Core Objectives of critical thinking skills, communication skills, and social responsibility are addressed by each course in this component area.

6. American History

Courses in this category focus on the consideration of past events 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.
The Core Objectives of critical thinking skills, communication skills, social responsibility, and personal responsibility are addressed by each course in this component area.

7. Government/Political Science

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.
The Core Objectives of critical thinking skills, communication skills, teamwork, and social responsibility are addressed by each course in this component area.

8. Social and Behavioral Sciences

Courses in this category focus on the application of scientific methods in the understanding of what makes us human.
Courses involve the exploration of behavior and interactions among individuals, groups, institutions, and events, examining their impact on society and culture.
The Core Objectives of critical thinking skills, communication skills, empirical and quantitative skills, social responsibility, and personal responsibility are addressed by each course in this component area.

9. Institutional Option

Institutions must include a minimum of three Core Objectives in each selected course.
Courses in this category may be used in various SCH increments (examples include integrative learning, oral communication, foreign language, science labs, etc.).
Courses in this category may be used for component area completion.

Recommendation 4: Map Core Curriculum Objectives to Foundational Component Areas.

Any course developed and approved for use in an institution's core curriculum must address at least three of the Core Objectives, mapped to specific Foundational Component Areas (see Table 1). Institutions must include the required Core Objectives designated for a particular Foundational Component Area, and may include any additional Core Objectives (designated as optional on the chart) for that Foundational Component Area.

Table 1: Core Objectives and Foundational Component Areas Mapping

	Core Objectives					
Foundational Component Areas	**Critical Thinking**	**Communication Skills**	**Empirical & Quantitative Skills**	**Teamwork**	**Social Responsibility**	**Personal Responsibility**
Communication	REQUIRED	REQUIRED	OPTIONAL	REQUIRED	OPTIONAL	REQUIRED
Mathematics	REQUIRED	REQUIRED	REQUIRED	OPTIONAL	OPTIONAL	OPTIONAL
Life & Physical Sciences	REQUIRED	REQUIRED	REQUIRED	REQUIRED	OPTIONAL	OPTIONAL
Language, Philosophy and Culture	REQUIRED	REQUIRED	OPTIONAL	OPTIONAL	REQUIRED	OPTIONAL
Creative Arts	REQUIRED	REQUIRED	OPTIONAL	OPTIONAL	REQUIRED	OPTIONAL
American History	REQUIRED	REQUIRED	OPTIONAL	OPTIONAL	REQUIRED	REQUIRED
Government/ Political Science	REQUIRED	REQUIRED	OPTIONAL	REQUIRED	REQUIRED	OPTIONAL
Social/Behavioral Science	REQUIRED	REQUIRED	OPTIONAL	OPTIONAL	REQUIRED	REQUIRED
Institutional Option*	OPTIONAL	OPTIONAL	OPTIONAL	OPTIONAL	OPTIONAL	OPTIONAL

* Institutional Option must contain a minimum of 3 Core Objectives selected by the institution.

REQUIRED = required Core Objectives to be addressed in each course selected for inclusion in the Foundational Component Area.
OPTIONAL = institution may include Core Objective for each course selected for inclusion in the Foundational Component Area.

Recommendation 5: Establish the allocation of semester credit hours by Foundational Component Area to total 42 semester credit hours.

Table 2: Required Semester Credit Hours

Foundational Component Area	SCH
Communication	6
Mathematics	3
Life and Physical Sciences	6
Language, Philosophy, & Culture	3
Creative Arts	3
American History	6
Government/Political Science	6
Social and Behavioral Sciences	3
Institutional Option	6
TOTAL	**42**

The maximum limit of the Core Curriculum will be 42 SCH with THECB approval required for any institution requesting a core over 42 SCH.

Recommendation 6: Establish an assessment reporting process to the THECB for institutions that is aligned with SACSCOC practices.

Accountability for assessment of the Core Objectives is at the institutional level. Institutions will continue the assessment practices required by SACSCOC. Institutions will assess the six Core Objectives using the following practices and submit the report to the THECB every ten years.

1. Assessment methods
    - Explanations of measures, methodology, frequency and timeline of assessment
2. Criteria/Targets
    - Explanation of targets or benchmarks of Core Objective attainment
3. Results
    - Evidence of attainment of the six Core Objectives
4. Analysis
    - Interpretation of assessment information
5. Actions & Follow-ups
    - Use of results for improving student learning

Recommendation 7: Establish a timeline and a set of guidelines for the development and approval of revised Core Curriculum.

The UEAC recommends two considerations regarding the timeline:

1. Allow a minimum of two academic years for the institutional redevelopment of institutional core curricula, specifying a faculty-centered process as the means for any redevelopment. Allow Coordinating Board staff sufficient time to evaluate the revised core curricula from each institution and to establish that each institution is in compliance with the new standards.

2. Provide for a phase-in year, during which incoming new students would be required to fulfill the requirements of the newly-revised Core Curriculum, while previously enrolled students would be able to choose between the requirements they have been expecting to complete or the new requirements, depending on their perception of educational advantage and timely degree completion.

In addition, the UEAC recommends the following guidelines for institutions to use in approval their new Core Curricula:

1. Number of courses in the core curriculum. Although no limit is placed on the number of courses an institution may submit for approval, it is strongly encouraged that institutions self-limit based on available resources and faculty credentials.

2. Selection and approval of core curriculum courses. Once approved by the institution, the courses and supporting documentation will be forwarded to the THECB for final approval. Institutions should develop a faculty-based approval process for institution approval. The mechanism and guidelines for course approval should be the same for all institutions, and the AAC&U VALUE rubrics should be used as initial guidelines for core objective assessment. Institutions are also responsible for maintaining the appropriate level of achievement for each core objective.

3. Disciplinary tracks: Instead of pursuing general core curriculum area tracks, the direction should be toward statewide articulation agreements that all institutions will follow.

4. The practice of allowing institutions to award academic associate degrees with a field of study curriculum or transfer compact agreement without core completion should be retained; however, this does not relieve a transfer student of the requirements to complete the core for a bachelor's degree.

5. Unique needs courses should not be part of the core curriculum.

ASSESSMENT

Purpose, Values, and Definitions:

The UEAC, with the assistance of two representatives of the Accountability Workgroup, Dr. Loraine Phillips of Texas A&M University and Dr. Danita McAnally of Amarillo College, developed some guidelines in assessing the new proposed core. The purpose of assessment is for institutions to discover, document and seek to improve student attainment of the six Core Objectives of the UEAC proposed General Education Core Curriculum. As such, the values for assessing the Core Objectives are:

1. UEAC's Core Objectives form the foundation of the institution's General Education Core Curriculum.
2. Institutions use assessment of UEAC's Core Objectives to improve student learning.
3. Faculty participation is integral throughout the assessment cycle.
4. Institutions use multiple measures for effective assessment, including at least one direct measure per Core Objective. Externally informed benchmarks are encouraged.
5. Assessment practice is evolving.

NOTE: The selection of courses for inclusion in the core is a separate process based on the Objectives and Component Area Mapping.

Certain definitions are helpful in considering assessment –

(A) Assessment cycle – The systematic collection, review and use of evidence for the purpose of improving student learning.
(B) Direct measure – Students' demonstration of learning.
(C) Indirect measure – Students' perceptions of their learning or other measures not derived directly from student work.
(D) Externally informed benchmarks – Targets for student attainment set by and/or in collaboration with constituencies outside the institution. Examples include advisory boards, peer institutions and national norms.

Current Core Assessment Processes:

According to Erisman's report[1], the following practices or forms of measurement are commonly used by institutions to measure institutional effectiveness:

- Institutional portfolios – student work gathered at the institutional level
- Embedded assessment

[1] Erisman, Wendy. *Assessing Student Learning in General Education: Effective Practices Utilized by Texas Public Education.* Accountability Peer Group Meetings and General Education Assessment Survey Results, 2009-2010.

- Standardized testing
- Other – locally developed exams, student portfolios, etc.

Currently, For Coordinating Board Rule 4.30 *Criteria for Evaluation of Core Curricula*, institutions are required to submit assessment of their current core curriculum based on the Assumptions & Defining Characteristics. Institutions report this information to Coordinating Board staff prior to SACSCOC reaffirmation of accreditation.

At the regional assessment level, SACSCOC requires institutional effectiveness processes through the following Core Requirement and Standards:

- SACS *Principles of Accreditation*
    - 2.5 Institutional Effectiveness
      The institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that (1) incorporate a systematic review of institutional mission, goals, and outcomes; (2) result in continuing improvement in institutional quality; and (3) demonstrate the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission.

    - 3.3.1.1 Institutional Effectiveness
      The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each of the following areas: (Institutional Effectiveness) 3.3.1.1 educational programs, to include student learning outcomes

    - 3.5.1 College-Level Competencies
      The institution identifies college-level general education competencies and the extent to which graduates have attained them.

Assessment Recommendations:

UEAC recommends that institutions continue the assessment practices required by SACSCOC. Institutions will assess the six Core Objectives using these practices and submit the report to the THECB every ten years. Accountability for assessment of the Core Objectives is at the institutional level.

The review process will consist of two requirements and three options.

For requirements:

1. Institutions will electronically submit the Assessment Report of the Core Objectives to THECB every 10 years.
2. Coordinating Board staff will process the report to confirm assessment of the six Core Objectives.

For options:

1. Institutions are encouraged to voluntarily participate in a peer review of the assessment of the six Core Objectives
2. Institutions are encouraged to select peer reviewers from across the state
3. Peer reviewers provide feedback to the institution

The assessment report of the Core Objectives will describe the assessment for each of the six Core Objectives:

1. Assessment methods
    - Explanations of measures, methodology, frequency and timeline of assessment
2. Criteria/Targets
    - Explanation of targets or benchmarks of Core Objective attainment
3. Results
    - Evidence of attainment of the six Core Objectives
4. Analysis
    - Interpretation of assessment information
5. Actions and Follow-ups
    - Use of results for improving student learning

For continuous improvement, the review of the assessment process will describe the strengths and weaknesses of the assessment process and also describe possible changes that the institution may apply to the assessment process.

TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Once the Coordinating Board has acted to adopt a revised Texas Core Curriculum through the amendment of its existing rules (Texas Administrative Code), appropriate time must be designated for institutions to make revisions in their core curricula that will match the statewide changes. Because the statute requires each institution to designate its own courses, and because the process needs to be a reflective, deliberative, and faculty-centered process, a minimum of one academic year should be allowed for institutional revisions.

Coordinating Board staff would need to receive summary reports from each institution of higher education, including the newly revised core curriculum for each institution, and would need to determine essential compliance with the newly revised rules. That process, depending on staff availability, will take about six weeks.

Following the revision of institutional curricula and approval of those revisions by staff, an implementation year should be designated, during which time all institutions would implement the revised core curriculum for their incoming freshman students, and a phase-out of the previous ("old") core curriculum for continuing enrolled students the choice of completing their core curriculum requirements under the "old" core curriculum, or switching to the "new" core curriculum, depending on the student's perception of advantage in completing one set of requirements or the other.

FURTHER DISCUSSION FOR UEAC CORE CURRICULUM REVISIONS

Recommendations included in Phase I have been intentionally kept within the parameters established by existing legislation regarding the Core Curriculum in Texas. Phase II of the review of the Core will look at possible modifications to the Core Curriculum that might entail the need for changes in the legislation governing the Core Curriculum.

Issues that do not depend on legislative action:

- Inclusion of proficiency in a second language

Issues that would require legislative action:

- Reduction of minimum of 42 SCH to 36 SCH
    - Change TEC 61.822
    - TEC 61.0515 (79th Legislature) placed a limit on the minimum requirement of all bachelor's degrees to be no than the SACSCOC minimum SCH requirement (currently 120 SCH), unless approved to require a higher number due to a "compelling academic reason."
    - Closer alignment with SACSCOC recommendation of 30 SCH for a bachelor's degree

- Reduction of American History and Government/Political Science from 12 SCH to 6 SCH

- Change TEC 51.301 and TEC 51.302
- Current requirements account for ten percent of the requirement for a bachelor's degree
- Align with national average of 6 SCH for both government and history
- Allow for the flexibility beyond the parameters of only American or Texan historical and political studies

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Chapter 4 Subchapter B Transfer of Credit, Core Curriculum and Field of Study Curricula
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Core Curriculum Assumptions and Defining Characteristics
Lower Division Academic Course Guide Manual

Wisconsin –

University of Wisconsin Colleges' General Education Requirements
UW System Liberal Education Initiative
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