

Core Objective Assessment and Excellence Course

Module 1: Core Objective Assessment and Excellence Course

Foundations of the Texas Core Curriculum

Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Reporting

The University of Texas at Arlington

Core Objective Assessment and Excellence Course

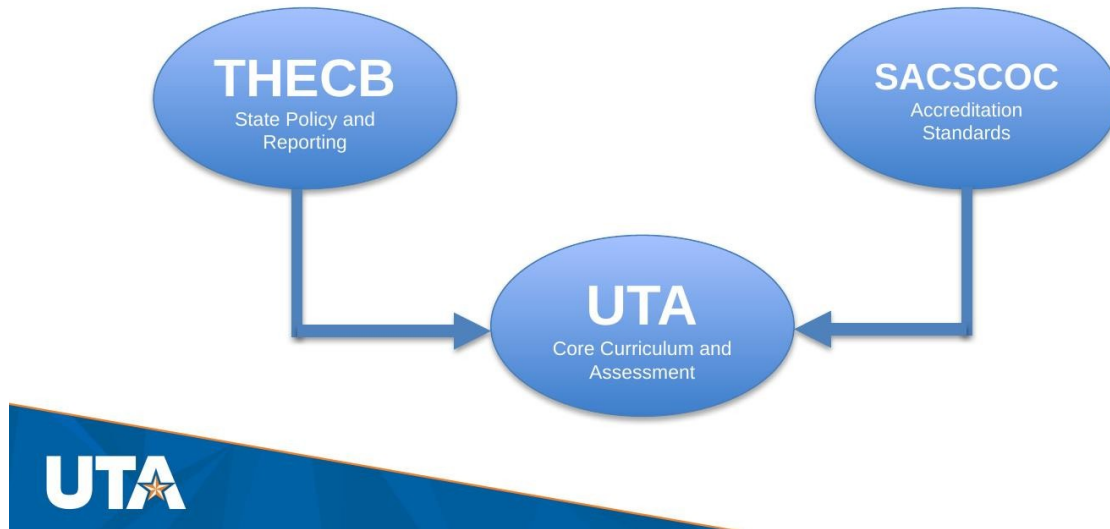
Foundations of the Texas Core Curriculum

Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Reporting



Welcome to Core Curriculum Assessment and Excellence at The University of Texas in Arlington course. This is the office that coordinates the assessment of the Core Curriculum. This course covers core curriculum assessment at UTA.... whether you're new to teaching core courses or refining your approach. We'll address why assessment matters, and how it directly supports student learning outcomes.

The Big Picture: Core Assessment at UTA



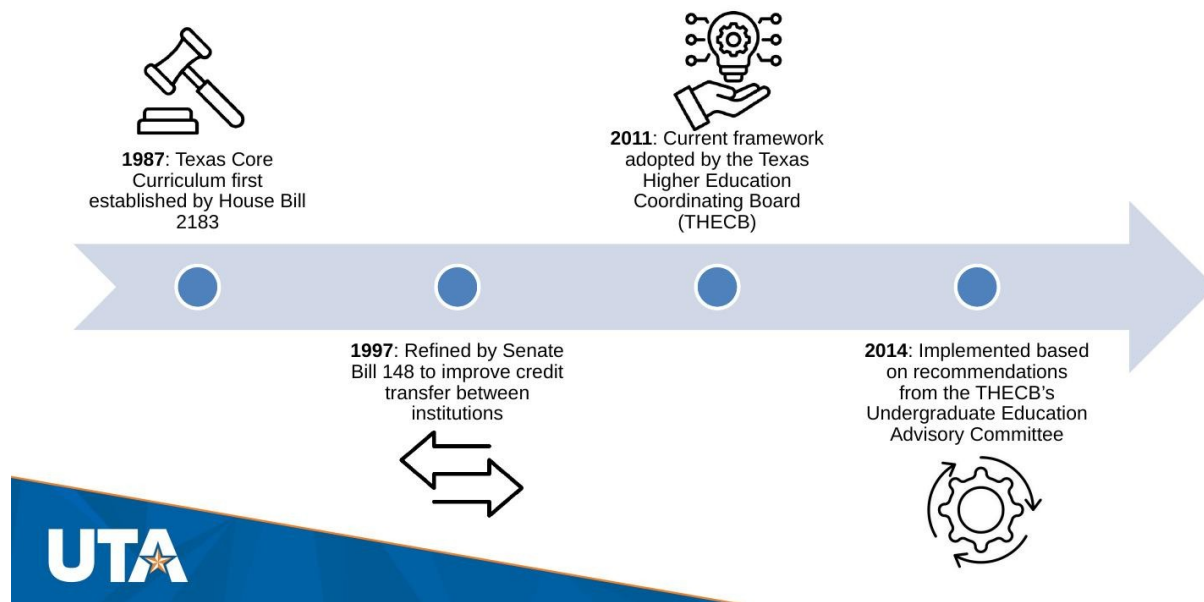
Core curriculum at UTA operates within a framework shaped by distinct requirements: state law, accreditation standards, and institutional mission. Understanding these will clarify why assessment matters and how your courses fit into the larger structure.

State law, through the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, mandates the core curriculum structure and requires assessment.

Accreditation standards, through SACSCOC, require that we assess and report on student learning in general education.

And UTA's commitment to these standards drives how we implement both.

The Big Picture: Core Assessment at UTA



The Texas Core Curriculum has a rich history.

It was first established in 1987 by House Bill 2183 to ensure quality in higher education.

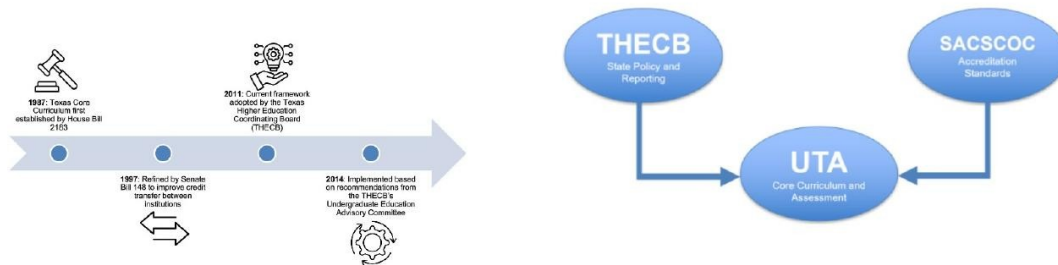
It was then refined in 1997 by Senate Bill 148 to improve credit transfer between institutions.

The current framework was adopted by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in October 2011 and

Implemented in Fall 2014, based on recommendations from the THECB's Undergraduate Education Advisory Committee.

Each change is built on the last, always focused on improving what students get from general education.

The Big Picture: Core Assessment at UTA



The Purpose of the Texas Core Framework:

- Shared foundation of essential skills
- Statewide transfer consistency
- Accreditation and reporting alignment



This framework accomplishes the following:

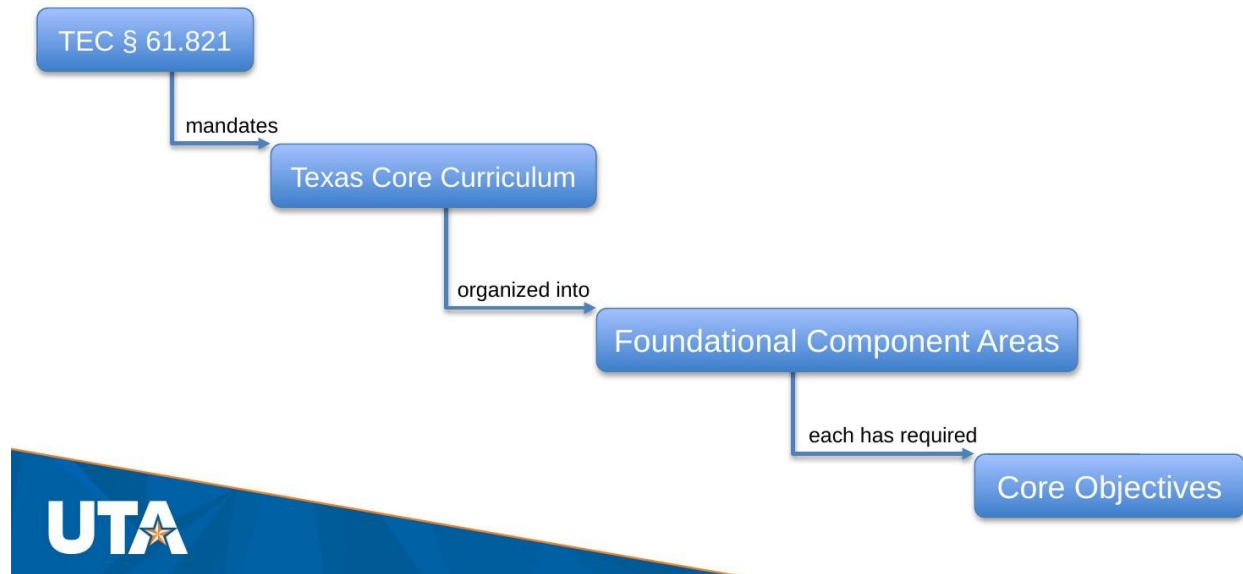
It assures that every graduate, regardless of major, develops essential intellectual and practical skills for lifelong learning and success, what THECB calls "a foundation of knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world."

It facilitates seamless transfer of credits between Texas institutions. Students who complete the full 42-hour core curriculum at one public institution can transfer it in its entirety to another Texas public institution without repeating courses.

It maintains our institutional accreditation through SACSCOC, which requires at least 30 semester credit hours of general education for bachelor's degree programs.

THECB requires that the institution reviews learning outcomes for general education on an ongoing basis and reports the results every 10 years, as does SACSCOC.

The Texas Core Curriculum Structure



The Texas Core Curriculum is legally defined by Texas Education Code Section 61.821 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." All courses in the core fit into what are known as foundational component areas and address the required core objectives.

The Texas Core Curriculum Structure

Nine Foundational Component Areas

- **6 SCHs of Communication** - Development of ideas and expressing them clearly, considering the effect of the message, fostering understanding, and building skills for persuasive communication.
- **3 SCHs of Mathematics** - Quantitative literacy in logic, patterns, and relationships
- **6 SCHs of Life and Physical Sciences** - Describing, explaining, and predicting natural phenomena using the scientific method
- **3 SCHs of Language, Philosophy & Culture** - How ideas, values, beliefs, and other aspects of culture express and affect human experience
- **3 SCHs of Creative Arts** - Appreciation and analysis of creative artifacts and works of the human imagination
- **6 SCHs of American History** - Past events and ideas relative to the United States, with the option of including Texas History
- **6 SCHs of Government/Political Science** - Constitution of the United States and the constitutions of the states, with special emphasis on Texas
- **3 SCHs of Social and Behavioral Sciences** - Application of empirical and scientific methods that contribute to understanding what makes us human
- **6 SCHs of Component Area Option** - Flexible area where at least 3 hours must meet one foundational component area definition



Texas Core Courses must address all required objectives aligned with the foundation component area.

The core curriculum comprises nine foundational component areas: Communication, Mathematics, Sciences, Language, Arts, History, Government, Social Sciences, and a flexible option.

Each area has a defined purpose. Communication, for example, focuses on expressing ideas clearly. Mathematics emphasizes quantitative literacy. Complete definitions for all nine areas are available on the slide and in your course materials.

Regardless of which component area your course falls under, it must address all required objectives for that area.

The Texas Core Curriculum Structure

Six Core Objectives

- **Critical Thinking Skills (CT)** - Creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information
- **Communication Skills (COM)** - Effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication
- **Empirical and Quantitative Skills (EQS)** - Manipulation and analysis of numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions
- **Teamwork (TW)** - Ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal
- **Social Responsibility (SR)** - Intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities
- **Personal Responsibility (PR)** - Ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making



Core Objectives describe the skills students build through core courses and vary by component area.

Six core objectives define the skills students develop through core curriculum courses: Critical Thinking, Communication, Empirical and Quantitative Skills, Teamwork, Social Responsibility, and Personal Responsibility.

Two of these objectives (Critical Thinking and Communication) appear in every foundational component area. They are foundational to all undergraduate education at UTA. The remaining four objectives vary by component area based on disciplinary needs.

Complete definitions for all six objectives are provided on the slide and in your course materials for reference.

Foundational Component Area	SCH	Required Core Objectives				Optional Core Objectives			
		CT	COM	EQS	TW	SR	PR		
Communication	6	●	●	●	●	●	●		
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 of oral, aural, written, and visual literacy skills that enable people to exchange messages appropriate to the subject, occasion, and audience.									
Mathematics	3	●	●	●	●	●	●		
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.									
Life and Physical Sciences	6	●	●	●	●	●	●		
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 & Culture	3	●	●	●	●	●	●		
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.									
Creative Arts	3	●	●	●	●	●	●		
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	●	●	●	●	●	●		
Courses in this category focus on the consideration of 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.									
Government/Political Science	6	●	●	●	●	●	●		
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 and Behavioral Sciences	3	●	●	●	●	●	●		
Courses in this category focus on the application of empirical and scientific methods that contribute to 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 the individual, society, and culture.									
Component Area Option	6	●	●	●	●	●	●		
a. A minimum of 3 SCH must meet the definition and corresponding Core Objectives specified in one of the foundational component areas. b. As an option for up to 3 semester credit hours of the Component Area Option, an institution may select course(s) that: (i) Meet(s) the definition specified for one or more of the foundational component areas; and (ii) Include(s) a minimum of three Core Objectives, including Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, and one of the remaining Core Objectives of the institution's choice.									

This matrix aligns each foundational component area with its required core objectives. Notice that Critical Thinking and Communication appear in every single area. This is intentional. These are the skills required of every undergraduate, regardless of major.

The other objectives (Empirical and Quantitative Skills, Teamwork, Social Responsibility, and Personal Responsibility) are assigned based on what each component area demands. Reference the complete matrix on the slide for your specific area.

Now, the matrix you see on the screen aligns each foundational component area with required core objectives:

Communication: requires Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility,

Mathematics: requires Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, and Empirical & Quantitative Skills

Life and Physical Sciences: requires Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, Empirical & Quantitative Skills, and Teamwork

Language, Philosophy & Culture: requires Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, Social Responsibility, and Personal Responsibility

Creative Arts: requires Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, Teamwork, and Social Responsibility

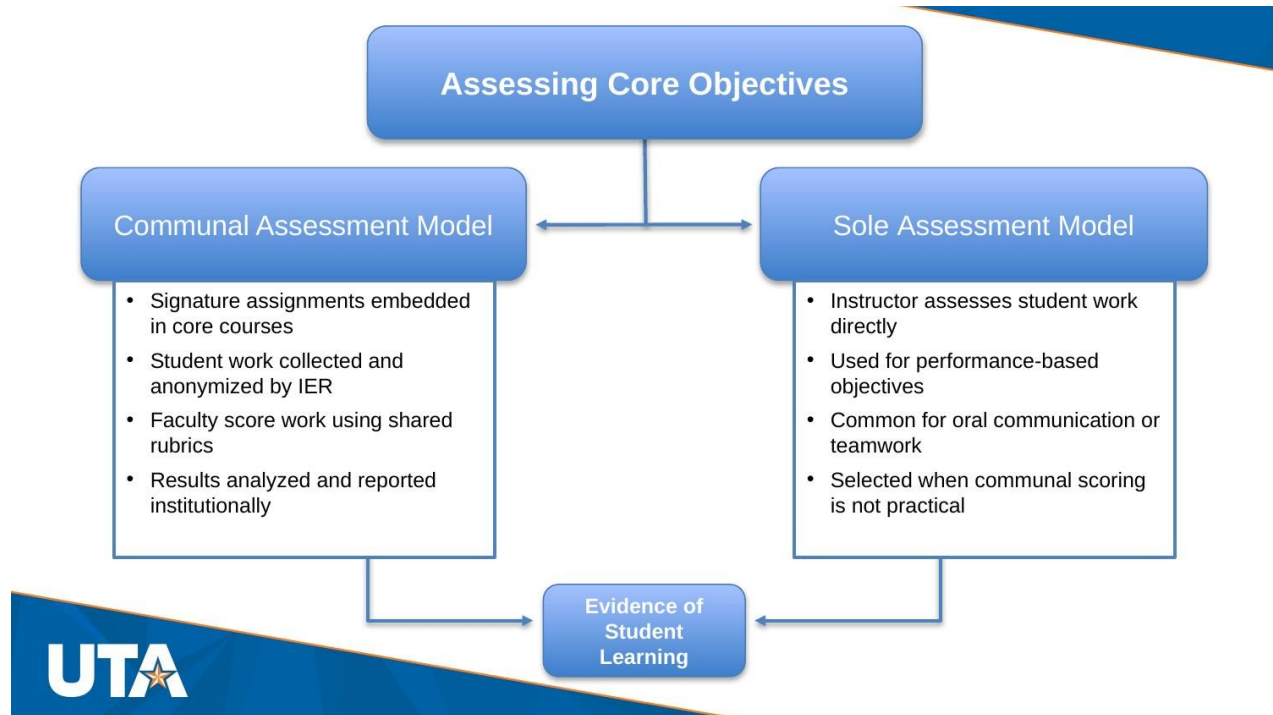
American History: requires Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, Social Responsibility, and Personal Responsibility

Government/Political Science: requires Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, Social Responsibility, and Personal Responsibility

Social and Behavioral Sciences: requires Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, Empirical & Quantitative Skills, and Social Responsibility

Component Area Option: requires Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills and one of the remaining Core Objectives of the institution's choice.

Notice that Critical Thinking Skills and Communication Skills are required in EVERY area—these are truly foundational.



Now let's talk about HOW we assess the six Core Curriculum objectives. UTA operates on two models: the Communal Assessment model and the Sole Assessment model. The choice of model depends the offering department's preference when the course is initially submitted for approval as a core course, and, in several cases, the logistics of assessing the student work products generated through coursework.

The Communal Assessment Model is UTA's primary approach.

This requires departments to develop signature assignments, which are substantial elements of coursework that best display the knowledge or skills essential to your course objectives, that are administered in core courses.

The office of institutional Effectiveness and Reporting, collects student work products, that are typically 2 to 3 page narratives, produced through the signature assignments, anonymizes them, and then invite faculty members from across the university to a Core Scoring Day.

During this event, a single objective is selected for assessment and faculty score each student work products using standardized rubrics adapted from AAC&U VALUE Rubrics.

IER trains faculty raters on how to interpret and apply the scoring rubrics during the calibration session that precedes scoring.

Then, each paper is scored by at least two independent raters while disagreements are resolved by a third rater, if needed.

For consistency purposes, reliability between raters is determined using statistical methods. IER collects and analyzes the resulting data, which is then summarized and published in a Core Assessment Report, made available to the public on the IER website.

Here's a useful note: While core courses must address ALL required objectives each time it is taught, all these objectives for a course are not typically assessed each assessment cycle.

For example, student work product sampled from a mathematics course will typically assess 1 out of the 3 required objectives:

Critical Thinking or Communication, or Empirical & Quantitative Skills.

Which objectives are assessed is determined by the rotation of objectives listed on the assessment calendar available on the IER website.

The Sole Assessment Model is typically selected for courses where the objectives are difficult to assess through written artifacts or without complicated logistics. Teamwork and oral Communication Skills are often difficult to assess communally. For example, student speeches are best assessed by the course instructor as the student is being evaluated for their performance on the activity for the class. Otherwise, speeches would have to be recorded and presented to the group of faculty raters through resource intensive procedures.

Both of these assessment models produce evidence of student learning.

If you currently teach a course or would like to propose a course that has a large enrollment and you believe the required objectives cannot be effectively assessed through communal or sole assessment, please contact IER to explore assessment options.

The Future of Core Curriculum

- In 2025, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board convened an advisory group comprised of representatives from Texas public institutions to review and recommend improvements to the core curriculum.
- The advisory group is expected to present its recommendations to the THECB Board in October 2026.
- While modifications are anticipated, specific changes have not yet been determined.



In 2025, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board convened an advisory group representing Texas public institutions to review the current core curriculum framework and develop recommendations for improvement. The advisory group is expected to present its recommendations to the THECB Board in October 2026.

While specific changes have not yet been determined, the scope of this review indicates that modifications to the core curriculum are anticipated. As those recommendations are finalized and adopted, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Reporting will communicate any changes that affect your courses and assessment practices.

Resources

Resources:

- Official bill text available via Texas Legislature Online
- Core Assessment Resources available on the IER website
- Links provided in course resources



For the official bill text, visit the Texas Legislature Online website.

Core assessment resources are also available on the IER website if you'd like to explore tools, reports, or guidance related to the assessment processes discussed in this module.

Links are provided in your course resources.