UT Dallas Core Curriculum

UT Dallas requires that every student pursuing a baccalaureate degree, regardless of their major, complete a general education Core Curriculum of 42 semester credit hours (SCH). All core courses are assigned to a foundational component area, allowing students to easily identify core curriculum requirements. Additional information pertaining to the core curriculum can be found in UT Dallas’ undergraduate catalog.

Foundational Component Areas

- Communication (6 SCH)
- Mathematics (3 SCH)
- Life and Physical Sciences (6 SCH)
- Language, Philosophy and Culture (3 SCH)
- Creative Arts (3 SCH)
- American History (6 SCH)
- Government/Political Science (6 SCH)
- Social and Behavioral Sciences (3 SCH)
- Component Area Option (6 SCH)

Core Curriculum Assessment

In accordance with recent changes instituted by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), UT Dallas’ general education courses were restructured to incorporate six component area objectives.

- Critical Thinking Skills-to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information
- Communication Skills-to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication
- Empirical and Quantitative Skills-to include the manipulation and analysis of numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions
- Teamwork-to include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal
- Personal Responsibility-to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making
- Social Responsibility-to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities
To assess UT Dallas’ ability to successfully integrate these objectives into its core curriculum, the University has adopted a pre-/post-test methodology to evaluate the underlying skills associated with these objectives. UT Dallas employs the following assessment measures to analyze the core curriculum:

1. Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA+)
   • Performance task in which students are asked to address real-world scenarios and identify an appropriate course of action
   • Designed to measure critical thinking skills, written communication skills, and empirical and quantitative skills

2. Student Portfolio and Group Projects
   • Students work individually and collectively to complete the projects
   • Designed to measure teamwork, oral communication skills, social responsibility, and personal responsibility

A base measurement is established during students’ University and school-related freshman seminars, which are mandatory for all freshmen during their first semester at UT Dallas. The CLA+ is administered to students within the first month of their University-level freshman seminar (UNIV 1010). During the same semester, students are required to complete a portfolio and/or group project in their school-related freshman seminar (e.g., EPPS 1100).

Once students have completed their core curriculum, a secondary measurement is obtained using a similar process in which students retake the CLA+ and complete an additional group project during their school-specific Advanced Communication course. To retake the CLA+, students are automatically enrolled in UNIV 2020—a zero SCH graduation requirement—once they are core complete. Students are not required to be core complete to enroll in Advanced Communication, however, due to its upper division status, most students will have completed their core curriculum prior to taking the course.

Each semester, UT Dallas receives institutional reports that provide aggregate summaries of student performance on the CLA+ and draw comparisons between UT Dallas and our peer institutions. The University also receives raw test scores, which allows for more specific analyses that examine potential influencing factors (e.g., high school GPA, major, etc.). To account for the subjective nature of the portfolio and group projects, freshman seminar course instructors evaluate the projects on an individual basis. However, to ensure internal consistency, instructors are trained to assess the projects using rubrics. Data from both assessment periods (i.e., pre- and post-core curriculum) are then compared to isolate any changes in students’ skill levels. Typically, there is a two-year lag between pre- and post-core curriculum assessment.

1. Effective fall 2014, all incoming students are required to complete UT Dallas’ current core curriculum as outlined above; however, the previous core curriculum will be temporarily retained to accommodate students who entered the University prior to fall 2014. [http://catalog.utdallas.edu/2014/undergraduate/curriculum/core-curriculum-transition](http://catalog.utdallas.edu/2014/undergraduate/curriculum/core-curriculum-transition)