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\(^1\). 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. Comets to the Core Project
   • Co-curricular project in which students work in interdisciplinary teams of 8 to propose a solution to a wicked problem
   • Students submit individual responses, which are designed to measure oral communication skills, teamwork, social responsibility, and personal responsibility. These responses include:
     • 3-to-5 minute video pitch to potential investors/grant review board
     • Responses to targeted questions on personal and social responsibility
     • Evaluation of team members’ contributions to the projects

A baseline measure is collected from all freshmen and transfer students who have not completed their core curriculum. Students complete the CLA+ and the Comets to the Core project within the first month of their first year at UT Dallas. A secondary measure is obtained during students' junior year, when most students have completed their core curriculum. Participation in the CLA+ and the Comets to the Core project is a graduation requirement for all students.

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 allow for more specific analyses that examine potential influencing factors (e.g., high school GPA, major, etc.). To account for the subjective nature of the Comets to the Core project, a committee of faculty, staff, and industrial partners conducts rubric-based evaluations of a representative sample of student projects. 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)

2. It is common for students majoring in programs within the schools of Arts, Technology, and Emerging Communication, Engineering and Computer Sciences, and Natural Sciences and Mathematics to postpone some of their core courses until their junior and senior years. Therefore, some students will not have completed their core curriculum by their junior year, but will be very close to becoming core-complete.