Proposed Core Curriculum Assessment Plan for
Texas A&M International University

2014 Core Curriculum Submission Components

Component II: Core Curriculum Assessment Plan

    A. <u>Describe the institution's process to determine the appropriate level of attainment of each Core Objective.</u>

Collaborative discussions involving the University Core Curriculum Committee (UCCC), deans, department heads, faculty, and the Provost focused on the new core curriculum, its component objectives, their implementation, and subsequent assessment using direct and indirect measures. Subcommittees were selected with input from the UCCC and chaired by members of the UCCC. Subcommittee chairs were responsible for keeping the UCCC informed of the deliberations. During discussions, attention was given to rubrics developed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities and others.

The following section provides a brief description of instruments that are being contemplated for use and how student performance data could be used to help TAMIU establish appropriate levels of attainment for students for each objective.

Assessment Rubrics
Interdisciplinary committees of faculty discussed and agreed upon the rubrics that will be used as direct means of assessment of the core curriculum objectives. These discussions resulted in recommended performance standards for the core curriculum objectives that will be expected of students. This information was shared with the UCCC, deans, faculty, and Provost for input prior to final adoption.

Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA+)
Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA+) data for TAMIU students will be examined to determine the number and proportion of freshmen and sophomores who demonstrate behaviors consistent with proficiency in Reading/Critical Thinking, Writing, and Quantitative Reasoning. Skills assessed through the CLA+ will include critical thinking and writing ability, analysis and problem solving, writing effectiveness and mechanics, recognition of logical fallacies, scientific and quantitative reasoning, and critical reading and evaluation. TAMIU students' achievement will be compared to the performance of comparable students at peer institutions. Recommended performance standards will be shared with the UCCC, deans, faculty, and Provost for input prior to final adoption.

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
Interdisciplinary committees of faculty examined TAMIU student perception data from the last three administrations of the NSSE and compared it to the NSSE data from peer institutions to help TAMIU establish reasonable levels of satisfaction expected from freshmen students. Special attention was given to students' responses to various survey items, especially those that directly relate to the critical thinking, communication, empirical and quantitative skills, teamwork, personal responsibility, and social responsibility. Recommended performance standards will be shared with the UCCC, deans, faculty, and Provost for input prior to final adoption.

B. Describe the institution's plan for assessment of each Core Objective. Include the following components of the institution's assessment plan: Assessment methods –explain the methodology (e.g., institutional portfolios, embedded assessment, etc.), describe the measures (must include at least one direct measure), outline the frequency and timeline of assessment.

Direct and indirect means of assessment will be used to assess students' accomplishment of the core objectives. Such a process allows for the triangulation of information to help faculty use the data for program improvement. The plan of action is described below. Table 1 depicts the various types of assessment tools identified for use, whereas Table 2 provides a proposed schedule designed to facilitate the implementation of this assessment plan.

Table 1 Outline of the Core Curriculum Assessment Plan

Core Objectives	Assessment	Type
Critical Thinking Includes creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information.	Samples of students' work from across the various disciplines using an appropriate rubric	Direct
	CLA+	Direct
	National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)	Indirect
Communication Includes effective development, interpretation, and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication.	Samples of students' work from across the various disciplines using an appropriate rubric	Direct
	CLA+	Direct
	National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)	Indirect
Empirical and Quantitative Skills Includes the manipulation and analysis of numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions.	Samples of students' work from across the various disciplines using an appropriate rubric	Direct
	CLA+	Direct
	National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)	Indirect
Teamwork Includes the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal.	Samples of students' work from across the various disciplines using an appropriate rubric	Direct
	National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)	Indirect
Personal Responsibility Includes the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making.	Samples of students' work from across the various disciplines using an appropriate rubric	Direct
	National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)	Indirect
Social Responsibility Includes intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.	Samples of students' work from across the various disciplines using an appropriate rubric	Direct
	National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)	Indirect

Rubrics are used to measure students' accomplishment of the core curriculum objectives across the various Foundation Component Areas (FCAs). Interdisciplinary committees of faculty corresponding to each core curriculum objective review rubrics used to assess the core curriculum objectives.

October 18, 2013, 2013

Implementation Schedule

Assessment of Core Curriculum Objectives through Core Curriculum Courses

To facilitate the implementation of the assessment plan, a phase-in process will be employed beginning in fall 2014 with the collection of student work for assessment of critical thinking, communication, and empirical and quantitative skills in core courses. Student work collected in fall 2014 will be assessed by spring 2015. Student work for assessment pertaining to teamwork, personal responsibility, and social responsibility will be collected during the spring 2015 term and assessed by summer 2015 or fall 2015.

Beginning in the 2015-2016 academic year, student work for all objectives will be collected in core courses for all corresponding objectives each time they are taught. Student work collected during fall semesters will be assessed during the following spring terms, and student work collected during the spring semesters will be assessed during the following summer or fall terms (see table 2 below).

Table 2 Core Course Assessment Schedule for fall 2014 and beyond

	Fall 2014	Spring/summer 2015	Fall 2015	Spring/summer 2016 and Beyond
Student Work Collected	Critical Thinking Communication Empirical and Quantitative Skills	Teamwork Personal Responsibility Social Responsibility	Critical Thinking Communication Empirical and Quantitative Skills Teamwork Personal Responsibility Social Responsibility	Critical Thinking Communication Empirical and Quantitative Skills Teamwork Personal Responsibility Social Responsibility
Student Work Assessed		Critical Thinking Communication Empirical and Quantitative Skills	Teamwork Personal Responsibility Social Responsibility	Critical Thinking Communication Empirical and Quantitative Skills Teamwork Personal Responsibility Social Responsibility

Table 3 below identifies the schedule that will be followed in order to administer the CLA+ and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to appropriate groups of students.

Table 3 Schedule for Administration of CLA+ *and NSSE*

Assessment	Time Frame	Students Involved
CLA+	Fall 2014 and every fall thereafter	First Time in College (FTIC)
CLA+	Fall 2015 and every fall thereafter	Sophomores with 45-60 SCHs
National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)	Spring 2015 and each odd-numbered year	FTIC students and seniors

Careful attention will be given to students' responses to questions from CLA+ and NSSE that directly address the Core Curriculum Objectives.

Plan for Assessing Student Work

Identification of Student Work in Core Courses

Faculty in each department proposing a course for inclusion in the core have identified specific course assignments (e.g., term papers, projects, speeches, presentations) used to measure student mastery of each required or optionally selected core objective for the Foundational Component Area in which the course is to be included (refer to the Foundational Component Area Table above). An assignment may be used to measure multiple objectives. Faculty will ensure that the identified assignments provide students the opportunity to clearly demonstrate their mastery of the associated objective(s). A clear description of the assignment and the means of assessment were submitted with the Request for Courses in the Core Curriculum.

Proposed assignments were reviewed and approved by the UCCC for effectiveness and fit for assessment of required and optionally selected objectives. Departments were notified of approval of their assignments as the committee reviewed them. If an assignment was found to be inappropriate for assessment, the department was be immediately notified and the submission of a new assignment was requested. All assignments were reviewed, approved, and departments notified by April 30, 2013. The UCCC approved all assessment plans prior to the delivery of any course included in the new core. Without an approved assessment plan a course will not be offered for core credit. The assessment process will be continuously monitored and modified to ensure appropriate assessment of all core objectives.

Descriptions of Embedded Assignments Used for Assessment

Embedded assignments to be used for core assessment may include, but are not limited to, lab reports, term/research papers, videos of speeches or presentations, essays, and journal entries.

> **Critical Thinking Skills:** assignments that allow students to demonstrate the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion. Critical thinking can be demonstrated in assignments that require students to complete analyses of texts, data, or issues. Assignments focused on the evaluation of information sources and student reflection may also be appropriate.

Communication Skills: any assignment that requires students to present a grammatically correct essay or speech effectively organized with an introduction, conclusion, thesis statement, supportive reasoning, and appropriately documented evidence. If the assignment is an oral presentation, the assignment should also require effective verbal and nonverbal delivery. Visual design elements should be incorporated into any communication assignment. Visual elements include, but are not limited to graphs, tables, charts, slides, videos, presentation graphics, etc.

Empirical and Quantitative Skills: assignments from any discipline where scientific or mathematical analysis may be required. Empirical skills must address the thinking process as it is demonstrated through observation, experimentation, and/or experience and that can be demonstrated through quantitative data and/or qualitative reasoning. Quantitative skills will ideally demonstrate a student's higher-order thinking capabilities through the use of applied mathematics and/or math assignments that have a purpose beyond merely providing the 'right' answer to a group of math problems.

Teamwork: assignments that demonstrate the quality of the teamwork process rather than the end result. Assignments must also demonstrate evidence of an individual's contribution and interaction within a team.

Personal Responsibility: assignments that require students to reason about ethical human conduct. Assignments require students to assess their own ethical values and the social context of problems, recognize ethical issues in a variety of settings, think about how different ethical perspectives might be applied to ethical dilemmas and consider the ramifications of alternative actions.

Social Responsibility: assignments that provide students the opportunity to become involved in the civic life of their communities and develop the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make a difference in the community (Ehrlich, 2000, p. vi). Assignments also allow students to demonstrate the cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts (Bennett, 2008).

Collection of Assignments for Core Assessment

Student work identified for core assessment will be collected electronically. Faculty will provide uploading instructions to their students as a part of the instructions/guidelines for the assignment(s).

Assessment of Student Work

Common rubrics developed by faculty committees (based on AAC&U rubrics and modified for institutional use) will be used to assess student assignments.

Embedded assignments will be assessed by three to five member interdisciplinary faculty assessment teams drawn from a list of faculty nominated by departments. Members of the assessment teams will be selected and assigned by the UCCC, and serve staggered terms of 2 and 3 years. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning and the UCCC will be responsible for training members of the assessment teams. Members of the UCCC and staff from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning will work together to facilitate meetings of the assessment teams.

C. **Criteria/Targets – Explain the criteria and targets for the level of attainment of each Core Objective, include references to externally informed benchmarks;**

Collaborative discussions involving the UCCC, deans, department heads, faculty, and the Provost focused on the new core curriculum, its objectives, their implementation, and subsequent assessment using direct and indirect measures. Subcommittees were selected with input from the UCCC and chaired by members of the UCCC. Subcommittee chairs were responsible for keeping the UCCC informed of the deliberations. During discussions, attention was given to standardized assessments, national surveys and rubrics developed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities and others.

The UCCC recommended that in performance measured by the rubrics for the core curriculum, 70% of native TAMIU students would meet or exceed a *competent* level of performance. Benchmarks for attainment of mastery on core objectives using the CLA+ will be defined using baseline date from a pilot assessment in Fall 2013.

During subsequent discussion, it was agreed targets could be raised, as appropriate, based upon careful analyses of students' performance over a period of time.

D. **Analysis – Explain how the results of the assessment will be evaluated**

Faculty assessment teams and the entire UCCC will critically examine the results from the direct and indirect means of assessment after each administration period to determine the possible inferences the data may suggest. Particular attention will be given to determine if there are any trends in data and what the trends may suggest. For example, how does the performance data for students after completing 45 SCH compare across different core curriculum objectives using institutionally developed rubrics for each objective? How does students' performance compare across core curriculum objectives? How do these patterns compare with those of students who are in their senior year of their academic programs?

Actions and Follow-Up – Explain the process for improving student learning based on the assessment results.

Once faculty assessment teams have completed their analysis of the data, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning (IEP) staff will compile the assessment results and disseminate the information to the Provost, deans, UCCC, and the departments and faculty involved in teaching core curriculum courses.

The department faculty and chairs will carefully examine the assessment results for their respective areas to identify proven strengths and deficiencies and develop an instructional plan that will improve the effectiveness of their core courses. This will include an examination of assignments and attainment targets and any changes thereto. The results of these deliberations will be entered into the assessment management system for review by the Deans, Provost, and the UCCC.

The UCCC will continuously review the assessment process and its implementation and make any modifications deemed necessary. All assessment plans, results, and actions will be tracked in the assessment management system by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning. All work undertaken by the UCCC will be posted on-line for review and consideration by all segments of the university community. (http://www.tamiu.edu/adminis/avpaa/ucc/2014%20Core%20Curr%20Docs.html)

October 18, 2013, 2013