

CORE CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT

INSTRUCTOR HANDBOOK
2026-2027



Table of Contents

Core Curriculum Background.....	2
Core Curriculum Assessment Schedule.....	3
Core Curriculum Process and Due Dates.....	4
Core Curriculum Learning Outcomes.....	5
Core Curriculum Assignment Examples.....	6
Core Curriculum Rubrics.....	7-8
Core Curriculum Reporting Tool.....	9-12

Core Curriculum Background

The purpose of the Core curriculum is to ensure that Texas undergraduate students enrolled in public institutions of higher education will develop the essential knowledge and skills they need to be successful in college, in a career, in their communities, and in life. The Core curriculum facilitates the transfer of lower-division course credit among public colleges, universities, and health-related institutions throughout the state.

Core courses provide students with a rich foundation in the areas of communication; language, philosophy, and culture; American history; mathematics; life & physical science; social & behavioral science; creative arts; and political science. With the general education lenses that reflect broad ranges of perspectives, students are better able to contribute to our rapidly changing global world.

In 2011, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) adopted the Core course statewide initiative, which states that **each fall and spring Core course must integrate and assess one to two assigned Core objectives into their courses each year.**

The THECB created a list of six specific skills to be applied to Core courses on an assigned rotation to equip students with the knowledge and skills to adapt to multiple situations and careers throughout their lives. These skills include communication, critical thinking, social responsibility, personal responsibility, and the skills for this year: empirical and quantitative reasoning and teamwork.

You can find more information about the Texas Core Curriculum requirements on the [THECB's Core website](#).

And you can always reach out to the Institutional Effectiveness Office for assistance:

April Aultman Becker
Assistant Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness
April.becker@sulross.edu

Isabella Lujan
Coordinator for Institutional Effectiveness
ljh15xr@sulross.edu

Core Curriculum Assessment

THECB outlines six skills to be embedded into Core courses. SRSU assesses only two of the skills each academic year.

The skills to be assessed for Core courses in Fall 2026 and Spring 2027 for ALL Core courses are Critical Thinking AND Communication:

THECB Subject Category	Empirical & Quantitative Reasoning	Teamwork	Social Responsibility	Personal Responsibility	Critical Thinking	Communication
Communication		X		X	X	X
Mathematics	X				X	X
Life & Physical Sciences	X	X			X	X
Language, Philosophy, Culture			X	X	X	X
Creative Arts		X	X		X	X
American History			X	X	X	X
Government, Political Science			X	X	X	X
Behavioral & Social Sciences	X		X		X	X
Education	X		X		X	X
Business	X		X		X	X

For more information on what courses are Core at SRSU, see the Registrar's [Core Curriculum Website](#).

For more information on which courses must assess Core, see the [Texas General Education Core Curriculum Web Center](#).

Core Curriculum Fall and Spring Skill Assessment Process

1. Faculty will insert the THECB skill-specific student learning outcome (SLO) into their syllabi.

See page 5 for the SLOs.

2. Faculty may determine any appropriate method to assess students according to the skill-specific SLOs with the following guidelines:
 - a. The assignment must be designed as a pre and post assessment.
 - b. SRSU has a target goal of 60% of students showing improvement between the pre-assessment and post-assessment.

See page 6 for examples of assignments to meet Core SLOs.

3. Faculty will use the skill-specific rubrics to assess the pre and post assignments.

See pages 7-8 for the rubrics to use for Core.

4. Faculty will use the Core Curriculum Instructor's Assessment Collection Tool to describe the assignment and to record student achievement:
<https://srinfo.sulross.edu/ie/core-curriculum/>.

See pages 9-12 for an example of the Collection Tool.

5. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness reports university-wide results to THECB.

Core Curriculum Important Dates	
August 31, 2026	Meeting: Fall Core Curriculum Assessment Process
December 14, 2026	Reporting: Faculty submit Fall Assessment Results
January 13, 2027	Reminder: Spring Core Curriculum Assessment Process
May 10, 2027	Reporting: Faculty submit Spring Assessment Results

Skill-Specific Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for Core Courses

Core Instructors should include the **SLOs** for **Critical Thinking AND Communication** skills in your syllabi for Fall 2026 and Spring 2027.

Critical Thinking: *to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information*

SLO: Students will develop critical thinking skills to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information.

Communication: *to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication*

SLO: Students will develop communication skills to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication.

These are the other skills to be evaluated in future years:

Personal Responsibility: *to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making*

SLO: Students will develop principles of personal responsibility for living in a diverse world; to include intercultural competency, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.

Social Responsibility: *to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities*

SLO: Students will develop principles of social responsibility for living in a diverse world, to include the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making.

Empirical & Quantitative: *to include the manipulation and analysis of numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions*

SLO: Students will develop 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*

SLO: Students will develop teamwork skills to include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal.

Examples of Skill-Specific Assignments for Core Courses

Critical Thinking

Pre-Assessment	Post-Assessment
Present an article from a journal related to a concept presented within the course. Students should evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the article and identify any biases. Students should rate one another using the Critical Thinking Rubric and record scores.	An additional article could be given with the same expectations. Use the Critical Thinking Rubric to assess students and record scores to show improvement.

Communication

Pre-Assessment	Post-Assessment
Provide students with selected readings from the course content and have them write a summary addressing the five criteria on the Communication Rubric.	Provide a related reading and have students write a summary. Use the Communication Rubric to assess scores to show improvement.

Personal Responsibility

Pre-Assessment	Post-Assessment
Assign a research assignment to students about a topic in the course. Score the paper with the Personal Responsibility Rubric.	Provide students a second chance to improve the research assignment. Use the Personal Responsibility Rubric to score students.

Social Responsibility

Pre-Assessment	Post-Assessment
Have a guided group discussion about a cultural topic relevant to the course. Use the Social Responsibility Rubric to score students.	Have a similar discussion later using the Social Responsibility Rubric to score students.

Empirical & Quantitative Reasoning

Pre-Assessment	Post-Assessment
Provide students with data in tables or graphs. Ask them to quantitatively corroborate these presentations, interpret data, and justify interpretations. Use the Empirical & Quantitative Rubric to score students.	Provide another set of data with the same assignment parameters. Use the Empirical & Quantitative Rubric to score students.

Teamwork

Pre-Assessment	Post-Assessment
Have students brainstorm a topic in the course as a group. Students can rate themselves using the Teamwork Scoring Rubric and record scores.	Give another group brainstorm task and have students rate themselves again on the Teamwork Scoring Rubric and record scores.

Core Curriculum Scoring Rubric for Communication Skills

Criteria	Not Observed 0	Minimal 1	Improving 2	Proficient 3
Organization		Organizational pattern has little organizational structure; contains random unconnected elements.	Organizational pattern is observable; lacks organization and sometimes disjointed and/or awkward.	Organizational pattern is clearly and consistently observable; contains elements of transition, logical development, and coherent flow of ideas
Technique		Marginal demonstration of appropriateness and quality of technique for the chosen mode.	Attempts to demonstrate appropriateness and quality of technique for the chosen mode.	Demonstrates appropriateness and quality of technique for the chosen mode. For example, executes appropriate genre and disciplinary conventions on written works; or effective oral delivery; or notable craftsmanship of visual works.
Purpose and Audience		Minimal attention to context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned task.	Awareness of context, audience, purpose, and the assigned task. The purpose of the message is vague or unclear, and style is moderately appropriate to audience.	Demonstrates adequate consideration of context, audience, and purpose and a clear focus on the assigned task(s) (e.g., the task aligns with audience, purpose, and context). The purpose of the message can be clearly discerned, and style is appropriate to audience.
Professional or Academic Language		Many errors in grammar and format. Language choices are questionable and ineffective.	Includes some errors in grammar and format that occasionally interfere with communication. Language choices are mundane and partially effective.	Very few errors in grammar and format that do not interfere with communication. Language choices are mostly effective and contributes to the overall meaning.
Supporting Materials		Attempts to use sources to support ideas but insufficiently makes references. Fails to attribute sources as appropriate.	Attempts to use credible or relevant sources to support ideas. References may be weak and sources inconsistently attributed.	Demonstrates consistent use of credible, relevant sources to support ideas that are appropriate for the intended message or discipline. Refers to supporting information or analysis, or establishes credibility or authority on the topic, and generally attributes sources as appropriate.

This Core Curriculum Rubric was adapted from the SRSU Quality Enhancement Plan Cardinal Rubric that drew upon the Association of American Colleges and Universities oral communication VALUE rubric, the National Communication Association's Speaking and Listening Competencies for College Students, Texas A&M University's Visual Communication rubric, Otis College of Arts and Design's Fine Arts rubric, Lane Community College Communicating Effectively Rubric, and Stephen F. Austin State University's assessment rubric for Oral and Visual Communication.

Core Curriculum Scoring Rubric for Critical Thinking Skills

Criteria	Not Observed 0	Minimal 1	Improving 2	Proficient 3
Think creatively		Specific position (perspective/thesis/hypothesis) is stated but is simplistic and obvious.	Specific position (perspective/thesis/hypothesis) acknowledges different sides and aspects of an issue.	Specific position (perspective/thesis/hypothesis) takes into account the complexities of an issue.
Think in an innovative way		Demonstrates limited new ideas or approaches.	Demonstrates some new ideas or approaches.	Consistently demonstrates new ideas or approaches.
Frame questions (inquiries)		Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated without clarification or description. Content has some inaccuracies.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated, but description leaves some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplored, boundaries undetermined, inaccuracies.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated, described, accurate, and clarified so that understanding is not seriously impeded by omissions.
Synthesize multiple findings in field into larger whole		Conclusion is tied to some of the information discussed; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are oversimplified.	Conclusion is logically tied to information (because information is chosen to fit the desired conclusion); some related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.	Conclusion is logically tied to a range of information, including opposing viewpoints; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.

This rubric was created using the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) Ethical Reasoning VALUE Rubric. Retrieved from <https://www.aac11.org/value-rubrics>



Instructors will use this tool to describe the assignment and to record student achievement on both Core Curriculum COMMUNICATION and CRITICAL THINKING student learning outcomes.

Instructor's last name, first name:

Semester:

Fall

Spring

Course Name (example - Principles of Macroeconomics):

Course Prefix and Number (example - ECOA 2301):

How many students completed the COMMUNICATION Core pre-assessment?

What method did you use to assess students for the COMMUNICATION Core pre-assessment?

Test

Written assignment

Class discussion

Oral presentation

Other (please describe)

Briefly describe your Core COMMUNICATION pre-assessment:

How many students completed the COMMUNICATION Core post-assessment?

What method did you use to assess students for the Core COMMUNICATION post-assessment?

Test

Written assignment

Class discussion

Oral presentation

Other (please describe)

Briefly describe your Core COMMUNICATION post-assessment:

What percentage of students in this course improved from the pre to post Core COMMUNICATION assessment?

SRSU has a target of 60% of students improving between assignments.





How many students completed the CRITICAL THINKING Core pre-assessment?

What method did you use to assess students for the CRITICAL THINKING Core pre-assessment?

Test

Written assignment

Class discussion

Oral presentation

Other (please describe)

Briefly describe your Core CRITICAL THINKING pre-assessment:

How many students completed the CRITICAL THINKING Core post-assessment?

What method did you use to assess students for the Core CRITICAL THINKING post-assessment?

Test

Written assignment

Class discussion

Oral presentation

Other (please describe)

Briefly describe your Core CRITICAL THINKING post-assessment:

What percentage of students in this course improved from the pre to post Core CRITICAL THINKING assessment?

SRSU has a target of 60% of students improving between assignments.



If you enter less than 60% on the question that asks about whether you met the target (60% improvement) in either COMMUNICATION or CRITICAL THINKING, you will see this follow up question:



Students in this course did not meet the 60% improvement target between pre and post Core CRITICAL THINKING assessments. What actions will you take to improve student performance on this Core assessment in the future?



Upon submission, you should see a summary of your responses with the chance to download a PDF. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness will also get a summary of your responses.