

3.5.1

General Education Competencies

The institution identifies college-level education competencies and the extent to which students have attained them.

Judgment

Compliant Non-Compliant Not Applicable

Narrative

Note: Text for all linked documents below can be increased/decreased for ease of reading by pressing your keyboard's Ctrl key while rotating the mouse wheel.

Angelo State University has established a collegiate-level general education curriculum that is based on a coherent rationale, ensures breadth of knowledge, and constitutes a substantial component of the institution's undergraduate degree programs, as summarized in Core Requirement 2.7.3, General education. The general education core at ASU, known as the University Core Curriculum, conforms to requirements of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), as published in the THECB's *Core Curriculum Assumptions and Defining Characteristics (Rev. 1999)*. At ASU, the University Core Curriculum Committee (UCCC), a standing committee of the faculty, is responsible for defining the University Core Curriculum requirements in accordance with the THECB guidelines. The ASU general education core curriculum is designed to help students develop the basic intellectual competencies needed for academic success and lifelong learning, and it aligns with the ASU undergraduate learning goals and the ASU mission, values, and master goals (Vision 2020, Master Goal #4).

EXEMPLARY EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

To ensure an appropriate breadth of knowledge that promotes intellectual inquiry and provides students with varying perspectives on the human experience, the THECB has designated the following areas as required components of any core curriculum—communication, mathematics, natural sciences, humanities/fine arts, social/behavioral sciences, and one institutionally designated area. ASU has selected computer literacy as its institutionally designated area. For each of the core component areas, the THECB has also defined a set of exemplary educational objectives to guide institutions in their selection and assessment of core courses (*Core Curriculum Assumptions and Defining Characteristics (Rev. 1999)*, p. 5). These objectives correspond to the ASU undergraduate learning goals, as illustrated in the attached table, ASU Undergraduate Learning Goals and the THECB Exemplary Educational Objectives. As noted in the table, all of ASU's undergraduate learning goals link to the THECB's exemplary educational objectives for general education except for ASU goal 3, which specifically addresses specialized student learning within each degree program.

The THECB's exemplary educational objectives, which closely align with ASU's undergraduate learning goals, are the college-level general education competencies that guide assessment for the University Core Curriculum. All courses selected for inclusion in the University Core Curriculum are mapped to the

corresponding exemplary educational objectives, and individual courses in each area measure and assess a majority of the educational objectives for the respective component area (ASU Core Curriculum Courses and Corresponding Exemplary Educational Objectives).

ASSESSING STUDENT LEARNING IN THE UNIVERSITY CORE CURRICULUM

In recent years, ASU has further strengthened its commitment to promoting institutional effectiveness (Core Requirement 2.5, Institutional effectiveness) and has reinvented its assessment program, developing a campus-wide systematic approach to continuous improvement of assessment results that is integrated with the university's strategic plan (Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1.1, Institutional effectiveness: Educational programs). Historically, ASU had an outcomes-assessment program that was based primarily on summative assessments of student learning as measured by comprehensive end-of-program exams such as the ETS Major Field Tests. In contrast, the university's new student learning outcomes assessment program is based on best practices and uses measures that are collected at the student level; aggregated across students, courses, and faculty members; and analyzed for trends and needed course or curriculum improvements.

To ensure that students are attaining the exemplary educational objectives identified for the University Core Curriculum, the core curriculum is routinely assessed as a program in accordance with the assessment procedures for educational programs outlined in Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1.1. The Coordinator of Academic Assessment and a subcommittee of the UCCC share responsibility for assessing the University Core Curriculum. All academic assessment processes and instruments used in the core curriculum are applied consistently across sections of a course, regardless of delivery method. Results are separated by delivery method (online and traditional) for the purposes of comparing results and making needed improvements. See, for example, the Overall Results for Learning Goals with Weighted Averages in the Bachelor of Arts in Communication Assessment Report.

In accordance with the institution-wide efforts to improve academic assessment processes, assessment of the core curriculum has changed and improved over the past several years. The first comprehensive attempts at assessing the core curriculum were conducted in 2001–2009 using the Educational Testing Service's (ETS's) Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP) test (formerly known as the Academic Profile and now known as the ETS Proficiency Profile). In academic years 2009–2010 and 2010–2011, the institution began using embedded assessments in core courses, and as of academic year 2011–2012, direct assessments using embedded rubrics were implemented in every core course. Following is a brief summary of these recent assessment efforts.

Core Assessment 2002–2009

ASU collected information on the Education Testing Service's (ETS) MAPP test twice before 2004. The MAPP assesses critical thinking, reading, writing, and mathematics with humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences areas embedded. In AY2006-2007, all first-time ASU students were required to take the MAPP, and in AY2008-2009, a random sample of students who were still enrolled was retested as rising juniors (MAPP Results). Although gains made were extremely modest, student scores improved in all areas from the initial to the subsequent round of testing.

Core Assessment Spring 2010–Spring 2011

Beginning in the spring semester of 2010, the University Core Curriculum Committee began overseeing assessment of the core curriculum at ASU. The UCCC initiated direct assessment of the core curriculum by working with faculty members who were teaching core courses to develop course-based assessments. These course-based assessments were developed by faculty, with the approval and oversight of the UCCC. Student learning outcomes were defined for each course to align with the THECB's exemplary educational objectives, and rubrics were written to facilitate assessment. The Director of Academic Assessment (renamed Coordinator of Academic Assessment as of July 2012) met regularly with the UCCC to assist in the assessment process and to develop plans for assessing various component areas of the core curriculum. Results of core assessments that were piloted in academic years 2009–2010 and 2010–2011 are summarized in the table of Core Curriculum Assessments and Results, April 2011 (Revised October 2011).

Because of the scope of the core, the UCCC initially planned to assess the core in phases in accordance with a systematic plan by which each component of the core curriculum would be assessed every three years. In academic year 2011–2012, however, the Director of Academic Assessment and the UCCC decided to conduct a complete evaluation of the core curriculum each semester.

Direct Assessments Using Embedded Rubrics 2011–2012

Beginning in the fall of 2011, responsibility for assessing the core curriculum was assumed by the Director of Academic Assessment and a subcommittee of the UCCC. In fall 2011 and the spring of 2012, the core curriculum underwent comprehensive assessments in which each component area was assessed by the relevant exemplary educational objectives. The assessment results were broken down by core component area and course, and faculty analyzed the results and developed corresponding improvement plans for the core courses in their respective departments. Improvement plans included appropriate “closing the loop” statements in which specific changes or plans were identified to ensure continuous improvement of the core curriculum (Core Assessment Results and Improvement Plans Fall 2011; Core Assessment Results and Improvement Plans Spring 2012).

INDIRECT ASSESSMENT OF THE CORE CURRICULUM

In addition to the direct assessment of the core curriculum described above, ASU evaluates courses in the core curriculum through regular student evaluations using the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Individual Development and Educational Assessment (IDEA) Student Ratings of Instruction.

National Survey of Student Engagement

ASU participates in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) in the spring of every odd-numbered year. This survey provides data on ASU students and comparative data for the Texas Public University Group and the university's Carnegie Classification peers who participated in the survey. In the

2011 survey, the majority of ASU freshmen and seniors indicated that they were developing general education competencies, as follows:

- 81% of ASU freshmen and 81% of ASU seniors responded “quite a bit” or “very much” to the item “acquiring a broad general education.”
- 70% of ASU freshmen and 73% of ASU seniors responded “quite a bit” or “very much” to the item “writing clearly and effectively.”
- 68% of ASU freshmen and 69% of ASU seniors responded “quite a bit” or “very much” to the item “speaking clearly and effectively.”

These ASU responses are in line with those of the Texas Public University Group and the institution’s Carnegie Classification peers, as shown in the NSSE 2011 Engagement Item Frequency Distributions, Angelo State University (see items 11a, c, and d on pp. 11–12).

Individual Development and Educational Assessment

Since the fall of 1999, ASU has evaluated courses, including those in the core curriculum, every semester using the Individual Development and Educational Assessment (IDEA) Student Ratings of Instruction. In the IDEA course evaluations, students self-reflect on how much progress they have made in achieving relevant objectives as established by the instructor. The results of these assessments can be used by faculty to improve course structure and content delivery. Summary reports for groups of courses can be requested from the IDEA center, and ASU requests group summary reports for different component areas in the core curriculum. See, for example, the IDEA Summary Report for Core Curriculum Natural Sciences, Fall 2011. Other examples are available onsite.