

2.7.3

General Education

In each undergraduate degree program, the institution requires the successful completion of a general education component at the collegiate level that (1) is a substantial component of each undergraduate degree, (2) ensures breadth of knowledge, and (3) is based on a coherent rationale. For degree completion in associate programs, the component constitutes a minimum of 15 semester hours or the equivalent; for baccalaureate programs, a minimum of 30 semester hours or the equivalent. These credit hours are to be drawn from and include at least one course from each of the following areas: humanities/fine arts; social/behavioral sciences; and natural science/mathematics. The courses do not narrowly focus on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession. If an institution uses a unit other than semester credit hours, it provides an explanation for the equivalency. The institution also provides a justification if it allows for fewer than the required number of semester credit hours or its equivalent unit of general education courses.

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 below.

OVERVIEW AND RATIONALE FOR UNIVERSITY CORE CURRICULUM

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) has long directed Texas universities to a common core curriculum, in accordance with state law. The general education core at ASU, known as the University Core Curriculum, conforms to the THECB regulations, which require every public institution of higher education in Texas to establish a core curriculum of at least 42 semester credit hours (19 TAC §4.28).

Core Curriculum Based on Coherent Rationale

Specific requirements and a coherent rationale for the state's general education parameters are published in the THECB's *Core Curriculum Assumptions and Defining Characteristics (Rev. 1999)*. Recognizing that the ultimate responsibility for any core curriculum rests with the faculty at each institution, the THECB does not attempt to "prescribe a specific set of core courses or a single core curriculum that would be uniform across all Texas colleges and universities." Instead, the THECB defines the general education parameters that are to inform each institution's core curriculum, including basic intellectual competencies and perspectives, core component areas, and exemplary educational outcomes. Each institution is

responsible for describing its core curriculum and identifying specific core courses and course content based on these parameters.

Angelo State University Core Curriculum

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). The University Core Curriculum is a set of 44 semester credit hours of core courses, including 6 hours of English (composition), 3 hours of oral communication, 3 hours of mathematics, 8 hours of laboratory science courses, 3 hours from the humanities (sophomore literature), 3 hours from the visual and performing arts, 6 hours of government, 6 hours from history, 3 hours from the social sciences, and 3 hours of computer literacy (ASU Undergraduate Catalog 2011–2012, pp. 361–363 and Core Requirements web page).

ASU also currently offers one associate's degree, the Associate of Applied Science in Nursing (AASN). The AASN core of 27 hours, listed in "Other Requirements" on page 230, includes biology, English composition, computer literacy, mathematics, and psychology (ASU Undergraduate Catalog 2011–2012, p. 229-230). This degree program is being closed and ASU is not taking any more applicants. The final cohort will graduate in May 2013.

Discipline-Specific Core Requirements

Although the University Core Curriculum is a common requirement of all undergraduate programs at ASU, individual departments can choose, from the list of approved core courses, specific requirements for a particular program. Specific requirements in each major reinforce the general education competencies through selected courses involving writing, oral communication, critical thinking, and/or ethical reasoning and responsibilities as appropriate to the given discipline. For example, several departments have particular computer literacy requirements within their programs (e.g., Theatre majors must complete THE 2345 for their computer literacy requirement). Allowing individual programs to designate specific courses from the list of approved core courses helps ensure that the University Core Curriculum is directly related and appropriate to the purpose and goals of both the institution and the specific degree program (see also Federal Requirement 4.2, Program curriculum).

Students who change degree programs within ASU are required to satisfy requirements of the University Core Curriculum as specified for the newly selected degree program. Program-specific requirements are published under each program description in the ASU Undergraduate Catalog 2011–2012 (pp. 54–288), and a table summarizing the core curriculum requirements for all ASU degree programs is attached. These degree requirements conform to commonly accepted standards and practices for degree programs, as discussed in Comprehensive Standard 3.5.3, Undergraduate program requirements.

Core Curriculum as Substantial Portion of Degree Program

All baccalaureate degree programs at ASU require at least 120 semester credit hours, and some degree programs have higher minimum requirements. Programs that include teacher certification require a

minimum of 128 semester credit hours, and the hybrid bachelor's and master's degree programs in the College of Business require a minimum of 154 semester credit hours, of which 118 are at the undergraduate level (ASU Undergraduate Catalog 2011–2012, pp. 55–56). Thus, the University Core Curriculum of 44 semester credit hours constitutes between 34 percent (44 out of 128 semester credit hours) and 37 percent (44 out of 118–120 semester credit hours) of the total semester credit hours required for a bachelor's degree.

Breadth of Knowledge

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)*). 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.

Collegiate Nature of Core Curriculum

The exemplary educational objectives for each of the required core component areas help ensure that courses selected for the core curriculum are at the collegiate level. In addition, the THECB has defined college-level intellectual competencies and perspectives that are to be integrated throughout the curriculum.

The basic intellectual competencies defined by the THECB include reading, writing, speaking, listening, critical thinking, and computer literacy. Noting that "students can be expected to come to college with some experience in exercising these competencies," the THECB also acknowledges that students "often need further instruction and practice to meet college standards." College-level standards are defined for each of the competencies. For example, reading at the college level is defined as "the ability to analyze and interpret a variety of printed materials" and a "core curriculum should offer students the opportunity to master both general methods of analyzing printed materials and specific methods for analyzing the subject matter of individual disciplines" (*Core Curriculum Assumptions and Defining Characteristics (Rev. 1999)*). Similarly, the ASU Undergraduate Learning Goals emphasize the attainment of college-level competencies in core skills, including, for example, the demonstrated ability to "comprehend and critically interpret information in written and oral forms."

The core curriculum is also designed to provide students with multiple perspectives on the human experience. To this end, the THECB has identified a set of eight perspectives that are to be addressed by courses in the core curriculum. For example, courses in the core curriculum should "Stimulate a capacity to discuss and reflect upon individual, political, economic, and social aspects of life in order to understand ways in which to be a responsible member of society" (*Core Curriculum Assumptions and Defining*

Characteristics (Rev. 1999)). These perspectives closely align with the ASU Undergraduate Learning Goals related to social responsibility and cultural identity.

ENSURING THE QUALITY OF THE UNIVERSITY CORE CURRICULUM

Through systematic policies and procedures governing the review of core courses and the acceptance of academic credit, ASU ensures the collegiate-level quality of all courses in its University Core Curriculum, in accordance with the Commission's policy, *The Quality and Integrity of Undergraduate Degrees*.

Review of the University Core Curriculum

The University Core Curriculum Committee reviews new and revised course descriptions to determine which courses meet the college-level general education requirements outlined by the THECB and to ensure alignment with relevant exemplary educational objectives and ASU Undergraduate Learning Goals. Courses recommended for inclusion in the core curriculum by the UCCC are forwarded to the University Curriculum Committee for review and approval in accordance with ASU policies and procedures governing curricular change (see ASU OP 04.05, Approval Process for New Degree Programs and Comprehensive Standard 3.4.1, Program approval). Evidence of this curriculum change process is provided in the following documents: Request Curriculum Change, add Math 1333 to core; Request Curriculum Change, delete Communication 2345 from core; University Core Curriculum minutes October 14, 2011 p 2 Course Deletions; Math 1333 Sample Syllabus; and THECB letter February 8, 2012. Once approved, core courses are listed in the appropriate category of the University Core Curriculum. Attached is a table of ASU core curriculum courses and corresponding exemplary educational objectives.

To ensure that each course in the core curriculum is evaluated in relationship to the institution's overall rationale for general education, the University Core Curriculum is routinely assessed in accordance with the assessment procedures for educational programs outlined in Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1, Institutional effectiveness. The Director of Academic Assessment and a subcommittee of the UCCC share responsibility for assessing the University Core Curriculum, and the most recent assessment of the curriculum was completed in fall 2011. More information about the assessment process, including summary information about the assessment results, is provided in Comprehensive Standard 3.5.1, General education competencies.

Transfer of Credit for University Core Curriculum

Texas law requires public institutions in Texas to accept as transfer credit a core curriculum completed at another accredited Texas public university or college (19 TAC §4.28 p. 4 Transfer of Credit). In accordance with this legislation, ASU will accept as transfer credit the entire core curriculum completed at another accredited Texas public university or college (Transfer Credit Guidelines, Completion of Core Requirements section). Core curriculum credits from private institutions in Texas and from out-of-state institutions are not necessarily transferred as core credits. Instead, the Office of Admissions evaluates such course work by reviewing course descriptions and degree plans, in consultation with the appropriate department heads and deans as needed. If it is determined that a course is equivalent to a core course at ASU, equivalent core credit is granted. Non-core-curriculum credits are evaluated in the same manner. Please see Comprehensive Standard 3.4.4, Acceptance of Academic Credit, for additional information about ASU transfer policies.