

The TCU Core Curriculum

The educational experience offered by Texas Christian University reflects its membership in the worldwide academy of learning. The intellectual traditions of the University, honed by the scholarship and creativity of successive generations of faculty, are founded upon a rational and reflective examination of humanity and its natural and social environments. The essential elements of these traditions are captured in our general education (“core”) curriculum.

The goals of our core curriculum are described clearly in the Heritage, Philosophy and Goals section of the *TCU Faculty/Staff Handbook*:

The University . . . regards as essential the advancement and communication of general knowledge which enables students to understand the past, to comprehend the natural and social order, to search for the good and the beautiful, and to integrate knowledge into significant wholes.

The design of courses and curricula is a principal responsibility of faculty. The many faculty who have participated in the development of our new core have attempted to serve the best interests of TCU students by designing a curriculum that:

- embodies the liberal arts ethos of Texas Christian University;
- facilitates a focus on educational outcomes and assessment;
- shows sensitivity to the special needs of students in different colleges and degree programs by providing a core that is lean in the required number of hours (to accommodate those in professional programs) yet capable of being expanded by individual Colleges to meet their needs; and
- provides fresh intellectual challenges and opportunities for faculty as well as for students.

The TCU Core Curriculum has three components: the Essential Competencies Curriculum (12 hours plus 6 hours Writing Emphasis), the Human Experiences and Endeavors Curriculum (27 hours), and the Heritage, Mission, Vision, and Values Curriculum (18 hours which may overlay with other elements of a student’s degree requirements). The required minimum hours are 39 (12 EC + 27 HEE), with an additional 6 hours of writing emphasis plus a substantial overlay component (18 HMVV) which can be provided by coupling overlay outcomes with the HEE Curriculum or with the major, minor, or general curriculum.

Essential Competencies (12 hours plus 6 hours Writing Emphasis)

Courses in this curriculum are designed to provide a base of skills to ensure students’ abilities to communicate clearly and think analytically. Its focus is effective writing, mathematical reasoning, and oral communication.

Human Experience and Endeavors (27 hours)

Courses in this curriculum will explore significant achievements and discoveries in the Humanities, Fine Arts, Social Sciences and Natural Sciences. Its aim, in accordance with the statement quoted above, is to develop students’ knowledge of the human condition and its connections to the good and the beautiful (Humanities and Fine Arts) and to the natural and social orders (Natural and Social Sciences).

Heritage, Mission, Vision, and Values (18 hours)

Courses in this curriculum will cultivate the broader skills and awareness associated with TCU's distinctive Heritage, Mission, Vision, and Values. TCU's Heritage will be explored via the study of Religious Traditions, Historical Traditions, and Literary Traditions. Similarly, TCU's Mission, Vision, and Values will be explored via courses that focus on Cultural Awareness, Global Awareness, and Citizenship and Social Values.

By design, these HMVV categories are not bound to any particular discipline or department. For example, courses proposed for Religious Traditions, Historical Traditions, or Literary Traditions need not be offered by the English, Religion, or History Departments. By opening each category to a range of disciplinary perspectives, we hope to encourage pedagogical innovation and conversation across traditional disciplinary boundaries.

Courses proposed for the HMVV curriculum may also meet the outcomes of a category in the HEE curriculum or couple with courses required for the major, minor or general curriculum. For example, a Sociology course might simultaneously satisfy the outcomes of Social Science and Cultural Awareness. If so, the student taking such a course would receive three credit hours and would have satisfied a Social Science requirement and the Cultural Awareness requirement with one three credit course. As another example, a course required for the B.B.A. degree might satisfy the outcomes for the Global Awareness category, in which case the student enrolled in such a course would receive three hours credit and would satisfy one of the requirements of the B.B.A degree and the Global Awareness requirement with one three credit course.

Outcomes and Assessment

The new undergraduate core is expressed as a series of learning competencies and outcomes, which represents a deliberate move towards a student-centered curriculum and away from the traditional emphasis on delivery of instruction. New core courses will be designed in accordance with the educational outcomes of the category (or categories) for which they are proposed. This design will also serve to facilitate the assessment of the new core. The purpose of the assessment process will be to determine how well students are attaining the educational outcomes in each category and to determine the effectiveness of the new core curriculum in fulfilling the TCU mission statement. Knowledge obtained from the assessment of the new core will guide faculty in the ongoing revision of their courses and also provide a mechanism to determine if the core categories and outcomes themselves need to be changed.

Requisite for Success

The success of the new core will require a university-wide effort to attract outstanding students and to educate them in the ends and means of the liberal arts. The new core represents more than a marketing instrument or a means to assessment. It should provide a foundation that will encourage personal and professional growth for TCU graduates. Further, students should come to understand how and why such a foundation is important for lifelong success. This will require renewed commitments at all levels of the University – trustees and administration; admissions, marketing, and student services; and individual departments and faculty – to the educational core of TCU's Heritage, Mission, Vision, and Values.