Core Objectives

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has identified 6 new core objectives for our 8 foundational component areas of academic courses we teach. In the screenshot below, the blue check marks identify which of the 6 core objectives must be included in your syllabus at least by Fall 2014, depending on which foundational component area your course falls.

If your course does not fall into one of these foundational component areas, you must include the Critical thinking skills (CT) and the Communication skills (COM) objectives in your course plus any others that are appropriate.

If your course is a workforce course, you should use the Course Objectives and/or Learning Outcomes listed for your course in the Workforce Education Course Manual at THECB’s website.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foundational Component Area</th>
<th>Core Objectives Required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>CT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses in this category focus on developing ideas and expressing them clearly, considering the effect of the message, fostering understanding, and building the skills needed to communicate persuasively. Courses involve the command of oral, aural, written, and visual literacy skills that enable people to exchange messages appropriate to the subject, occasion, and audience.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses in this category focus on quantitative literacy in logic, patterns, and relationships. Courses involve the understanding of key mathematical concepts and the application of appropriate quantitative tools to everyday concepts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life and Physical Sciences</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses in this category focus on describing, explaining, and predicting natural phenomena using the scientific method. Courses involve the understanding of interactions among natural phenomena and the implications of scientific principles on the physical world and on human experiences.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language, Philosophy &amp; Culture</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses in this category focus on how ideas, values, beliefs, and other aspects of culture express and affect human experience. Courses involve the exploration of ideas that foster aesthetic and intellectual creation in order to understand the human condition across cultures.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Arts</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses in this category focus on the appreciation and analysis of creative artifacts and works of the human imagination. Courses involve the synthesis and interpretation of artistic expressions and enable critical, creative, and innovative communication about works of art.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American History</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses in this category focus on the consideration of past events and ideas relative to the United States, with the option of including Texas History for a portion of this component area. Courses involve the interaction among individuals, communities, states, the nation, and the world, considering how these interactions have contributed to the development of the United States and its global role.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government/Political Science</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses in this category focus on the consideration of the Constitution of the United States and the constitutions of the states, with special emphasis on that of Texas. Courses involve the analysis of governmental institutions, political behavior, civic engagement, and their political and philosophical foundations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and Behavioral Sciences</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses in this category focus on the application of empirical and scientific methods that contribute to the understanding of what makes us human. Courses involve the exploration of behavior and interactions among individuals, groups, institutions, and events, examining their impact on the individual, society, and cultures.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Component Area Option</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses used to complete the Component Area Option must meet the definition and criteria specified in one or more of the foundational component areas above. The Core Objectives required in the corresponding foundational component area apply to each course used to fulfill the Component Area Option.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Core objective definitions

- CT = Critical thinking skills – to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information
- COM = Communication skills – to include effective written, oral, and visual communication
- EQS = Empirical and quantitative skills – to include the manipulation and analysis of numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions
- TW = Teamwork – to include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal
- SR = Social responsibility – to include intercultural competency, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities
- PR = Personal responsibility – to include the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making

You can learn more about this at the THECB’s website at http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/index.cfm?objectid=6F049CAE-F54E-26E4-ED9F0DAC62FABF7D
Learning Outcomes

Academic courses
In addition to the core objectives, the Learning Outcomes Project being completed by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board identifies specific minimum learning outcomes each academic course must include, no matter which state college/university is offering the course in the state of Texas. You are free to add additional learning outcomes to your course if appropriate.

Most courses already have the minimum learning outcomes identified by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. You can find the learning outcomes for your course by searching the latest Lower Division Academic Course Guide Manual at http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/aar/undergraduateed/workforceed/acgm.htm.

If there are no learning outcomes listed there, it is your responsibility to include appropriate learning outcomes in your course as long as they are “measurable.” If you need help, discuss it with your division director.

Workforce education courses
Locate the minimum learning outcomes to include in your course syllabus by referring to the Workforce Education Course Manual at http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/AAR/UndergraduateEd/WorkforceEd/wecm/

Learning Outcomes must be written using “measurable” terms.
If you have to develop your own learning outcomes or plan to add additional ones beyond the required ones listed in the Academic Course Guide Manual or Workforce Education Course Manual, read this information carefully.

Learning outcomes are specific measurable outcomes you expect students to achieve at different times throughout your course. They have to be “measurable” so that you can assess whether students have actually achieved the outcomes. The learning outcomes from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board are already written in measurable terms for both academic and workforce education courses.

Use the information below to help you write new learning outcomes in measurable terms.

Below are examples of measurable terms to include in a student Learning Outcome:

- explain
- apply
- predict
- identify
- employ
- evaluate
- describe
- illustrate
- defend
- integrate
- use
- assess
- contrast
- interpret
- distinguish
- sort
- categorize
- diagram
- solve
- formulate
- report
- relate
- organize
- restate
- recall
- prepare
- review
- list
- arrange
- classify
- name
- construct
- translate
- recognize
- create
- discriminate

General terms such as those listed below are inadequate because they are open to many interpretations. They are non-specific and are not measurable. They could, however, be used in writing broad objectives.

Avoid using terms like the following when writing learning outcomes:

- know
- fully appreciate
- have an awareness of
- understand
Coordinate Core Objectives and Learning Outcomes

Background Information:
Our accrediting association (SACS) has begun looking closely to see if all courses are coordinating the core objectives and learning outcomes for our academic course in these four places:

- Master Syllabus – obtained from Clarendon College’s home page (Faculty & Staff > Syllabi > Master Syllabi)
- Individual Syllabi from each instructor teaching the same course – all use Master Syllabus as template
- Online courses – information in the overview of each unit
- Annual program evaluation – developed by program coordinator

Details and Examples

Master Syllabus and Individual Syllabi
The new core objectives and minimum learning outcomes from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board must be included in not only the master syllabus for each course but in all individual syllabi developed from a master syllabus. You are free to add other learning outcomes as well as broad objectives to your syllabi if appropriate. You can often find broad objectives for the course in your textbook. (Objectives are different from learning outcomes and do not have to be written in “measurable” terms.)

Below are two examples of ways to incorporate the new core objectives and new learning outcomes into your course syllabus:

This example comes from a BIOL 1411 syllabus:

In accordance with recommendations from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, all life and physical science courses at Clarendon College will address the following core objectives:

- Critical Thinking Skills – including creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.
- Communication Skills – including effective written, oral, and visual communication.
- Empirical and Quantitative Skills – including application of scientific and mathematical concepts.
- Teamwork – including the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal.

Student Learning Outcomes: Upon successful completion of General Botany, the student should be able to...

- Demonstrate critical thinking skills by comparing and contrasting mitosis and meiosis.
- Demonstrate communication skills by preparing a written report and giving a presentation over a plant.
- Demonstrate empirical and quantitative skills by solving genetics problems.
- Demonstrate teamwork by successfully completing group projects during lab.

This example comes from an ENGL 2332 syllabus:

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:**
Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

1. Identify key ideas, representative authors and works, significant historical or cultural events, and characteristic perspectives or attitudes expressed in the literature of different periods or regions.
2. Analyze literary works as expressions of individual or communal values within the social, political, cultural, or religious contexts of different literary periods.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of the development of characteristic forms or styles of expression during different historical periods or in different regions.
4. Articulate the aesthetic principles that guide the scope and variety of works in the arts and humanities.
5. Write research-based critical papers about the assigned readings in clear and grammatically correct prose, using various critical approaches to literature.

**CORE OBJECTIVES:**

- Critical Thinking Skills
  - to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information
- Communication Skills
  - to include development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication
- Social Responsibility
  - to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities
Online courses – information in the overview of each unit
In the overview of each of your online course units, identify which of the learning outcomes from your syllabus students should expect to achieve in that unit. Also, identify which specific activity in that unit assesses whether students have achieved each particular learning outcome listed for that unit.

You need to do this for every learning outcome in your syllabus. You may need to list a learning outcome in several units if it is assessed in several units. All learning outcomes listed in the syllabus should be identified in at least one of your course units.

Example

In the master syllabus and individual syllabus for a course, one of the learning outcomes is to:

*Demonstrate proper file management techniques to manipulate files and folders.*

In the online course that same learning outcome is identified as being one that students should achieve in Unit 1. It is assessed with the Windows Assignment included in that unit.

**The following statement is included in the overview of Unit 1:**

*In this unit students will demonstrate proper file management techniques to manipulate files and folders in the Windows Assignment.*

Annual Program Evaluation
If you are a program coordinator it is your responsibility to complete the annual program evaluation. In it you evaluate whether students taking courses in your program are achieving certain learning outcomes that are listed in the master syllabi of those courses. You do not evaluate every learning outcome from the syllabi every year but must address all learning outcomes over a 3-year period as determined in the course’s Assessment Planning sheet. All teachers who teach the same course (full-time and adjunct) should be accumulating the data results needed for the learning outcomes being assessed for the annual program evaluation. Separate results should be kept for face-to-face courses and for online courses. It is the program coordinator’s responsibility to coordinate this. If you need help, contact your division director.

Example

**Core Objective 1:** Critical thinking skills – to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information

**Learning Outcome 2:**
The learner shall demonstrate proper file management techniques to manipulate files and folders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Criteria &amp; Evaluation Methods</th>
<th>Assessment Results</th>
<th>Use of Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In a hands-on Windows assignment, students will demonstrate their ability to properly manipulate files and folders is “Above Average” or “Excellent.”</td>
<td>In the Fall 2011 / Spring 2012 semester 56% of students demonstrated their ability to properly manipulate files and folders as “Above Average” or “Excellent.” This compares to 70% the previous year.</td>
<td>We have determined this is significant drop and will include at least one additional hands-on practice activity for students to complete to see if it improves the students’ ability to achieve this learning outcome.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>