

**Spring 2017**

## **UHD Gen Ed Core Assessment Fact Sheet**

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) requires all state universities to teach certain skills in the General Education Common Core and has mandated where in the core they should be taught (see separate Core Mapping Chart). The THECB also requires UHD to assess how well these skills (known as “Common Core Objectives”) are being learned by its students and produce regular reports.

### **Core Assessment Plan**

UHD (via faculty work groups and UCC) designed an assessment plan to identify objectives and assessment measures to determine student attainment of the Core Objectives. We have put the objectives into a 3-year rotation for collection and assessment. In 2017-18, we will enter the final year of our initial 3-year pilot. We use **Signature Assignments as the primary direct assessment tool.**

### **What is a Signature Assignment?**

A Signature Assignment is an assignment that addresses the core objectives identified for “emphasis/assessment” in their core areas and matches the relevant rubric for core assessment. E.g., as per the Core Mapping Chart, if you are in the LPC band, you need to develop an assignment that addresses the area of Personal Responsibility as defined by the THECB and represented in the rubric.

### **How do we use the Signature Assignment in Core assessment?**

- Faculty create the Signature Assignment for their Core Objective Area to meet required elements of the relevant **Core Rubric(s)\*** found at <https://www.uhd.edu/about/ie/Pages/core-assessment.aspx>
- General Education Committee reviews assignments to ensure they align with relevant Core Rubric.
- The Signature Assignment becomes a required standing component of courses/sections for which it was proposed.
- Students submit their Signature Assignments via Blackboard each long semester in the year of collection. (Currently faculty have been using the archive in BB2—TK20 will likely be the future site.)
- The Office of Institutional Effectiveness will draw a random sample of student work (based on predetermined target demographics)
- Students/faculty identifiers will be removed
- A group of faculty evaluators will apply the relevant rubric to the sample artifacts.
- Results are reported to the faculty and strategies for improvement are identified and implemented if necessary via processes described in recently circulated Gen Ed policy (pending final approval).

\*The **Core Rubrics** are based on national AAC&U resources because, as part of the THECB requirements, we must have an external comparison for our data and the THECB core is modeled on the AAC&U program. The rubrics were reviewed and finalized by UHD faculty in Fall 2014. Part of our pilot assessment is to consider any needed changes to the rubrics as well as the student learning/teaching components.

### **Who Designs the Signature Assignment?**

There are many ways that a Signature Assessment can be developed in a discipline or core area:

- All faculty teaching in a given course collaborate and develop a common assignment
- There is an agreed-upon common assignment shell that faculty customize to the emphasis and subject of the class
- Only adjuncts use a common assignment/shell; all FT faculty create their own assignments
- Every faculty creates his/her own signature assignment

All assignments should be submitted to and reviewed by the UHD General Education Committee prior to implementation.

### **What are the Requirements for a Signature Assignment?**

- Must produce an artifact
- Must be aligned with the relevant rubric (e.g., allow students to demonstrate their attainment)
- Should count for some kind of credit in the course (to increase student commitment)
- Should be identified on the syllabus as a signature assignment (to increase visibility across core)

*Tips-* based on the past two years of assessment cycles and faculty input:

- The most effective signature assignments allow the students time to complete the work and thus assignments like in-class essay exam are not ideal unless students are prepared in advance.
- Work that is completed toward the end of the semester allows more time for students to acquire and employ relevant skills.
- A single Signature Assignment could address multiple rubrics/objectives if carefully designed.

### **What is the Process for Developing a Signature Assignment?**

- Work collaboratively within your discipline to determine how the faculty would like to design the signature assignments.
- Submit the draft assignments to the Gen Ed Committee via Karen Kaser (ideally by May 10)
- Make any necessary revisions based on feedback (over summer and/or perhaps at department/discipline meetings in August)
- Faculty in disciplines should inform colleagues, work with new faculty and adjuncts who will be teaching the relevant course to integrate the signature assignment into their classes.
- Implement signature assignments in Fall 2017 and Spring 2018.

### **Resources**

- Any General Education Committee members, chaired by Karen Kaser.
- Lea Campbell--the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.
- Website--the Gen Ed Committee is also working to develop better online resources and will communicate with all faculty when it's available.

### **Other Notes**

***Do faculty need to change the content of a course to cover information relevant to the signature assignment?*** Perhaps. Ideally, the objectives are already relevant to your course, but you may need to adjust pedagogy or content to better align with the outcomes and/or signature assignment that you design.

***Do faculty have to use the rubric to grade the work in their classes?*** No. Faculty can evaluate the signature assignment as they wish in their own courses. The rubric will be applied in the General Education assessment process which is “blind”—all student/faculty markers are removed.