

USG Core Curriculum Initiative

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the University System of Georgia Core Curriculum Framework?

For over 100 years, undergraduate education in the United States has been divided into two basic components: general education and study in a major field of specialization. General Education provides students with foundational knowledge and abilities thought to be essential for becoming an educated person and for more advanced study in a major.

Within the University System of Georgia (USG), the core curriculum framework is that component of the general education curriculum common to all USG institutions. It consists of credit hour and distribution requirements and also regulations guiding transfer of credit between system institutions. Additional information can be found [here](#).

When was this framework created?

The current USG core curriculum framework was created during the semester conversion process and was adopted by the Board of Regents in 1996.

Why should we undertake core curriculum framework revision at this point in time?

There is probably no perfect time for the review and the revision of a curriculum framework that impact 35 diverse institutions in a complex state system.

However, any curriculum, including the System core curriculum framework, must be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure its currency and effectiveness. It has been ten years since the last core curriculum framework review.

This timing also is responsive to an emerging national consensus among higher education leaders that public education must re-focus its expectations for student learning if our nation is to remain competitive in the technologically interconnected, global environment of the 21st century. Since students within the University System spend most of their first two years of college completing the core curriculum, its academic viability and success in preparing students for the future are key indicators of educational quality in the University System of Georgia.

Why not modify the existing core curriculum framework rather than create a new one?

It is not clear whether the next USG core curriculum framework will be viewed as a modification of the existing framework or as the creation of a new framework. This may depend on the extent to which features of the current core curriculum framework are retained in the successor framework.

For example, the current core curriculum framework includes a set of [learning outcomes that define competency for core knowledge and ability areas](#). The revised core curriculum framework will also be structured in terms of learning outcomes, and a number of outcomes included in the current core curriculum may well be retained in the revised framework. However, unlike the current framework, the revised framework will seek to provide a clearer roadmap with respect to the minimal level of mastery or proficiency that the USG expects its students to achieve.

Will faculty be involved in the process?

Yes, faculty expertise will be critical in identifying core competencies and appropriate standards of student achievement.

How will the revision process be handled?

President Dorothy Leland is accountable for the success of the core curriculum initiative, which falls under the oversight of a three person Regents Committee. Chancellor Davis has appointed a Steering Committee to provide President Leland with input on process design, implementation, and communication strategies.

Several different committees, each charged with accomplishing specific tasks, will carry out the revision process. Initially, these committees will include (1) a Core Curriculum Competencies Committee, which will make initial recommendations regarding the foundational knowledge and abilities that students need to master through their core curriculum studies; and (2) a Curriculum Design & Assessment Committee, which will focus on organizing these competencies into a coherent curriculum framework that reflects the initiative's objectives with respect to delivery and transferability.

Institutions and their faculties will have opportunities to provide input and feedback at key milestones along the way.

What do "competency" and "competency based curriculum" mean?

"Competency" in the context of the core curriculum project serves as a shorthand reference for student mastery of learning outcomes associated with core knowledge and abilities. The project asks us to identify what our students should know (core knowledge) and be able to do (core abilities) through the USG core curriculum. It also asks us to be clear about the level of mastery or proficiency that we expect them to achieve. A curriculum that is designed explicitly as a response to these questions is a competency based curriculum.

How will the new core curriculum affect transfer?

The current core curriculum framework facilitates transfer of credit between USG institutions. Specifically, the core curriculum completed at one System institution is fully transferable to another System institution for the same major. This transferability also holds for completion of any one or more of the six sub-areas of the curriculum.

The updated core curriculum framework will preserve the University System's transfer goals while also placing a stronger emphasis on linking the transfer of credit to minimally acceptable levels of student achievement.

Will all USG institutions be required to deliver the same core curriculum?

No. One of the goals of this initiative is to develop a system-wide core curriculum framework that articulates some common learning outcomes ("competencies") but also

provides considerable flexibility to institutions to develop curricula responsive to specific student populations and different institutional missions.

Will Area F be included in the curriculum framework revision?

As envisioned, the core curriculum initiative will not pertain to Area F in the current core curriculum framework. Area F focuses on lower-division prerequisites for transfer into a specific major and such prerequisites can be preserved and reviewed outside of the core curriculum framework.

Will this project result in an increased system-wide use of standardized tests?

The core curriculum project will recommend mastery or proficiency expectations (standards) for each core competency area. However, it will not prescribe the particular assessment tools (curriculum embedded assessments, standardized tests, etc.) to be used in measuring this achievement.

Independent of the core curriculum initiative, the University System may consider instruments such as the CLA, MAPP, or CAAP to measure institutional and system performance in broad ability areas. Currently, University System institutions use the NSSE and CCSSE to measure student engagement.

Will raising expectations with respect to student achievement affect the System's retention and graduation goals?

As educators, we cannot reasonably ask students to achieve at higher levels without providing ways for helping them to do so. If the core curriculum project recommends higher levels of performance in competency areas such as written communication or quantitative reasoning, the University System will recommend corresponding actions for facilitating student success. These actions could include better alignment between the University System and its K-12 educational partners.

Will an emphasis on student performance expectations result in a narrow focus on "teaching to the competencies?"

Although the USG core curriculum will articulate minimum expectations with respect to student mastery or proficiency, institutions will be provided with flexibility in designing institutional core curricula consistent with the University System framework and responsive to differing institutional missions and student characteristics. This means that institutions will be able to enrich their local core curricula in ways that enhance the undergraduate learning experience.

As with the current University System core curriculum, the revised core also will articulate a set of principles related to the quality of the student learning experience, effective pedagogies, and educational best practices. As educators, we must continually strive to motivate student learning and to stimulate the imaginations and intellects of our students through effective teaching.

Will the new core curriculum framework require the creation of new courses?

Yes, it is quite likely that some existing courses will need to be revised and some new courses created once an updated core curriculum has been established. This would occur after the University System Board of Regents has approved an updated core curriculum framework.

Will core curriculum revision be an unfunded mandate?

Creating a competency based core curriculum framework is part of the system's strategic plan, and Chancellor Davis is committed to a funding allocation strategy that reflects system strategic priorities. Funding for the first year of the project has already been allocated.

What is the timeline for this revision process?

The revision of the USG core curriculum framework is likely to take several years. By that point in time, a timeline for institutional level implementation will need to be articulated.

How will communications be handled and information shared?

Given the difficulties of face-to-face communication in a 35 institution state system, the project will rely heavily on the use of electronic communications. These will include a project website, discussion forums, and other input and feedback mechanisms.

Who makes final decisions about the USG Core Curriculum Framework?

The University System Board of Regents has final approval authority.