

**Report on the EQS Signature Assignment in Introduction to Sociology Courses**  
**Texas Core Curriculum Objective: Empirical and Quantitative Skills**  
**Sociology Program**  
**Spring 2017**

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During the Spring semester, students in all Introduction to Sociology courses were required to complete the Signature Assignment for the Core Objective in Empirical and Quantitative Skills, as mandated by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). This included 957 undergraduates enrolled in nine courses (online and in-class) taught by one full-time faculty member and five adjuncts. On average, the grade distribution across all sections (lecture and online) for the Core Objective in Empirical and Quantitative Skills was as follows: A's=65%, B's=21%, C's=5%, D's=4%, and F's=4%.

The Sociology Program has been administering the Signature Assignment across all four Core Objectives since Fall 2014. Full-time faculty selected the “individual” rather than “communal” option—meaning that we were responsible for (1) developing measures that map onto the four Core Objectives, (2) making them available to all students in all Introduction to Sociology courses, and (3) tracking student academic performances. We followed THECB’s recommendation to utilize digital technologies (i.e., BlackBoard) in creating, administering, and grading online tests for each Core Objective. Our measure for Empirical and Quantitative Skills is based on a handout that was provided to faculty during the Spring 2013 semester, which states that assessments in this area must “include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.” (Texas Core Curriculum 2014, Chapter 4 B§4.28-4.31). Consequently, demonstrating competence in “empirical and quantitative skills” in Introduction to Sociology courses requires students to exhibit an understanding of complex social issues, as well as display knowledge on the role that various social forces play in shaping life experiences across individuals and groups.

Students were randomly presented with 10 of the 13 items comprising the test bank for Empirical and Quantitative Skills. To successfully complete the Signature Assignment, students had to correctly answer multiple choice questions related to newspaper articles, short films, graphs, and demonstrate an awareness of civic and cultural issues from a sociological perspective. They were required to complete the test in two hours, but were permitted to use their class notes and textbook. A copy of our measure for Empirical and Quantitative Skills is contained within the Appendix<sup>1</sup> to this report<sup>2</sup>.

The Sociology Program’s threshold for student mastery is 70%. We arrived at this decision with input from Dr. Kim Van Noort—a former Associate Dean in the College of Liberal Arts—who initially led the implementation of Undergraduate Core Curriculum Revisions. During the spring 2017 semester, 91% of our students either met or surpassed this baseline for performance. Section numbers for courses comprising the total list of courses administered the Signature Assignment include 1311-001, 1311-002, 1311-003, 1311-004, 1311-005, 1311-006, 1311-007, 1311-700, and 1311-701.

*Notes:*

<sup>1</sup> A list of the 13 multiple-choice items used to assess Critical Thinking is available by permission; please contact the Sociology Department directly.

<sup>2</sup> The report, above, was furnished to the University by Dr. Jason Shelton, UTA Sociology and Anthropology Dept.