

Implementing Fields of Study

April 2019

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Agency Mission

The mission of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) is to provide leadership and coordination for Texas higher education and to promote access, affordability, quality, success, and cost efficiency through *60x30TX*, resulting in a globally competitive workforce that positions Texas as an international leader.

Agency Vision

The THECB will be recognized as an international leader in developing and implementing innovative higher education policy to accomplish our mission.

Agency Philosophy

The THECB will promote access to and success in quality higher education across the state with the conviction that access and success without quality is mediocrity and that quality without access and success is unacceptable.

The Coordinating Board's core values are:

Accountability: We hold ourselves responsible for our actions and welcome every opportunity to educate stakeholders about our policies, decisions, and aspirations.

Efficiency: We accomplish our work using resources in the most effective manner.

Collaboration: We develop partnerships that result in student success and a highly qualified, globally competent workforce.

Excellence: We strive for excellence in all our endeavors.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age or disability in employment or the provision of services.

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Executive Summary

Fields of Study (FOS) are sets of lower-division courses specific to a discipline that are guaranteed by state law to transfer across all Texas public institutions of higher education and apply to the degree program.

FOS contribute to the goals of the state's *60x30TX* strategic plan for higher education. FOS are designed by faculty committees to include the necessary coursework for success in the major, no matter the public institution of higher education that receives the Texas transfer student. Also, because every course in an FOS is guaranteed by state law to transfer and apply to the appropriate degree program, students can minimize the risk of taking unnecessary courses and incurring the extra expenses that come with them. Students who complete an FOS are finished with their lower-division major requirements for the applicable degree program. Students who do not complete an FOS must still have the courses they completed transfer and apply to the degree program.

FOS help advance each of the four goals in the state's *60x30TX* strategic plan for Texas higher education, particularly the goal of not having student loan debt exceed 60 percent of first-year wages for graduates of Texas public institutions by 2030. Because every course in a complete or incomplete FOS is guaranteed by state law to transfer and apply to the discipline's degree program, students can eliminate the extra time and expense of taking unnecessary courses.

Each FOS is determined by advisory committees consisting of up to 24 faculty with expertise in the discipline, drawn equally from two- and four-year institutions. FOS advisory committees may create multiple tracks within the FOS for various discipline specialties or career pathways. If necessary, committees can create new courses or revise existing ones in the *Lower-Division Academic Course Guide Manual*. All FOS are posted in the *Texas Register* for a 30-day public comment period before they are considered for approval by the Board of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Institutional personnel can assist with FOS implementation.

- Executive Administration can assist with the implementation of FOS by distributing relevant information to faculty and staff, regularly nominating faculty for FOS advisory committees, and reviewing transfer policies to remove barriers.
- Registrars have a key role to play in identifying FOS courses on transcripts and promoting efficient and consistent course equivalencies in transfer.
- Deans and department chairs can work with faculty to make sure there are enough course offerings and to see if FOS courses can also be used as core curriculum component options.
- Faculty and advisors can make sure students know about FOS courses early in their degree plans to minimize time and money spent on unnecessary courses.

FOS will not help students if Texas public institutions of higher education are not complying with the statute, not offering the courses, or inconsistently applying the regulations. This guide offers recommendations to institutions on how to effectively implement the FOS curricula to maximize student benefits while minimizing administrative conflicts.

Background Information on Fields of Study

The Texas higher education *60x30TX* strategic plan prioritizes the creation of effective pathways from the first semester of higher education, through graduation with a manageable amount of student debt, and into the workforce with an identifiable set of marketable skills. There are many pathway projects, from secondary schools to graduate programs, at the local and state level. For example, pathway initiatives and tools approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (Coordinating Board or THECB) in recent years include a core curriculum that is guaranteed by state law to transfer between all public institutions of higher education; the *Lower-Division Academic Course Guide Manual* which lists all of the courses that can receive state funding at community colleges and are guaranteed to transfer across institutions; the Texas Common Course Numbering System, which lets students know what courses are equivalent across institutions despite possible course title differences; and required advising for optimum course selection once a student completes 30 semester credit hours (SCH) to prevent students from taking unnecessary courses.

Other pathway initiatives are the individual articulation agreements between colleges and their university transfer partners. Faculty from the same discipline at both institutions meet to discuss coursework, student needs, and common learning objectives. When the student transfers from the college, the university agrees to accept the transfer credits toward the degree program. The 75th Texas Legislature in 1997 enacted legislation that requires the state's public universities to accept lower-division coursework for bachelor's degree programs in specific academic areas.

FOS function as statewide articulation agreements; they are valid across all public institutions of higher education in the state and are backed up by state law (Texas Education Code, Chapter 61, Section 61.823; see Appendix A).

What is a Field of Study?

An FOS is the grouping of lower-division courses that are *guaranteed by state law to transfer and apply to a degree program*. Just as students complete the core curriculum at public institutions and are considered core complete when they transfer to any other public institution (even if the receiving institution offers a different selection of core courses), students who complete an FOS curriculum at any public institution have completed the lower-division requirements for their degree program when they transfer to any other public institution (even if the receiving institution offers a different selection of lower-division requirements).¹

Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Chapter 4, Subchapter B, Rule 4.32(b), states: "If a student successfully completes a field of study curriculum developed by the Board, that block of courses must be substituted in transfer to a general academic teaching institution for that institution's lower-division requirements for the degree program for the field of study into which the student transfers, and the student must receive full academic credit toward the degree program for the

¹ The Coordinating Board also has a related initiative called Programs of Study, which do for workforce certificates and associate of applied science degree programs what FOS do for academic programs. Advisory committees consisting of secondary school faculty, higher education faculty, and industry representatives design sets of courses that give students guidance on what courses from high school onward are guaranteed to transfer and ensure preparation for specific workforce careers.

block of courses transferred.” The word “substituted” means that the completed FOS transfers in as the completed lower-division major requirements at the receiving institution, and the receiving institution cannot require any additional lower-division major coursework for the degree. The receiving institution can continue to set its own lower-division course requirements for its native students in degree programs.

Also, according to TAC 4.32(c), institutions can require additional lower-division courses outside the FOS if a student transfers with an incomplete FOS: “A student who transfers from one institution of higher education to another without completing the field of study curriculum of the sending institution must receive academic credit in the field of study curriculum of the receiving institution for each of the courses that the student has successfully completed in the field of study curriculum of the sending institution. Following receipt of credit for these courses, the student may be required to satisfy the remaining course requirements in the field of study curriculum of the receiving institution, or to complete additional requirements in the receiving institution's program, as long as those requirements do not duplicate course content already completed through the field of study curriculum.”

Community colleges can award an associate degree to students who complete an approved FOS but only a portion of the 42 SCH core curriculum, if the total for both would exceed 60 SCH. This is helpful for degree programs such as Architecture, Engineering, or Music, where students need to begin taking program courses as soon as possible and stay on track with extensive degree requirements at the lower division (TAC, Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 9, Subchapter J, Rule 9.183).

How does a Field of Study work with the core curriculum?

Courses in an FOS can “double dip” with the core curriculum. For example, Calculus I (MATH 2413) is a part of the Mathematics FOS, but it can also fulfill the 3 SCH requirement for the Mathematics component area of the core.

If an FOS course is also used as a core course, the receiving institution cannot add an extra lower-division degree program requirement in its place. The FOS transfers in as the total set of lower-division requirements for the degree program (unless there are also lower-division courses required of all students in the university or college regardless of major).

Appendix H provides a shareable infographic about how the FOS integrates with the core curriculum.

How does the Coordinating Board develop and approve a Field of Study?

Advisory committees: The process of creating an FOS begins with Coordinating Board rules authorizing the creation of an FOS advisory committee. Texts of the proposed rules are published in the *Texas Register* for a 30-day public comment period.

After the rules are approved by the Committee on Academic and Workforce Success (CAWS) and the full Board of the THECB, a call for nominations goes out via GovDelivery to presidents, chancellors, chief academic officers (CAOs), chief instructional officers (CIOs), and Coordinating Board liaisons at all public general academic institutions, community colleges, and public and

state technical colleges in Texas. By nominating an individual for an advisory committee, each institution pledges to pay the nominee's expenses for the meetings in Austin.

Once nominations are received, Coordinating Board staff select up to 24 faculty members, drawn equally from two- and four-year institutions. For example, if there were 12 nominations from one type of institution but only 8 nominations from the other type of institution, then there would be 16 total members on the FOS advisory committee.

Whenever possible, FOS advisory committee members are selected to provide fair representation of Texas institutions and faculty. Coordinating Board staff aim for balance between the sizes of institutions, accountability peer groups, regions of the state, university systems, community college districts, and faculty of all levels.

The FOS advisory committees are polled for their preference of meeting dates, and then a two-day meeting is held at the Coordinating Board offices in Austin. All meetings are broadcast live and stored on YouTube for full transparency. The first day provides an overview of what FOS are, how they work, and what regulations are in place. Two co-chairs are elected, one from a two-year institution and one from a four-year institution. The co-chairs are responsible for running the meeting and ensuring all members' concerns are addressed.

The advisory committee members discuss the general needs of the major at the lower division, review the degree requirements at universities, review what courses are available in the *Lower-Division Academic Course Guide Manual*, and review Coordinating Board data to identify the courses that are most frequently offered and have the highest enrollments. The advisory committee members then select the specific courses for the FOS, sometimes creating more than one track within the FOS depending upon discipline specialties or career pathways. Only if it is essential for including crucial content for success in upper-division courses, the committee can create new courses or revise existing ones in the *Lower-Division Academic Course Guide Manual*.

Public comment: Once the advisory committee has drafted a recommended FOS curriculum, it is distributed to the *Texas Register*, CAOs, CIOs, and Coordinating Board liaisons for a 30-day public comment period to provide further opportunities for faculty input. Every comment is considered by the advisory committee, and the committee typically reconvenes in person to discuss the comments. If substantial changes are made to the FOS, it goes out for another 30-day public comment period. The committee's responses to the public comments are summarized in the public agenda item pages when the FOS curriculum is considered for final approval by the Board of the THECB.

Advisory committees will review each FOS every five years, or sooner if needed, to ensure that the curriculum is meeting the needs of the discipline and the job market.

How do Fields of Study contribute to the state's higher education goals?

FOS help advance each of the four goals in the state's *60x30TX* strategic plan for Texas higher education.

Goal 1: By 2030, at least 60 percent of Texans ages 25-34 will have a certificate or degree.

Goal 2: By 2030, at least 550,000 students in that year will complete a certificate, associate, bachelor's, or master's from an institution of higher education in Texas

By completing an FOS at any public institution of higher education, no matter where they transfer, students can progress with confidence in two essential elements of a pathway to graduation: 1) the courses they take are guaranteed by state law to transfer for credit and apply toward a major, and 2) the pre-selected coursework in the FOS has been reviewed by a panel of faculty to ensure that students will have the knowledge and skills necessary for success in upper-division coursework.

Goal 3: All graduates from Texas public institutions of higher education will have completed programs with identified marketable skills.

FOS curricula are designed by advisory committees consisting of community college and university faculty from across the state with practical teaching and research experience in the discipline. The FOS advisory committees consider each course carefully for how it prepares students for success in the major and the careers to which those majors lead. Each FOS is revisited periodically to ensure that it reflects the current state of the discipline and the needs of the related job markets.

Goal 4: By 2030, undergraduate student loan debt will not exceed 60 percent of first-year wages for graduates of Texas public institutions.

Because every course in an FOS is guaranteed by state law to transfer and apply to a degree program (even when the total FOS is not completed), students can eliminate the extra time and expense of unnecessary courses. Some FOS courses may also be available as dual credit options, allowing students to begin their degree plan in high school with the certainty that their courses will count toward their baccalaureate degree no matter what public institution they decide to attend.

Even small changes in the number of attempted SCH can have a significant impact on student debt, and by extension, student persistence and graduation rates. Students may end up paying twice for each course that is taken at a community college that is not accepted for credit toward the degree program at a transfer university (Table 1). For example, a community college student may take two courses (6 SCH) in Criminal Justice that the student assumes will count toward a Criminal Justice major after transferring to a university. If the university does not accept those courses toward requirements for the major, and if the student has already used up the lower-division free elective credits (if any) and core curriculum selections, then the student will have paid for the two courses at the college and will have to pay again for the two required university Criminal Justice courses that will fill those credit hours in the university's degree program.

Table 1. Average student costs of excess college SCH (based on 2017 statewide average academic charges).

	One Course (3 SCH)	Two Courses (6 SCH)	Three Courses (9 SCH)	Four Courses (12 SCH)	Seven Courses (21 SCH)
College Costs	\$301.80	\$603.60	\$905.40	\$1,207.20	\$2,112.60
University Costs	\$904.20	\$1,808.40	\$2,712.60	\$3,616.80	\$6,329.40
TOTAL	\$1,206	\$2,412	\$3,618	\$4,824	\$8,442

Source: Coordinating Board, "Tuition and Fees Data," 2018

FOS minimize this financial risk to students. Students who plan to major in a field with a THECB board-approved FOS will know exactly what courses to take, and by omission what courses *not* to take, as soon as they enroll or begin taking dual-credit courses in high school.

Implementation Information for Administrators

Distribute Information and Oversee Compliance

Administrators can be most helpful to the success of FOS by ensuring that relevant information and communication from the Coordinating Board is distributed to the appropriate people on campus. This includes making sure that deans and registrars understand the legal requirements for compliance, distributing requests for faculty nominations to the appropriate department chairs, and keeping staff updated about FOS with information provided in memos from the Coordinating Board. It may be helpful for institutions to identify an administrator to oversee FOS participation on campus, collect data for compliance reports, and serve as the point of contact for FOS issues between the faculty and administration. Coordinating Board staff are available to work with institutional staff to address questions and provide guidance and information.

Encourage Faculty Participation

Administrators should promote and support nominations to FOS advisory committees. It is important to have voices in the room from a cross-section of institutions when decisions are made about what the lower-division requirements will be for degree programs at every public institution in Texas. Faculty participation also assumes financial support from institutions to support the member's transportation, lodging, and expenses for the meeting dates in Austin. The THECB is aware that this sometimes means a substantial financial commitment from institutions, particularly small institutions in regions far from central Texas. The Coordinating Board hopes that administrators will recognize the importance of FOS and offer faculty members the opportunity to participate in their development.

After an advisory committee proposes an FOS, it is published for a 30-day public comment period. The proposed FOS is sent out as a memo to all presidents, chancellors, chief academic officers, chief instructional officers, and Coordinating Board liaisons at all Texas public institutions of higher education. Administrators should let relevant deans and department chairs know when an FOS is proposed for one of their degree programs, encourage departments to discuss the proposed FOS at faculty meetings, and send the Coordinating Board any responses and recommendations. The advisory committees consider all responses received, and if changes are made to the proposed FOS, it goes out for a second 30-day comment period.

Review Transfer Policies

Administrators can promote the success of FOS by proactively reconsidering any policies that create barriers to successful transfer, including any policies that prevent lower-division courses from transferring in as the equivalent of upper-division courses with similar course content. Barriers can take many forms (see, for example, the Coordinating Board's annual *Texas General Academic Institutions: Increasing Successful Community College Transfer* report for survey results). For FOS, it is important that department chairs and curriculum committees establish course equivalencies in transfer for courses that their programs may not offer at the lower division.

Transfer Dispute Resolution

If there are any disputes about how transfer credits are applied to programs, an institution has two options. On a more informal basis, anyone can email Coordinating Board staff to help communicate FOS statute and ensure an institution of higher education is in compliance. Emails should be directed to fos.contact@thecb.state.tx.us and should provide information about the relevant institutions and programs. Supplemental documentation is helpful but not required. Coordinating Board staff will keep informal complaints as confidential as possible.

A second option is to exercise the Transfer Dispute Resolution authority of the Coordinating Board, in which two institutions and a student must first attempt to reach a consensus according to Coordinating Board rules (Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 4, Subchapter B, Rule 4.27). Failing that, either institution may notify the Commissioner of Higher Education in writing for a transfer dispute resolution. The Commissioner's determination is final.

Implementation Information for Registrars and Institutional Researchers

Registrars can play an important role in making sure that staff who handle transfer issues are aware of what FOS are and how they work. Most importantly, registrars need to make it clear to the staff who apply credit for transferred-in courses that the courses from a completed FOS are not optional or to be handled on a course-by-course basis, but instead are a block of courses that are required by state law to transfer and fulfill the lower-division major degree requirements for the applicable degree program. If a student has not completed the full FOS and transfers from one institution of higher education to another, the student must receive academic credit for each of the courses that the student has successfully completed and have these courses applied to the major.

Institutional reporting officials are responsible for reporting FOS completion on the Coordinating Board Management (CBM) 009, the report that captures degrees awarded by discipline. It is important to document completed FOS each year, even if a student has also completed the core curriculum or a degree program at the same time.

Registrars are responsible for implementing the statutory requirement that FOS courses be identified on a student's transcript. Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Title 19, Chapter 4, Subchapter B, Rule 4.32(e) states that "Each institution must note field of study curriculum courses on student transcripts as recommended by the Texas Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers." The Coordinating Board is currently working with Texas

Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (TACRO) to develop a common transcription process for FOS.

To assist receiving institutions, college registrars are encouraged to indicate on a student's transcript if a student has completed an FOS. Registrars also are encouraged to identify FOS courses in the undergraduate catalog and sample degree plans, including explanations of how the FOS works. It is especially important for community college students to understand FOS as soon as possible after identifying a planned major so they can select the appropriate courses and minimize the risk of taking unnecessary SCH.

Implementation Information for Deans and Department Chairs at Public Universities

One of the most commonly asked questions the Coordinating Board receives is whether a university can add additional lower-division courses on top of what is in the FOS. It is important for deans and department chairs to understand, and communicate to their faculty, that the answer is no—a completed FOS transfers in as a full substitute for the receiving institution's lower-division requirements for the degree program. For example, if an institution's Criminal Justice major requires native students to take a lower-division Statistics for Social Sciences course, a transfer student who comes in with the completed FOS in Criminal Justice (which does not include a comparable course) cannot be required to take it, even if the Statistics course is a prerequisite for later upper-division courses.

Here are the possible exceptions:

- If the transfer student comes in with an incomplete core curriculum, the receiving institution could advise the student to take the Statistics course to fulfill the relevant component area of the core.
- An institution can still require lower-division courses that are not specific to the degree program, such as Learning Frameworks, Math, or Language courses that are required of all students at the institution, college, or school, regardless of their major. Non-credit courses such as Introduction to University Studies that are required of all students can also be required, as can developmental education courses that do not count toward the degree program.
- If a student transfers in with an incomplete FOS, the student must be given credit toward the major for the FOS courses that are completed. After that, the student can be treated as a native student and be required to take additional lower-division courses not specified in the FOS, so long as the additional courses do not substantially repeat the content from completed FOS courses.

The Coordinating Board encourages deans and department chairs to work closely with the departments' curriculum planning committees and undergraduate studies committees to help align lower-division curriculum with the FOS. This can be done in several ways:

- Offer enough sections of the courses included in the FOS.
- When FOS courses are not yet available on your campus, identify how the FOS courses will transfer in as course equivalents. It will increase transfer efficiency and consistency. Communicate the equivalencies to your transfer partner institutions.

- Add FOS courses to the institution’s core curriculum component area options. If a course can count toward both the core curriculum and the FOS, it may enable more program flexibility for applying courses to the overall 120-SCH degree program.
- Review the upper-division curricula and the possible prerequisites to align the curriculum with the learning outcomes reflected in the FOS.

Implementation Information for Deans and Department Chairs at Public Community and Technical Colleges

It can be an effective recruitment tool to let students know that the institution offers a full slate of courses that are guaranteed by state law to transfer and apply to degree programs at any public university in Texas. Institutions are encouraged to offer every course in each FOS curriculum with enough sections to accommodate student demand.

Institutions are encouraged to embed the FOS into the relevant associate degree programs, providing students with the opportunity to have a completed FOS if they later decide to transfer to a four-year institution. Developing guided pathways and model degree maps may be a good mechanism for reviewing how FOS courses can be incorporated into degree plans and flagged for students.

Work with members of your partner transfer institutions to identify course equivalencies if the university does not offer the same FOS courses. The specific course content taught in the FOS courses may influence how the receiving university chooses to use its electives and shape its upper-division offerings.

Implementing FOS may require changes in staffing and teaching assignments, and in some cases, it may mean that enrollments may fall in *Lower-Division Academic Course Guide Manual* courses that are not included in the FOS. It is important to communicate to your faculty that the long-term benefits to students will justify the difficult choices to be made on campus, as shown in Table 1 (pg. 4), which highlights the cost savings to students by taking only courses that apply to their degrees. If a student takes just three unnecessary courses that do not apply toward the student’s major after transfer, and if the student then must take three additional courses to replace them at the university, it will cost the student an average of \$3,618 and possibly a full additional semester of time to complete the degree.

Implementation Information for Faculty and Advisors

Faculty and advisors can have a powerful impact on students’ educations by making sure they know about the FOS curriculum as soon as they identify their intended degree programs. FOS can take a burden off advisors by identifying what courses students should take for specific degree programs, reducing the need for multiple transfer guides for multiple institutions. The FOS curriculum can be made available in sample degree maps, course selection guides, and course catalogs. Institutions that offer FOS courses for dual credit or that have outreach programs to area high schools have excellent opportunities to publicize the FOS curriculum. The sooner students know about FOS curricula, the less chance there is of them using time and money to take unnecessary courses for their degree programs.

Take opportunities to communicate with the faculty at transfer partner institutions to discuss the content of shared FOS courses. The goal is to not have students unnecessarily duplicating content in courses with different names at different levels. Because FOS courses are fully transferrable and applicable to the degree program, the courses and their applicable fields have the potential to open spaces for faculty to bridge the content of their courses and promote student engagement and degree completion. They may also present new opportunities for collaboration between college and university faculty members.

Appendix A

Texas Education Code, Chapter 61, Section 61.823: Field of Study Curriculum

(a) The board, with the assistance of advisory committees composed of representatives of institutions of higher education, shall develop field of study curricula. Each advisory committee shall be equitably composed of representatives of institutions of higher education. Each university system or institution of higher education which offers a degree program for which a field of study curriculum is proposed shall be offered participation on the advisory committee for that particular field of study. At least a majority of the members of any advisory committee named under this section shall be faculty members of an institution of higher education. An institution shall consult with the faculty of the institution before nominating or recommending a person to the board as the institution's representative on an advisory committee.

(b) If a student successfully completes a field of study curriculum developed by the board, that block of courses may be transferred to a general academic teaching institution and must be substituted for that institution's lower division requirements for the degree program for the field of study into which the student transfers, and the student shall receive full academic credit toward the degree program for the block of courses transferred.

(c) A student who transfers from one institution of higher education to another without completing the field of study curriculum of the sending institution shall receive academic credit from the receiving institution for each of the courses that the student has successfully completed in the field of study curriculum of the sending institution. Following receipt of credit for these courses, the student may be required to satisfy further course requirements in the field of study curriculum of the receiving institution.

(d) In developing field of study curricula, the board shall pursue a management strategy that maximizes efficiency, including a management strategy that provides for the decentralization of advisory committees to enable concurrent development of curricula for different fields of study.

(e) The board, with the assistance of an appropriate advisory committee, shall periodically review each field of study curriculum to ensure alignment with student interest and academic and industry needs.

(f) Repealed by Acts 2011, 82nd Leg., R.S., Ch. 1083, Sec. 25(21), eff. June 17, 2011.

Appendix B

Texas Administrative Code, Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 4, Subchapter B, Rule 4.32: Field of Study Curricula

(a) In accordance with Texas Education Code, §61.823, the Board approves field of study curricula for certain fields of study/academic disciplines. Field of study curricula shall be developed with the assistance of advisory committees whose membership includes at least a majority of members who are teaching faculty (as defined by §4.23(8) of this title, relating to Definitions for Core Curriculum and Field of Study Curricula) within the field of study under consideration.

(b) If a student successfully completes a field of study curriculum developed by the Board, that block of courses must be substituted in transfer to a general academic teaching institution for that institution's lower-division requirements for the degree program for the field of study into which the student transfers, and the student must receive full academic credit toward the degree program for the block of courses transferred.

(c) A student who transfers from one institution of higher education to another without completing the field of study curriculum of the sending institution must receive academic credit in the field of study curriculum of the receiving institution for each of the courses that the student has successfully completed in the field of study curriculum of the sending institution. Following receipt of credit for these courses, the student may be required to satisfy the remaining course requirements in the field of study curriculum of the receiving institution, or to complete additional requirements in the receiving institution's program, as long as those requirements do not duplicate course content already completed through the field of study curriculum.

(d) A student concurrently enrolled at more than one institution of higher education shall follow the field of study curriculum requirements of the institution at which the student is classified as a degree-seeking student.

(e) Each institution must note field of study curriculum courses on student transcripts as recommended by the Texas Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (TACRAO).

(f) Each institution must review and evaluate its procedures for complying with field of study curricula at intervals specified by the Board and shall report the results of that review to the Board. These reports shall be submitted following the same timetable as the regular reports of core curriculum evaluations.

Appendix C

Texas Administrative Code, Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 4, Subchapter B, Rule 4.33: Criteria for Evaluation of Field of Study Curricula

(a) Every five years, each public institution of higher education shall review and evaluate its policies and practices regarding the acceptance and application of credit earned as part of a Board-approved field of study curriculum, and reports the results of that evaluation to the Board. The evaluation should include:

(1) the extent to which the institution's compliance with the acceptance of transfer credit through field of study curricula is being achieved;

(2) the extent to which the institution's application to the appropriate degree program of credit earned as part of a Board-approved field of study curriculum facilitates academic success;

(3) the effectiveness of field of study curricula in the retention and graduation of transfer students in those degree programs that have Board-approved field of study curricula.

(b) Each institution's evaluation report must contain at least the following:

(1) a listing of the institution's degree programs that have Board-approved field of study curricula;

(2) a description of the institution's policies and practices regarding applicable Board-approved field of study curricula, including admission-point evaluation of transfer credit, advising practices (including catalogue and website information on existing field of study curricula and advising/counseling practices for enrolled students), and transcripting practices to show field of study participation and completion;

(3) a chart or table showing the number of total transfer students for each degree program that has a Board-approved field of study curriculum, for each of the last five years; the chart should indicate year-by-year the percentage of students who transferred having completed the applicable field of study curriculum, the percentage of students who transferred without having completed the applicable field of study curriculum, and any information about progress toward graduation or graduation rates that can compare transfer student performance with non-transfer student performance during the evaluation period.

Appendix D

Texas Administrative Code, Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 4, Subchapter B, Rule 4.34: Revision of Existing Approved Field of Study Curricula

(a) The Board shall have the authority to modify or revise a Board-approved field of study curriculum when a need for such a revision is identified, as specified in current Board policy and procedures.

(b) The need for a revision or modification to a Board-approved field of study curriculum may be identified by one the following methods, or by other methods that are similarly appropriate:

- (1) notice of a change in licensure, certification, or accreditation standards that would affect the field of study curriculum and lower-division requirements for a field of study or academic discipline;
- (2) notice of a change in curricular structure or content that is part of a pervasive change in the academic discipline served by the field of study curriculum, as documented by national or regional professional organizations, faculty organizations, or other indicators of best practices in the discipline;
- (3) receipt of a request from at least three public institutions of higher education that are affected by the field of study curriculum under consideration for modification, including at least one two-year and one four-year academic-degree-granting institution. The request and justifications for the request should be made by the chief academic officers of the institutions, in a joint memorandum sent to the Commissioner.

(c) Any proposed modification or revision to a Board-approved field of study curriculum should be evaluated by an advisory committee convened under the conditions cited in §4.30(a) of this title (relating to Criteria for Evaluation of Core Curricula). Recommendations for modifications or revisions to a Board-approved field of study curriculum should reflect the advice and wisdom of an advisory committee made up primarily of teaching faculty from the academic discipline(s) affected by the field of study curriculum under consideration.

Appendix E

Texas Administrative Code, Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 1, Subchapter A, Rule 1.6: Advisory Committees

(a) The Board may appoint advisory committees from outside the Board's membership to advise the Board as it may deem necessary.

(b) The use of advisory committees by the Board shall be in compliance with the provisions of Texas Government Code, Chapter 2110 regarding the composition and duration of committees, the reimbursement of committee member's expenses, the evaluation of committees, and the reporting to the Legislative Budget Board.

(c) An advisory committee is automatically abolished on the fourth anniversary of the date of its creation unless it has a specific duration prescribed by statute or the Board reestablishes the committee. A written statement shall be prepared by the Commissioner or his or her designee for each advisory committee setting forth the purpose of the committee, the task of the committee, the manner in which the committee will report to the Board, the date on which the committee is created, and the date on which the committee will automatically be abolished. The written statements shall be maintained on file in the Board offices.

(d) Purpose and Duties of Advisory Committees. The purpose of an advisory committee shall be to give the Board the benefit of the members' collective technical expertise and experience with respect to matters within the Board's jurisdiction. An advisory committee's sole duty is to advise the Board. An advisory committee has no executive or administrative powers or duties with respect to the operation of the Board, and all such powers and duties rest solely with the Board. The specific purposes and tasks of an advisory committee subject to this subchapter shall be identified in Board rules.

(e) Composition of Advisory Committees.

(1) The composition of advisory committees created by the Board, including subcommittees or workgroups with non-advisory committee members, shall contain no more than 24 members in compliance with the requirements of Texas Government Code, Chapter 2110.

(2) The Board shall make reasonable attempts to provide balanced, geographic representation, consonant with Texas Government Code, Chapter 2110, on all advisory committees. A rule or other action may not be challenged because of the composition of an advisory committee.

(3) This section does not apply to an advisory committee to the extent that:

(A) another state law specifically states that Texas Government Code, Chapter 2110 does not apply; or

(B) a federal law or regulation:

(i) imposes an unconditional requirement that irreconcilably conflicts with the requirements of Texas Government Code, Chapter 2110; or

(ii) imposes a condition on the state's eligibility to receive money from the federal government that irreconcilably conflicts with Texas Government Code, Chapter 2110.

(f) Membership Terms. Except as otherwise provided by law, advisory committee members shall serve terms as determined by the Board.

(g) Membership. The Board shall solicit nominations and make appointments from such nominations for membership on advisory committees from presidents and chancellors, or the respective designee. For advisory committees that include members not associated with an institution of higher education, the Board shall solicit nominations from appropriate entities, such as stakeholder organizations whose membership consists of the type of representative the advisory committee is seeking. Except as otherwise provided by law, all members of advisory committees are appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Board. Board members may not serve on advisory committees. If an advisory committee member resigns, is no longer associated with the nominating institution or entity, dies, becomes incapacitated, is removed by the Board, otherwise vacates his or her position, or becomes ineligible prior to the end of his or her term, the Board may appoint a replacement who shall serve the remainder of the unexpired term.

(h) Attendance. A record of attendance at each meeting of advisory committees shall be made. Except as otherwise provided by law, if a member of an advisory committee misses three consecutive regularly scheduled meetings or more than half of all the regularly scheduled meetings in a one-year period, without approval by a majority vote of the Board, that member automatically vacates his or her position on the advisory committee and the Board may make an appointment to fill the remainder of the unexpired term of the vacancy.

(i) Reimbursement. Members of advisory committees shall not be reimbursed for expenses unless the Board expressly authorizes reimbursement. The Board may also, in its discretion, reimburse the expenses of members of any duly authorized subcommittee of an advisory committee.

(j) Presiding Officer. Except as otherwise provided by law, each advisory committee shall select from its members a presiding officer, who shall report the committee's recommendations to the Board. The Board may, at its discretion, appoint other officers of advisory committees or allow committee members to elect other officers at their pleasure.

(k) Manner of Reporting. Advisory committees shall report any recommendations directly to the Board at a Board meeting determined in consultation with agency staff, including the Commissioner of Higher Education. Advisory committees shall also provide an annual or biennial report to the Board to allow the Board to properly evaluate the committee's work, usefulness, and the costs related to the committee's existence, including the cost of agency staff time spent in support of the committee's activities.

(l) Subcommittees or Workgroups. Advisory committees may organize themselves into subcommittees or workgroups. One member of each subcommittee or workgroup shall serve as the chairperson. Subcommittee or workgroup chairs shall make written reports regarding their work to the presiding officer of the advisory committee. A subcommittee or workgroup of an advisory committee may include members who are not members of the advisory committee, but must include at least one member of the advisory committee.

(m) Meetings. Advisory committees shall meet at the call of the presiding officer or the Board. All advisory committee and subcommittee meetings shall be open to the public and broadcasted via the web, unless prevented by technical difficulties.

(n) Monitoring of Advisory Committees and Records.

(1) The Board shall monitor the activities of advisory committees.

(2) Agency staff shall record and maintain the minutes of each advisory committee and subcommittee meeting. The staff shall maintain a record of actions taken and shall distribute copies of approved minutes and other committee documents to the Board and to advisory committee members on a timely basis.

(3) Minutes kept for advisory committee meetings and reports required under subsection (k) of this section shall be maintained in a form and location that is easily accessible to the public, including making the information available on the Board's website.

Appendix F

Texas Administrative Code, Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 9, Subchapter J, Rule 9.185: Academic Certificates

A college may award an academic certificate to a student who completes:

- (1) the college's approved core curriculum; or
- (2) a Board-approved field of study curriculum; or
- (3) fifty percent of the courses specified in a voluntary statewide transfer compact.

Appendix G

Current and Upcoming FOS

The list of approved and currently active FOS is available at this website:

www.thecb.state.tx.us/fos

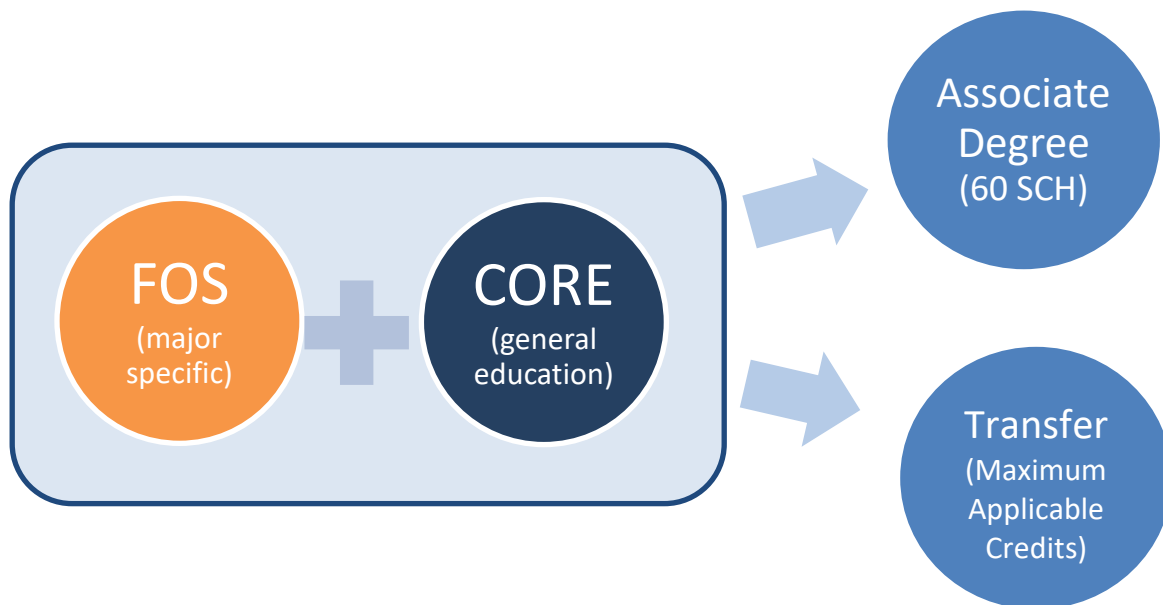
Appendix H

Infographic on Integration of FOS and Core Curriculum

(see following pages)

Fields of Study Curriculum: Improving Transfer and Minimizing Credit Loss in Texas

In Texas, Field of Study (FOS) curricula are one of the most important policies to support efficient upward transfer with minimal loss of credit. A FOS is a set of courses that fulfill lower-division requirements for a specific major or degree plan. Combined with the core curriculum, a FOS can help a student reach an associate degree and/or be prepared for efficient transfer to another institution. Courses within FOS are **guaranteed** to transfer to any public college or university in Texas and are **guaranteed** to apply to the appropriate bachelor's-level degree plan. No exceptions. A student who transfers without completing the entire FOS shall receive credit for each of the courses the student successfully completed in the FOS.

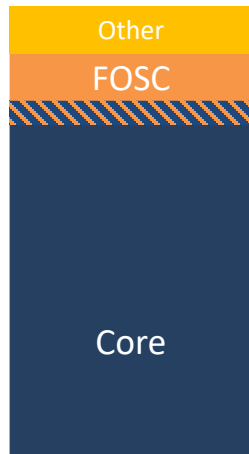


In Practice, the Total Number of Credits Earned through the Field of Study Curriculum Varies by Major

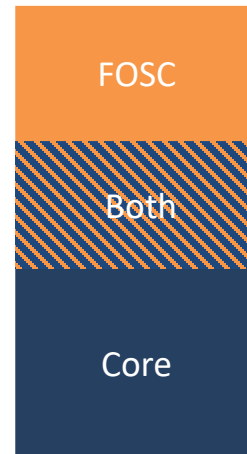
In practice, the total number of credits students will earn through FOS and the core curriculum will vary based on the number of semester credit hours included in the FOS. The number and content of courses contained in each FOS are identified by faculty committees representing two-year and four-year institutions who determine the knowledge and courses necessary to prepare students for upper-division coursework in a particular major.

Field of Study Curricula by Semester Credit Hour Requirements

Small FOSC (< 18 SCH)



Large FOSC (> 18 SCH)



- Communications (12)
- Criminal Justice (15)
- English Language & Literature (12)
- Political Science (12)
- Social Work (15)
- Sociology (12)
- Mexican American Studies (18)
- Psychology (18)

- Architecture (36)
- Business Administration and Management (24)
- Chemical Engineering (35)
- Civil Engineering (39)
- Electrical Engineering (30)
- Mechanical Engineering (36)
- Engineering Technology (37)
- Music (31)
- Nursing (34)

The graphic above displays two possible scenarios combining FOS of different sizes with the core curriculum. The core curriculum contains 42 semester credit hours in each scenario. There is often some degree of overlap between the FOS and the core.

1. **Small FOS:** Several FOS require students to complete 18 SCH or fewer major-specific lower division courses. One example is Communications with 12 SCH. Students pursuing these majors must take other non-major degree requirement courses to earn a 60 SCH associate degree or may wish to transfer with their guaranteed FOSC and core hours.
2. **Large FOS:** Other FOS contain more than 18 SCH, such as Business (24 SCH), Electrical Engineering (30 SCH), and Nursing (34 SCH). In cases where an FOS contains more than 18 hours, credits earned to satisfy lower-division major requirements in the FOS will also satisfy lower-division general education requirements in the core curriculum.

Appendix I

Frequently Asked Questions

The frequently asked question document is available at this website:

www.thecb.state.tx.us/fos

What is a Field of Study?

A Field of Study (FOS) is a selection of lower-division courses that are guaranteed by state law to transfer and apply to a degree program. Usually an FOS is somewhere between four and eight introductory-level classes, selected to provide students with a solid introduction to the field and prepare them for success in upper-division courses. If a student takes all the courses in an FOS and then transfers to another Texas public institution of higher education, the FOS is guaranteed to transfer as a block and be applied to the appropriate major. If a student has completed (1) the Texas common core curriculum; (2) the university or college courses required of all students regardless of major, if any; and (3) the FOS, then the student is finished with all the lower-division courses for the degree program. This is true even if the institution to which the student transfers requires a different selection of lower-division courses for their own freshmen or sophomores, and even if the institution has prerequisites for their upper-division courses that are not included in the FOS.

What courses can be in an FOS?

An FOS can consist of any courses from the *Lower-Division Academic Course Guide Manual*. In rare cases, new courses can be created for the *Lower-Division Academic Course Guide Manual* to serve the needs of an FOS. An FOS may draw from several disciplines and may include courses outside of the main field of the major. For example, the Business Administration and Management FOS includes courses in Math, Economics, Accounting, and Business Computer Information Systems as well as courses from Business.

Can a course “double dip” and count toward both the core curriculum and an FOS?

Yes, the same course can count toward the core curriculum and an FOS. For example, if a student plans to transfer from a community college to a university and major in Psychology, the student can take General Psychology (PSYC 1301) and have the same 3 semester credit hours (SCH) count toward both the Social & Behavioral Sciences component area of the statewide core curriculum and the Psychology FOS.

What if students take fewer, or more, lower-division courses than the ones included in the FOS before they transfer?

If students take fewer courses than the complete FOS, then each FOS course the students did take is guaranteed to transfer and apply. If students do not transfer the complete FOS as a block, the receiving institution can require them to take additional lower-division, non-FOS courses and prerequisites up to the maximum number of SCH for the degree program.

If students take more lower-division courses than are required for the FOS, the students and their advisors may want to look at the degree plans at the institutions to which the students want to transfer and consider what additional courses they may need to prepare for upper-division courses. Some lower-division courses may transfer in as electives. Most universities will transfer in a maximum of around 60 SCH, so students will need to choose any extra courses wisely.

What is the advantage of completing an FOS rather than a student self-selecting the courses needed before transferring?

Coordinating Board data show that it takes Texas transfer students an average of 7.6 years to graduate, with 11.4 semesters and 142 SCH attempted. The most efficient and least expensive way to graduate is to take 4 years, with 8 semesters and 120 SCH. The data reveal that most transfer students are taking far too many courses that do not apply to a degree program. Prior to the development of an FOS in a degree field, community college students would have to rely on advisors and university catalogs to determine what courses are most likely to transfer to the university to which they planned to apply. If a student did not get admitted to that targeted university, or if the student changed plans, then the student may have taken several unnecessary courses and may have to take several additional requirements at the new university. All of these courses take valuable time and money. With an FOS, a student can be certain that the block of courses will transfer and apply toward the degree with no additional lower-division major requirements at any public institution.

What if a student can't complete the full FOS and the full core curriculum in two years (60 SCH) before the student transfers?

There are several FOS—such as Architecture, Music, and Engineering programs—that have more than 18 SCH. These cannot be completed alongside the entire 42 SCH core curriculum in the 60 SCH before transfer from a two-year institution. If students complete the FOS and then transfer the courses as a block to a university, students can complete the core curriculum in their third and fourth years at the university while taking the upper-division requirements for the degree program.

Does the transfer of an FOS work just from a two-year to a four-year institution?

FOS courses are guaranteed to transfer and apply to degree programs at all Texas public institutions of higher education, including community colleges, state and technical colleges, universities, and health-related institutions. This means the courses will transfer and apply from a two-year to a four-year institution, from a two-year to a two-year institution, from a four-year to a two-year institution, and from a four-year to a four-year institution. Students who are enrolled at more than one institution simultaneously, or who attend several institutions on their path toward a baccalaureate degree, can now work on their lower-division degree requirements with confidence that every course they take will apply to a degree.

Do FOS Advisory Committees violate Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) standards?

SACSCOC accreditation requires faculty input on program development. Each FOS is developed by a committee of faculty actively teaching in the discipline, the same way that degree plans are assembled at individual institutions. Additional faculty committees are assembled by the Coordinating Board to regularly review and update the courses in the *Lower-Division Academic Course Guide Manual*, the listing of approved community colleges courses that are used to create FOS curricula. Faculty members at Texas public institutions are the only ones who determine the courses in the *Lower-Division Academic Course Guide Manual* or in any FOS curriculum. SACSCOC has confirmed to the Coordinating Board that FOS do not violate SACSCOC accreditation standards.

How are the courses chosen for the FOS? What do I do if I have a suggestion?

FOS courses are selected by an advisory committee of up to 24 faculty in the discipline with an equal number of community college and university representatives, drawn from a spectrum of public institutions across the state. They have an open meeting at the Coordinating Board offices in Austin which is broadcast live and preserved on YouTube. The courses they select then go out for a 30-day public comment period. The committee members then consider every recommendation, and if changes are made to the FOS, it goes out for another 30-day public comment period until the committee has determined that the proposed FOS represents the best selection of courses for the needs of students and institutions. Advisory committees will meet periodically to reconsider existing FOS and keep them up to date.

If you have any complaints or suggestions about an FOS, please send them to fos.contact@thecb.state.tx.us.

Where can I get more information?

Updated information about current FOS is available on the Coordinating Board website: www.thecb.state.tx.us/fos

Information about FOS Advisory Committees is available here: <http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/fosadvisorycomms>

If you have any questions about FOS, please send a message to fos.contact@thecb.state.tx.us, or call Allen Michie, Program Director, at (512) 427-6518.



The list of approved and currently active FOS is available at this website:

www.thecb.state.tx.us/fos

This document is available on the [Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board website](http://www.thecb.state.tx.us).

Contact Information

Please contact Coordinating Board staff if there is anything we can do to help your campus effectively and efficiently implement FOS.

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