

Faculty Syllabi for SACS Compliance and THECB

“The college that takes students with modest entering abilities and improves their abilities substantially contributes more than the school that takes very bright students and helps them develop only modestly. We really need to take the focus off entering scores and put it more on how much value is added.” –*Derek Bok, former and interim President of Harvard University*

SACS compliance will require access to all faculty syllabi. We need to begin building our database this semester. Please forward a fall 2007 syllabus for each course to ebassham@sulross.edu by September 15, 2007. The following information may be useful.

SACS does not demand or encourage prescriptive formatting, and sample syllabi on the Internet seem wordy, overdone, or so minutely detailed that they produce a 20-page syllabus—daunting for students. SACS stresses student-friendly conciseness. We realize syllabi design is a process and encourage creative solutions. Please send suggestions to bnelson@sulross.edu.

Combining SACS with THECB:

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) gives good guidance for constructing student-learning objectives for SACS compliant syllabi. THECB lists five “Competencies” (i.e., reading, writing, speaking, listening, critical thinking, and computer literacy) and eight “Perspectives” (e.g., understand the responsibilities of living in a culturally and ethnically diversified world) that should be included in all courses (scroll down for competencies and perspectives at http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/AAR/UndergraduateEd/fos_assumpdef.cfm).

THECB also provides “Exemplary Educational Objectives” for five core subject areas (math, natural science, communication, social and behavior science, and humanities and visual and performing arts) at http://www.unt.edu/ir_acc/Assessment/CORE%20COMPONENTS%20AND%20RELATED%20EXEMPLARY%20EDUCATIONAL%20OBJECTIVES.htm.

Compliance:

Each course syllabus should include at least five to six Student Learning Objectives. Objectives should begin “The student will be able to...” not “The professor will...”

- **Preferred example using THECB guidelines:** Students will understand, select, and apply appropriate rhetorical strategies (i.e., narrative, descriptive, cause/effect, compare/contrast, and argument) targeting an educated multi-ethnic audience.
- **Bad example using teacher-centered goal:** The professor will improve the student’s ability to write.

Objectives should cover four levels of thinking:

- **Level 1:** define, list, match, recall, name, report, select, recite, state, label, identify
- **Level 2:** describe, paraphrase, summarize, generalize, estimate, classify, explain, predict, illustrate, give an example of, state in your own words, translate
- **Level 3:** determine, chart, solve a problem, implement, prepare, use an approach, develop, choose an appropriate procedure, apply a principle, relate, demonstrate

- **Level 4:** compare, contrast, design, plan, appraise, discriminate, infer, create, organize, generate, critique, judge, weigh, evaluate, combine, conclude, support (Flatby 2005).

Our goal is to change the focus of syllabi objectives or outcomes from what faculty will present to the learning goals for students. What do you expect your students will have learned to DO at the end of the course?

Final Steps:

Objectives should “match” assignments so that both students and SACS can understand how students will learn them. Assessment methods should also “match” assignments, so that SACS can determine how you will measure whether or not learning has actually occurred. You may accomplish this by attaching other pages (e.g., assignments, reading schedule, etc.) that you may already give to students as part of your course syllabus.