

## **Guidelines**

### **State Mandated Academic Learning Compacts**

#### **1. PURPOSE**

These guidelines are designed to provide clearly defined procedures for developing, implementing, and reviewing Academic Learning Compacts and their associated activities. They complement and further university policy. See Policy on State Mandated Academic Learning Compacts and Appendix 1, Board of Governors, “Academic Learning Compacts”, Policy Guideline, #05.02.15.

#### **2. ACCOUNTABILITY/ RESPONSIBILITY**

Primary responsibility for implementation of these guidelines resides with the Office of Academic Affairs and the Associate Vice President of Budgeting, Institutional Effectiveness and Planning. The Associate Vice President is charged with oversight of the processes detailed in these guidelines and reporting the results of the processes to the Vice-President for Academic Affairs and the Vice-President for Academic Quality and External Programs. Reports prepared for the State Board of Governors regarding state mandated academic learning compacts will be submitted through the university data administrator.

#### **3. PROCEDURES FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

For purposes of these guidelines, the following definitions shall apply:

- a) A **State University System Academic Learning Compact** is comprised of the identification, for each academic Bachelor’s program, of what it is that students will have learned by the end of the program, and how that learning will be measured and validated above and beyond course grades. The compact for each degree program identifies clearly articulated core student learning outcomes in three areas: content/discipline knowledge and skills, communication skills, and critical thinking skills.
- b) **Student Learning Outcomes** indicate what a student will be able to do at the end of a course of study that she or he couldn’t do at the beginning of that course of study. They are the knowledge, skills, and abilities that a student has attained at the end (or as a result) of his or her engagement in a particular set of higher education experiences. A Student Learning Outcome should not describe a process. Student learning outcomes must be framed as specific, measurable results whose attainment can be assessed after the student has undertaken a set of education experiences.
- c) **Core Student Learning Outcomes** are those selected student learning outcomes that are central to a degree program and are indicative of what active and successful

participants in the joint process of teaching and learning will know and be able to do as recipients of the baccalaureate degree in a particular program of study. Core learning outcomes will generally be associated with courses required for the degree, with capstone courses, with a variety of designated student experiences, or with evaluative exercises undertaken by all students in a program or course of study.

- d) **Assessment** is the systematic collection, review and use of information about student performance in an educational program. It is undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and educational programs.
- e) A **Rubric** is a “set of rules printed in some special way and telling one what to do.” Within assessment circles, a rubric is a prescribed “guide used to score performance assessments in a reliable, fair, and valid manner and is generally composed of dimensions for judging student performance, a scale for rating performances on each dimension, and standards of excellence for specified performance levels.” (cited at: <http://pals.sri.com/pals/guide/glossary.html>)
- f) **Capstone Course** is typically thought of as a course for undergraduates who are nearing the completion of their studies that builds on skills and knowledge acquired in previous courses and provides an opportunity for students to demonstrate the competencies and communication skills they have acquired in the course of study. Capstone courses are often required of all students in a program for graduation.
- g) An **Embedded Examination** is an evaluation that occurs within a single course designed to assess specific student learning outcomes.
- h) **Validity** shall mean how well a measurement, including any systematic scoring procedure, captures what it purports to measure. A measurement is said to be valid when the scores derived from a given indicator can be interpreted in terms of the concept that it aims to operationalize. Validation is often said to be part of a process that integrates multiple sources of evidence and combines logical argument and empirical justification in a way needed to establish intersubjective validity.
- i) **External Validation** entails the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data conducted by an individual, group of individuals, or organization outside the entity being evaluated that results in agreement that internal scoring procedures fairly capture what they purport to measure.
- j) A **Program** is a set of activities guided by clearly stated goals designed to achieve approved purposes through an integrated course of academic study. (e.g. a degree program)
- k) **Goal** is the broad statement that describes the desired impact or outcome of a program.
- l) **Outputs** are the products and services delivered by the program. They include the quantity of units produced, services provided, and people served such as the number of

graduates of a program.

- m) A Process is a series of operations or activities that result in a program output. They include operations such as the number of courses taken or the prerequisite courses satisfied.
- n) **Bachelor's program** shall mean Baccalaureate Degree programs found in the Degree Inventory maintained by the university in compliance with s. 1007.25, Florida Statutes. The University Departmental Degree Program Inventory is a listing of FSU Degree Programs, approved by the Division of Colleges and Universities (DCU) of the Florida Board of Education. Included are programs approved and offered by departments within the Schools and Colleges of the university. This departmental list includes official degree program names and the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) code of the degree program approved by the DCU for which State Mandates Academic Learning Compacts will be prepared. The university's degree inventory is located at <http://www.ir.fsu.edu/Factbooks/2004-05/CIP.pdf>.
- o) **Communication Skills** generally involve the ability to conduct written and oral communication in different modes with different audiences. These skills include the abilities to organize information clearly and coherently; respond to written sources; present information orally in a clear and convincing fashion appropriate to the topic and purpose; adapt style for different audiences; and use images as a communication tool. They also involve demonstrating the ability to discuss ideas clearly with others, to hear and respond to questions, and to assess critical responses appropriately.
- p) **Critical thinking skills** generally describe reasoning that involves framing a situation or problem and supporting the solution. They involve such processes as interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, reflection, argumentation and disposition.
- q) **Content/discipline knowledge and skills** generally describe the concepts, ideas, principles, relationships and information a student emerging from a program of study is expected to know and be able to use. They include common forms of representation, analogies, illustrations, examples, explanations, demonstrations and performance. They include the theoretical, conceptual, methodological, creative and aesthetic elements of a discipline.

#### **4. DEVELOPMENT OF STATE MANDATED ACADEMIC LEARNING COMPACTS**

- a) The Faculty of each baccalaureate program listed on the State University System Academic Degree Inventory will develop an Academic Learning Compact that identifies, at a minimum, seven expected core student learning outcomes for its program graduates in the areas of:

- i) content/discipline knowledge and skills;
- ii) communication skills; and
- iii) critical thinking skills.

The instrument or mechanism used to assess each outcome may deal with more than one outcome, but each outcome must be assessed separately.

The Faculty serving on and working with the Undergraduate Policy Committee of the Faculty Senate shall develop core student learning communications skills outcomes associated with the general requirements of the liberal studies curriculum.

- b) The student learning outcomes of each Baccalaureate program will be clearly related to the mission and goals of that degree program and clearly tied to course or other requirements necessary for graduation. The student learning outcome statement should not describe either educational processes or outputs.
- c) The student learning outcomes associated with the requirements of the liberal studies curriculum will be clearly related to the approved communication liberal studies goals and competencies approved by the Undergraduate Policy Committee of the Faculty Senate.
- d) Each student learning outcome will state in which courses or at what time in their academic career students will evidence that the results cited will be attained. The course of study of every graduate of a program must include core student learning outcomes in content/discipline knowledge and skills, communication skills, and critical thinking skills that are assessed with mechanisms that ensure that graduates have met the criteria of the Compact.
- e) The Chair of the Department or Program Director in which the degree program resides is responsible for reporting the State Mandated Academic Learning Compact for that program.

## **5. SUBMISSION OF STATE MANDATED ACADEMIC LEARNING COMPACTS**

- a) The Department Chair or Program Director will be responsible for submitting the core student learning outcomes associated with a degree program into the university institutional effectiveness portal in accordance with its operating procedures and guidelines. The Chair of the Undergraduate Policy Committee of the Faculty Senate will be responsible for submitting the core student learning outcomes associated with the liberal studies curriculum.

- b) The core student learning outcomes will be configured to conform to the template in the institutional effectiveness portal for recording outcomes, assessment, results and improvements.
- c) The State Mandated Academic Compact for each bachelor's degree program will be recorded in the responsible academic department's (or program's) file within the institutional effectiveness portal. The Student Learning Outcomes associated with the liberal studies curriculum will be recorded in the appropriate folder within the institutional effectiveness portal listed under the Dean of Undergraduate Studies.
- d) The detail of assessment mechanisms along with results and associated analyzes should be stored in the portal file bank.
- e) Under state and federal law, the information that can be legally included in the portal is rigorously restricted. Federal and state privacy laws protect student educational records. [The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools and universities that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education. Section 1002.22, Florida Statutes, is a similar state law that also gives students privacy rights in their records.] A university found in violation is subject to severe penalties, including the loss of federal funding. You should be exceptionally careful about the information you submit for entry into the Institutional Effectiveness Portal. Please do not upload information into the Portal that contains specific information about a student unless it complies with university policy. Also, do not upload information that lists a student's social security number, grade point average or standardized test scores. When in doubt, do not enter or upload information that provides information on specific students. Before uploading or releasing student information, you should check with the University Registrar to see if the student has indicated he or she does not want his or her name included. For university policy, see [http://registrar.fsu.edu/dir\\_class/spring/registration\\_information.htm](http://registrar.fsu.edu/dir_class/spring/registration_information.htm)  
[http://registrar.fsu.edu/bulletin/undergrad/info/acad\\_regs.htm#ReleaseStudentInfo](http://registrar.fsu.edu/bulletin/undergrad/info/acad_regs.htm#ReleaseStudentInfo)  
<http://registrar.fsu.edu/bulletin/undergrad/info/registrar.htm#AccessRecords>  
<http://registrar.fsu.edu/bulletin/grad/info/registrar.htm#AccessRecords>  
<http://www.vpfa.fsu.edu/policies/bmanual/safeguard.html>
- f) Unless expressly noted, student learning outcomes will be assessed for the period of the Fall semester plus the Spring and Summer Semesters of the following calendar year.
- g) Student Learning outcomes and assessment statements for the current extended academic year should be entered into the institutional effectiveness portal annually between August 15th and September 15th. Results statements along with improvement

and action plans related to the previous academic year should be entered between August 15th and October 15th.

## **6. ASSESSMENT OF STATE MANDATED ACADEMIC LEARNING COMPACTS**

- a) Each student learning outcome must state a specific learning result that can be measured for a well defined period that will be reported in an assessment statement.
- b) Each student learning outcome assessment statement must specify the standard or criterion that establishes successful performance on the measure or rubric.
- c) Each student learning outcome assessment statement must identify the corresponding assessments and methods used to determine how well student learning matches those articulated expectations. The outcome statement should identify the timeframe, in which the assessment or method is conducted along with any special conditions, if necessary, that might affect the evaluation.
- d) The assessment or method associated with each student learning outcome should provide evidence as to the percentage of students of the program that have met the standard or criterion of each of student learning outcome.
- e) The assessment or method used to measure performance on a student learning outcome should constitute a valid measurement. The validity of an individual measure can be established in a number of ways, but should involve evaluation of the measure by faculty or individuals external to the particular course or circumstance in which the assessment is conducted. Validity can be established by review and approval of an assessment or method by a group of designated faculty such as a department curriculum committee or through use of an externally validated assessment tool. The technique used to establish validity along with the evaluation resulting from application of the technique should be documented in writing and filed with the appropriate department Chair or Program Director. Such documentation may also be maintained in the associated file bank within the institutional effectiveness portal.
- f) The outcome statement should identify the group or individual responsible for conducting the assessment.
- g) More than one single assessment measure or method can be used to assess a student learning outcome.

## **7. REPORTING AND ANALYZING THE RESULTS OF ASSESSMENT**

- a) The results of assessing student performance on a student learning outcome must be

reported in the institutional effectiveness portal using the same measure or method identified in the Assessment Statement. The Program Director or Department Chair is responsible for reporting results in the institutional effectiveness portal.

- b) The results should be reported thoroughly and clearly. Summary statements should be representative of the full range and distribution of results.
- c) The results statement must indicate how the results compare to the standards set in the assessment statement and note the size and direction of any deviation from the standard.
- d) The results statement should include an analysis of the results and consider any concerns raised by the assessment.
- e) The results should identify the number or percentage of students whose initial performance on an assessment meets the standard or criterion.
- f) Details of the results shall be maintained by the department responsible for the assessment in accordance with student privacy requirements.

## **8. IMPROVEMENT AND ACTION PLANS**

- a) The results and analysis statement for each student learning outcome must be considered in an improvements and action plan statement.
- b) Recommended improvements and action plans must be clearly supported by the results and analysis statement.
- c) Recommended improvements and action plans should be feasible, include an associated timetable for implementation, and help insure continuous improvement or sustained performance at a high level in student learning or the degree program.
- d) The budgetary implication of any recommended improvements or action plans should be noted appropriately within the reporting system.
- e) Recommended improvement and action plans should designate the individual or organization responsible for implementation and oversight.
- f) The recommended improvement and action plan should note whether the assessment mechanism is performing as expected. The department, dean's office or responsible administrative unit, on a schedule determined by the appropriate review authority, should develop, implement and report on evaluation efforts (including external validations) necessary to corroborate that the assessments actually measure student achievement against the expected core learning outcomes. Such evaluations will serve to validate the confidence levels associated with assessment mechanisms used in the program, and results will be used to improve student achievement and program effectiveness.

## **9. REVIEW OF THE STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES AND ASSOCIATED INFORMATION**

- a) Submission and review of the student learning outcomes and associated information shall involve two steps: the first step consists of initial submission and the associated review of outcomes and assessment, and the second involves the submission and review of results, analysis and improvement plans.

In September annually, The Student Learning Outcomes for each degree program and for the student learning outcomes associated with the liberal studies curriculum shall be submitted, reviewed and approved by officials at three levels beyond the initial submission. The Program Director or designee shall be responsible for the initial submission and review of the student learning outcomes and associated information concerning a degree program. This shall constitute the level 1 review.

- b) Following development and submission of the Student Learning Outcomes, they shall be reviewed and approved by the Department Chair, Program Director or Chair of Undergraduate Policy Committee of the Faculty Senate. This is a level 2 review as depicted in Figure 1. The review shall apply criteria drawn from these guidelines. Approval shall be contingent upon conformance with these guidelines and validation of the associated assessment mechanisms.
- c) A level 3 review shall be conducted by the appropriate Dean of the appropriate college or the Dean of Undergraduate Studies in the case of liberal studies outcomes. The review shall apply criteria drawn from these guidelines. Suggested rubrics for evaluating the submissions will be distributed on a timely basis by the Associate Vice-President for Budgeting, Institutional Effectiveness and Planning. Approval shall be contingent upon conformity with these guidelines.
- d) A level 4 review shall be conducted by the Provost or Associate Vice President of Budgeting, Institutional Effectiveness and Planning. The review shall apply criteria drawn from these guidelines. Approval shall be contingent upon conformance with these guidelines.
- e) The Associate Vice President for Budgeting, Institutional Effectiveness and Planning, at three-year intervals, shall develop, implement and report on evaluation efforts (including external validations) necessary to corroborate that the assessments actually measure student achievement against the expected core learning outcomes. Such evaluations will serve to validate the assessment mechanisms used in the program, and results will be used to improve student achievement and program effectiveness. They should integrate multiple sources of evidence that combines logical argument and empirical justification needed in order to establish intersubjective validity. These sources can include: student test scores on licensure examinations, CLAST, GREs, GMAC, LSAT, MCAT, and various field examinations; direct inquiry of employers on

performance, and direct inquiry of officials at the graduate school admitting students.

**Figure 1. SMALC Submission and Review**

	Level 1	level 2	level 3	level 4
<b>2004-2005</b>				
<b>Student Learning Outcomes</b>				
□ Academic Units: Degree Offering	<b>Program Director</b>	<b>Chair or Program Director*</b>	<b>Dean</b>	<b>Provost [AVPAA]</b>
<b>2005-2006</b>				
<b>Student Learning Outcomes</b>				
□ Academic Units: Offering Courses Leading to the Bachelor's Degree	<b>Program Director</b>	<b>Chair, Chair UPC or Program Director*</b>	<b>Dean or Dean of Undergraduate Studies</b>	<b>Provost [AVPAA]</b>

*Note: A Reviewer can be assigned by the appropriate higher level Administrative unit upon contacting The Institutional Effectiveness Portal Administrator for inclusion in the IE Portal.*

*\* The Chair or Director will certify the status and validity of the SMALCs as determined and reported by third parties (e.g. committee, etc.)*

- f) The second step of steps consists of submission of the results, analysis, improvement statements and action plans associated with each outcome and assessment along with the four levels of review. The levels of review shall proceed in the same manner as in the first step.

## 10. PROGRAMMATIC USES OF STATE MANDATED ACADEMIC LEARNING COMPACTS

- a) State Mandated Academic Learning Compacts are an integral part of the university quality enhancement process. See [http://www.fsu.edu/~acaffair/qe/qe\\_process.html](http://www.fsu.edu/~acaffair/qe/qe_process.html). The Vice President for Academic Quality and External Programs will submit to the Board of Governors an electronic copy or hyperlink to a copy of the Academic Learning Compact for each Baccalaureate degree program reviewed as part of the mandated review and continuous improvement process for State University System degree programs (refer to the Policy Guideline on Academic Program Review #PG 04.08.11).
- b) The Quality Enhancement Review prepared for review of each program will demonstrate how information from the periodic review of student learning outcomes, as well as from the evaluation of corresponding assessment mechanisms, has been used to improve student achievement and program effectiveness.
- c) The Documentation required for and certified for graduation by each department to the Office of the University Registrar shall constitute satisfaction that individual students have met the requirements of the State Mandated Academic Learning Compact.
- d) In addition to satisfying the requirements of the Academic Learning Compact, the

general requirements of the Florida State University remain applicable to all students for all baccalaureate degrees.

- e) Undergraduate students will notified of the State Mandated Academic Learning Compact requirement in the General Bulletin.

## **11. DISSEMINATION OF STATE MANDATED ACADEMIC LEARNING COMPACTS**

- a) State Mandated Academic Learning Compacts for each Bachelor's degree program will be made readily available to students electronically at a site initially listed on the university's home page. The Academic Learning Compacts must be made available to students beginning no later than the end of the fall semester of 2005.
- b) The web site will provide current and prospective students access to the outcome statements of Academic Learning Compacts, edited and rendered in concise colloquial statements of what active and successful participants will know and be able to do after completion of the requirements for each baccalaureate degree.
- c) The web site will list the types of assessments used in each program and will be updated as needed.
- d) The web and its contents are subject to periodic change. Neither the State Mandated Academic Learning Compact nor its associated activities constitute a contract with students, either expressed or implied, between the University and the Student, but represent a flexible program of the current curriculum. Educational plans, offerings and requirements may be altered from time to time to carry out the administrative, academic and procedural purposes and objectives of the University. The University specifically reserves the right to change, delete or add to any provision, offering, academic curriculum, program or requirement at any time within the student's period of study at the University.

## **12. SCHEDULE FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

- a) Preliminary submission and review of the State Mandated Academic Learning Compacts will begin in the summer of 2005. Full implementation is contingent upon approval of these guidelines by the Faculty Senate and the University Board of Trustees.
- b) Students will complete the State Mandated Academic Learning Compact for their program of graduation, effective in the semester following approval of this policy by the University Board of Trustees and these guidelines.
- c) Undergraduate students with an AA degree or General Education Statement from a Florida public senior or community college with which The Florida State University

maintains an official articulation agreement are exempted from completion of those elements of a State Mandated Academic Learning Compact that are included in the courses approved for transfer of credit after a student has met other university requirements and been declared eligible for transfer.

### **13. SCHEDULE FOR REVIEW**

- a) Following the first two years of implementation, these guidelines shall be reviewed every two years or more frequently as necessary. During the first two years of implementation, the review will occur every six (6) months.
- b) The exemption for undergraduate students with an AA degree or General Education Statement from a Florida public senior or community college with which The Florida State University maintains an official articulation agreement shall be reviewed following the initial eighteen months of implementation of these guidelines by the Associate Vice-President for Academic Affairs for Budgeting, Institutional Effectiveness and Planning. The Associate Vice-President shall make recommendations for change, as necessary, to the Faculty Senate for their consideration and review. The review should also consider whether the university should develop comprehensive core student learning outcomes associated with the general requirements of the liberal studies curriculum that conform to the requirements of the State Mandated Academic Learning Compact. Additionally, it will examine the advantages and disadvantages of including an evaluation and approval of such liberal studies core student learning outcomes as part of the award of transfer credit. The review shall determine if the university will award and recognize the associate in arts (AA) certificate to students who have successfully completed the State Mandate Academic Learning Compact associated with the Liberal Studies program and satisfied all other requirements established by the University.
- c) The Associate Vice President for Budgeting, Institutional Effectiveness and Planning, on three year intervals, shall develop, implement and report on evaluation efforts (including external validations) necessary to corroborate that the assessments actually measure student achievement against the expected core learning outcomes.