

**University Guidelines**  
**State Mandated Academic Learning Compacts**  
**(SMALCs)**

**1. PURPOSE**

These guidelines are designed to provide clearly defined procedures for developing, implementing, and reviewing State Mandated Academic Learning Compacts and their associated activities. They complement and further university guidelines. See Board of Governors, “Student Learning Outcomes Assessment,” Regulation 8.016.

**2. ACCOUNTABILITY/RESPONSIBILITY**

Primary responsibility for implementation of these guidelines resides with the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Vice President and the Office are charged with oversight of the processes detailed in these guidelines and reporting the results of the processes to the University Board of Trustees and University President, as appropriate. Reports prepared for the State Board of Governors regarding state mandated academic learning compacts will be submitted through the university data administrator.

**3. DEFINITIONS**

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 discipline knowledge and skills that students will have learned by the conclusion of the program, and how student learning will be measured, above and beyond, course grades. The compact for each degree program identifies at least 5 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 the discipline knowledge that a student will learn by the end of a course of study. Discipline knowledge is the information, skills, and abilities that a student has attained at the conclusion, 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) **Assessment Units** are academic educational, support, and administrative units within the university which require outcomes, assessment processes, results, analyses, and

improvement plans / recommended actions along with associated information and documentary files as appropriate.

- d) **Assessment** is the systematic collection, review, analysis, and use of information about student performance in an educational program. It is undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and the quality of educational programs.
- e) **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.
- f) An **Embedded Examination** is an evaluation that occurs within a single course designed to assess specific student learning outcomes.
- g) An Academic **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)
- h) **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 Mandated Academic Learning Compacts will be prepared.
- i) **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.
- j) **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.
- k) **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**

The following guidelines apply:

- a) The Faculty of each baccalaureate program listed on the State University System Academic Degree Inventory will develop an Academic Learning Compact that identifies and is comprised of, at a minimum, five expected core student learning outcomes for its program graduates which include the areas of:
  - 1) content/discipline knowledge and skills;
  - 2) communication skills; and
  - 3) critical thinking skills.
- b) Each SLO does not need to address all areas, but all areas must be included within the Academic Learning Compact as a whole.
- c) Each student learning outcome must state a specific learning result that can be measured for a well-defined period that will be reported in the assessment process portion of the relevant student learning outcome.
- d) 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.
- e) The development of the SMALCs must take into consideration perspectives of appropriate constituencies (including but not limited to potential employers and graduate programs) regarding the knowledge and skills graduates need for the global marketplace and society.
- f) The course of study of every graduate of a program must include core student learning outcomes in content/discipline knowledge and skills, communication skills, or critical thinking skills that are assessed with mechanisms that ensure that graduates have met the criteria of the Compact.
- g) 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.
- h) The instrument or mechanism used to assess each outcome shall be identified and may deal with more than one outcome, but each outcome must be assessed separately.
- i) The Chair of the Department or Program Director in which the degree program resides is responsible for developing and reporting the State Mandated Academic Learning Compact for that program in the institutional effectiveness (IE) portal.

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

The following guidelines apply:

Outcomes must be assessed and reported separately for programs delivered at each branch campus and for programs delivered through distance/online means.

- a) The instrument or mechanism used to assess each outcome shall be identified and may deal with more than one outcome, but each outcome must be assessed separately.
- 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. A list of applicable assessment methods are provided in the template with the assessment process for a given student learning outcome.
- d) The assessment process associated with each assessment should provide evidence as to the students of the program that have met the standard or criterion of each of the student learning outcomes.
- e) Unless expressly noted, student learning outcomes will be assessed for the period of the academic year beginning with the Fall semester plus the Spring and Summer semesters of the following calendar year.
- f) Each assessment unit should identify the group or individual responsible for conducting the assessment. This can be entered in the Assignment portion of the assessment process section of the student learning outcome within the IE portal or may be maintained separately with the department.
- g) More than one single assessment measure or method can be used to assess a student learning outcome. This can be entered as additional assessment process within the IE portal template for a given assessment unit.

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

The following guidelines apply:

- 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 Process 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 conclude how the results compare to the standards set in the assessment statement and note the size and direction of any deviation from the standard along with an indication of whether the criteria established for the outcome assessment has been met.
- d) The results statement should include an analysis of the results and consider any concerns raised by the assessment. The analysis should explain why you got the results you did. It should explain why both successful and unsuccessful results were achieved.
- e) The results should identify the number or percentage of students whose initial performance on an assessment meets the standard or criterion along with an indication of whether there is a budget impact associated with the recommended action to be taken. The result statement should include an analysis of results in the appropriate portion of the results template for the student learning outcome. The analysis should identify areas of weakness or strength in achieving the outcome.
- f) Details of the results shall be maintained by the department responsible for the assessment in accordance with student privacy requirements.

## **7. IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION PLANS**

The following guidelines apply:

- a) The results and analysis statement for each student learning outcome must be considered in an improvements and recommended actions plan statement. Improvement plans and recommended actions must be clearly supported by the results and analysis statement. Improvements should address areas needed to support or sustain achievement or remedy areas of weakness found in the analysis of results.
- b) Improvement plans and recommended actions should be feasible, include an associated timetable for implementation, and help ensure continuous improvement or sustained performance at a high level in student learning or the degree program.
- c) The budgetary implication of any improvement plans and recommended actions should be noted appropriately within the results portion of the assessment units.
- d) Improvement plans and recommended actions should designate the individual or organization responsible for implementation and oversight. This information can be included among related documents in the Recommended Actions portion of the unit assessment or maintained by the unit's department office.
- e) Improvement plans and recommended actions should note whether the assessment mechanism is performing as expected.

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

The following guidelines apply:

- a) The student learning outcomes within a program will be configured to conform to the template in the institutional effectiveness portal for recording the outcomes of assessment units and related assessment process, results, analyses and improvement plans / recommended actions.
- b) The State Mandated Academic Learning Compact for each bachelor's degree program will be recorded in the responsible academic department's (or program's) student learning outcomes within the institutional effectiveness portal.
- c) The detail of assessment mechanisms along with results should be stored, as necessary, in the IE portal document repository.
- d) The instrument or mechanism used to assess each outcome shall be identified and may deal with more than one outcome, but each outcome must be assessed separately. The instrument or mechanism used to assess each outcome shall be identified and may deal with more than one outcome, but each outcome must be assessed separately. 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.] No information should be uploaded into the Portal that contains specific information about a student unless it complies with university policy. For university policy, see <https://registrar.fsu.edu/records/ferpa/>.
- e) Assessment units with student learning outcomes and assessment statements for the current academic year should enter information into the institutional effectiveness portal annually in accordance with the schedule established and disseminated by the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs.

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

The following guidelines apply:

- a) Submission and review of the student learning outcomes and associated information shall involve three phases:
  - 1) Identification, submission and review of outcomes and assessment processes;
  - 2) review and approval of the outcomes, results, analyses and improvement plans; and
  - 3) compliance review of all by a university Dean or appropriate director.

On a schedule established and disseminated by the Office of the Provost and Executive

Vice President for Academic Affairs, the student learning outcomes for each degree program shall be submitted, reviewed and approved annually. The Department Chair or designee shall be responsible for the initial submission and review of the student learning outcomes and associated information concerning a degree program. Entry of information into the institutional effectiveness portal shall indicate review and approval by the appropriate Department Chair or Program Director.

- b) Following development and submission of student learning outcomes, the outcomes shall be reviewed and approved by the Department Chair or Program Director. The review shall apply criteria drawn from these guidelines. Approval shall be contingent upon conformance with these guidelines. In instances where the Chair or Director submits the outcomes and associated information, their action shall constitute an initial approval of the submission.
- c) A final review shall be conducted by the appropriate Dean of the appropriate college. The review shall apply criteria drawn from these guidelines. Suggested rubrics for evaluating the submissions will be developed and distributed by the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs. Approval shall be contingent upon conformity with these guidelines.
- d) The Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs will periodically review samples of unit submissions for conformity with these guidelines. The Office will provide training and assistance as needed to ensure compliance with these guidelines.

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

The following guidelines apply:

- a) State Mandated Academic Learning Compacts are an integral part of the university quality enhancement process. The Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs 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 Board of Governors Regulation on Academic Program Review 8.015 and Student Learning Outcomes Assessment, 8.016).
- b) The Quality Enhancement Review prepared for review of each program in compliance with state law and BOG regulation (8.015) 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.

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

The following guidelines apply:

- a) State Mandated Academic Learning Compacts for each Bachelor's degree program will be made readily available to students electronically at sites listed on the university's web page (See Academic Program Guide and Office of the Provost, Outcomes and Institutional Effectiveness websites). The Academic Learning Compacts along with the Academic Program Guide must be made available to students on a continuing basis.

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.

- b) The web site will list the types of assessments used in each program and will be updated as needed.
- c) 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.