



Florida A&M University

Formulating
statements
of outcomes

Ascertaining
criteria for
success

Measuring
performance

Observing
and analyzing
results

Using results
to effect
improvement

Strengthening
programs
and services

ACADEMIC LEARNING COMPACTS: Policies and Procedures

Developed by:
Institutional Level Assessment Committee
Spring 2005

Revised Spring 2007

I. Introduction

This document has been prepared by Florida A&M University in response to the Division of Colleges and Universities Policy Guideline (PG 04.08.26). It presents the policies and procedures, which were developed at Florida A&M University for implementing the state-mandated Academic Learning Compacts for baccalaureate degree programs. These Academic Learning Compacts are structured plans to account for student achievement in specified domains in baccalaureate degree programs in the State University System. At Florida A&M University, beginning fall 2005, these Academic Learning Compacts will be made available to the entering freshman class and prospective students.

The Office of Assessment at Florida A&M University is housed in the Office of the Provost and led by a Program Director with a program and office support staff. The range of assessment activities covers the quality of all academic programs, including the general education program and all administrative and educational support services and operations that support the academic programs. University personnel have been organized into a hierarchy of committees, with the **Committee for Institutional Effectiveness (CIE)** at the top level reporting directly to the Provost and President. The **Institutional Level Assessment Committee (ILAC)** reports to the CIE and provides leadership in the implementation of the University's assessment plan. Membership of the ILAC consists of the program/divisional assessment committee chairpersons from all academic programs and administrative and educational support service units at the University. The **Administrative and Educational Support Services Divisional Assessment Committee (AESDAC)** provides oversight and leadership for the design, development, and implementation of a systematic plan for assessing the quality of the services and operations that support academic programs. The **General Education Assessment Committee (GEAC)** provides the oversight and leadership for the design, development, and implementation of a systematic general education assessment plan. Representatives of all programs and areas that contribute to the core curriculum constitute membership of this committee. Oversight of the Academic Learning Compacts will be one of the responsibilities of both the ILAC and GEAC.

“Explicit identification of learning expectations facilitates the department’s coherence about their goals. Sharing those expectations explicitly with students can provide an effective learning scaffold on which students can build their experiences and render effective performance.” [American Psychological Association \(March, 2002\)](#).

In recent years, there has been increased emphasis on the identification and assessment of core student learning outcomes in higher education. The Florida Board of Governors has articulated the importance of student achievement in its strategic planning and accountability processes. Research indicates that university students are served best when students and faculty fully engage in a teaching-learning partnership, and this partnership is all the more meaningful if it is made as clear as possible to students what it is they will learn and how program faculty will assess that learning. Therefore, the Board has determined that universities must develop “Academic Learning Compacts” and related assessment processes to define and demonstrate student achievement in baccalaureate degree programs in the State University System.

The Board of Governors supports the ongoing devolution of authority to the universities, campus-level decision making, and institutional accountability under the constitutional framework established by Floridians for their system of public universities. The Board also

expects university and BOG personnel to ensure that the Academic Learning Compacts and corresponding assessment processes are of high quality and that they comply with the expectations outlined in Board of Governors and university regulations. The infrastructure outlined below is in place to ensure such compliance.

II. Policies and Procedures

Herein Florida A&M University has defined its policies and procedures for developing, implementing, and reviewing Academic Learning Compacts (ALC) and associated activities in compliance with the Policy Guidelines. These policies and procedures are subject to approval by the Board of Trustees and file copies are submitted to the Division of Colleges and Universities through the Office of the Provost. The Office of the Provost, through the Office of Assessment, is primarily responsible for managing and coordinating the implementation of these policies and procedures throughout the University.

Florida A&M University recognizes that a liberal arts foundation is essential to supporting the process of learning in the respective program majors. Accordingly, learning outcomes have been developed, which address required core competencies at both the general education and the program levels. In relation to Academic Learning Compacts, the general education program will measure student achievement in terms of expected student learning outcomes in the areas of (i) communication skills and (ii) critical thinking skills.

Baccalaureate programs are required to develop Academic Learning Compacts that will effectively measure student learning outcomes in specified domains. The Board of Trustees must approve the process for certifying that each Baccalaureate graduate has completed a program with clearly articulated core student learning expectations. These Academic Learning Compacts are required, at a minimum, to determine the expected student learning outcomes for program graduates in the areas of (i) content/discipline knowledge and skills, (ii) communication skills, and (iii) critical thinking skills.

Furthermore, each Academic Learning Compact will contain criteria for success and methods for assessing how well student learning matches the articulated expectations. The FAMOUS assessment planning and implementation model, shown below has been adopted by the University and will be used to document the Academic Learning Compacts and related results.

The “FAMOUS” Assessment approach involves six sequential and precise steps. Each letter of the acronym “FAMOUS” represents an important step that is connected to the next step in a chain that ultimately comes together to contribute to the goal of successfully developing and implementing an effective assessment plan.

The **FAMOUS** assessment planning and implementation model, includes the following steps

- Step 1: **F**ormulating statements of outcomes/objectives aligned to the institutional mission/goals;
- Step 2: **A**scertaining criteria for success;
- Step 3: **M**asuring student/service performance using qualitative and quantitative methods;

- Step 4: Observing and analyzing results for congruence between expected and actual outcomes;
- Step 5: Using the results to effect improvement of instructional programs and administrative and educational support services; and
- Step 6: Strengthening programs and services by continuously evaluating, planning, allocating resources and implementing new approaches to ensure congruence between expected and actual outcomes.

The University will require each program to submit an annual status report on the development and implementation of its Academic Learning Compacts and associated processes.

III. Academic Learning Compact Evaluation Process

For all baccalaureate programs on (or that an institution intends to place on) the State University System Academic Degree Inventory:

- a. Program faculty must develop Academic Learning Compacts that identify, at a minimum, the expected core student learning outcomes for program graduates in the areas of (i) content/discipline knowledge and skills; (ii) communication skills; and (iii) critical thinking skills. Input should be sought from the business and professional community to identify learning outcomes that students need for success in the global marketplace and society.
- b. Program faculty must identify the corresponding assessment tools and procedures that faculty use within the context of the program to determine if individual students have met each of the articulated core student learning expectations.
- c. University personnel must develop robust and effective program assessment/evaluation systems (which can involve sampling), including external corroboration, to substantiate that graduates have truly attained the expected core competencies. Such program assessments/evaluations should provide assurance that completion of the baccalaureate degree program indicates that individual students have attained the articulated core learning requirements.
- d. Program faculty must demonstrate the use of results from program assessments/evaluations to continuously improve program effectiveness and student learning.

The University requires each program to develop evaluation systems, including external validations, necessary to corroborate the identified assessment strategies to measure student achievement on the expected student learning outcomes. The validations include:

- a. Reviews of the Academic Learning Compacts and related results by teams of faculty;
- b. Oversight of program assessment and improvement systems by the ILAC and GEAC Committees and the Office of Assessment; and

- c. Program reviews or specialized accreditation processes - External consultants will review the learning outcomes to verify they are appropriate for the discipline, methods of assessment, and samples of student work.

Such evaluations will serve to validate the confidence levels associated with the assessment mechanisms used in the program.

The Office of Assessment shall be the repository for all Academic Learning Compacts and assessment plans in the University. In addition:

- (1) Each program department is required to keep complete records of its Academic Learning Compacts and assessment plans.
- (2) The executive summary for the Academic Learning Compacts and measurements of student achievement in each program must be submitted to the appropriate Dean's office.
- (3) The Director for Assessment will ensure that these Academic Learning Compacts and assessment plans are made available to ILAC.
- (4) The ILAC will review the submitted assessment reports against plans that were previously submitted by the instructional programs and make recommendations for revisions, as appropriate.
- (5) The ILAC will corroborate, through appropriate methods, that the reported results have been used for implementing programmatic or service improvements.
- (6) The ALC's evaluation findings will be made an integral part of the **Annual Institutional Assessment Report** prepared by the Office of Assessment.

This report will be disseminated to designated university committees, charged with the task of developing institutional-wide and program-specific accreditation plans. The findings and recommendations in this report will be used in responding to evaluation procedures by other accrediting bodies and documenting use of results for improvement.

IV. The Availability of Academic Learning Compacts to Students

The University is responsible for providing all of its prospective and current students with clearly defined Academic Learning Compacts, which are written in a user-friendly format. Academic programs will distribute their Academic Learning Compacts to students through the University website and course syllabi. Effective Fall Semester 2005, these Compacts will be made available to all prospective and current students of the University. In addition:

- a. A current copy of each university's policies and procedures regarding both Academic Learning Compacts and corresponding assessment/ evaluation processes must remain on file in the Board of Governors Office of Academic and Student Affairs.
- b. Program faculty must provide current and prospective students with student-friendly, jargon-free Academic Learning Compacts for each baccalaureate program on (or that an institution intends to place on) the State University System Academic Degree Inventory. Each Academic Learning Compact must be made available on the university's Web site and must include, at a minimum:
 - i. concise statements of what active and successful students participating in the joint teaching-learning-assessment process will know and be able to do, expressed in terms of the core student learning outcomes embodied in the requirements for each baccalaureate degree;
 - ii. A list of the types of assessments students might encounter in the program (e.g., capstone projects, juried performances, standardized exams, common embedded exam questions, portfolio requirements, etc.).
- c. 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), university personnel must submit an up-to-date hyperlink to a copy of the Academic Learning Compact for each baccalaureate degree program under review. University personnel are expected to demonstrate how results from the periodic review of student learning outcomes, as well as from the evaluation of corresponding assessment mechanisms, have been used to continuously improve program effectiveness and student learning.
- d. Initially, university personnel will be asked to submit periodic status reports to the Board of Governors Office of Academic and Student Affairs on the progress baccalaureate degree program faculty are making on developing, implementing, and reviewing Academic Learning Compacts and corresponding assessment/evaluation policies, procedures, and products.

V. Responsibilities of the Office of Academic and Student Affairs

The Board of Governors Office of Academic and Student Affairs will:

- (1) Review institutional policies and procedures to ensure that they comply with the expectations outlined in this regulation.
- (2) Offer technical assistance to university personnel as they work to improve the quality of program assessment/evaluation processes to demonstrate that individual students receiving the baccalaureate have attained the articulated core learning requirements.

- (3) Convene periodic meetings of representatives from the State universities to review institutional progress in developing, implementing, and reviewing Academic Learning Compacts and corresponding assessment policies, procedures, and products, as well as to share related best practices.
- (4) Provide periodic updates to the Board of Governors on efforts in the State University System to demonstrate student achievement in the baccalaureate degree programs.

VI. The FAMU Action Plan

The University has developed a plan of action for the implementation of these Policies and Guidelines. This action plan, once approved by the Board of Trustees, will be submitted to the Division of Colleges and Universities. The plan includes the following:

1. A description of how the university personnel will certify that each baccalaureate graduate has completed a program with clearly articulated student learning expectations in content/discipline knowledge and skills, communication skills, and critical thinking skills and that corresponding robust and effective assessment mechanisms have been used to ensure that graduates have met the criteria of the compacts; and
2. A proposed timeline for developing policies and implementing procedures to capture each element outlined in the Academic Learning Compacts.

VI.1. The Certification Process

The Academic Learning Compacts will serve to document the expected learning outcomes to be achieved by every student matriculating through his/her program. Periodic measurements of the extent to which student learning has taken place will be accomplished by the use of tools, such as rubrics, products of student work, and other course-embedded assessments. These various measurements will be used by faculty in each program to enhance student achievement. The reports generated by these various measurements will be used to make program enhancements.

The program director or department chair for each academic program will certify to the dean of the college, school, or institute that the program has: (1) developed a set of clearly articulated student learning outcomes in the areas of (i) content/discipline knowledge and skills; (ii) communication skills; and (iii) critical thinking skills; (2) evaluated student learning outcomes during the previous academic year; and (3) identified recommendations for student learning outcome improvement to be used during the current academic year.

The academic division director or department chair will demonstrate that the plans of study for its program graduates systematically include all courses used to evaluate student learning outcomes. The awarding of the diploma will certify that the graduate has completed a program that has met the criteria of the Academic Learning Compacts.

VI.2. Proposed Timeline for Academic Learning Compact Implementation

The implementation of the Academic Learning Compacts (ALC) at Florida A&M University has been divided into the following major phases:

- Phase I: The Establishment of the Assessment Infrastructure
- Phase II: The Establishment of the Assessment Training Program
- Phase III: The Development of the ALC Detailed Implementation Plan
- Phase IV: The Design and Development of the Academic Learning Compacts
- Phase V: The Refinement of the Academic Learning Compacts
- Phase VI: The Approval of the ALC Implementation Plan
- Phase VII: The Availability of the Academic Learning Compacts to Incoming Freshmen and Other Students
- Phase VIII: The Implementation of the Academic Learning Compacts
- Phase IX: The Development and Submission of Mandated Reports on Assessment.

These phases are depicted in the following timeline chart that shows when each phase is planned for execution in relation to the other phases.

FAMU: Proposed Timeline for Academic Learning Compact Implementation

Last Revision Date: April 6, 2005											
Phase	Implementation Task	Spr 2004	Sum 2004	Fall 2004	Spr 2005	Sum 2005	Fall 2005	Spr 2006	Sum 2006	Fall 2006	Spr 2007
I	Establish the assessment infrastructure.	-----									
II	Establish the assessment training program.	----->									
III	Develop the ALC implementation plan.	-----									
IV	Design and develop the Academic Learning Compacts.	-----									
V	Refine the preliminary Academic Learning Compacts.	----->									
VI	Approve the ALC implementation plan.	-----									
VII	Make the Academic Learning Compacts available to incoming freshmen and other students.	----->									
VIII	Implement the Academic Learning Compacts.	-----									
IX	Prepare and submit mandated reports on assessment.	----->									

The Action Plan for Policies and Procedures Development

The following immediate tasks will be performed in order to finalize the ALC policies and guidelines as a part of Phase 6.

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|-------------|---|
| Spring 2005 | <p>Submit the policies and procedures for Academic Learning Compacts to the Deans and the Provost for review and acceptance.</p> <p>Finalize and submit policies and procedures for the Academic Learning Compacts to Faculty Senate for review and approval. (Faculty Senate meets on April 19, 2005).</p> <p>Finalize and resubmit policies and procedures to the Deans, the Provost and the President for review and acceptance.</p> |
| Summer 2005 | <p>Finalize and submit the approved policies and procedures for the Academic Learning Compacts to Board of Trustees by May 14, 2005.</p> <p>Finalize the design and development of all Academic Learning Compacts.</p> <p>Communicate the expectations of the Academic Learning Compacts to the incoming freshmen during the Total Orientation Program for Students (TOPS) during July 5 – July 14, 2005.</p> <p>Submit the approved policies and procedures for ALC to the Division of Colleges and Universities by July 29, 2005.</p> |
| Fall 2005 | <p>Make the Academic Learning Compacts available to students through the website.</p> <p>Implement/Initiate the Academic Learning Compacts for certain academic programs.</p> |
| Spring 2006 | <p>Implement/Complete the Academic Learning Compacts for all other academic programs.</p> <p>Phase in critical thinking for some programs.</p> |
| Fall 2006 | <p>Prepare and submit mandated reports on assessment.</p> |