University of West Florida
Academic Learning Compact
Policies and Procedures

Approved by the University of West Florida Board of Trustees
March 20, 2007

The University of West Florida (UWF) has adopted the Board of Governors' (BOG's) mandate to develop an "Academic Learning Compact (ALC)" to identify student learning outcomes and relevant assessment strategies for UWF's undergraduate degree programs. Our faculty and administration concurred that developing the reporting requirements to satisfy the ALC mandate would also effectively address accountability demands related to the SACS review. Our approach adheres to Policy Guideline #PG 05.02.15, issued by the Board of Governors, State University System/Division of Colleges and Universities.

STATEMENT OF POLICY

Academic departments are responsible for developing student learning outcomes, completing a curriculum audit, and designing an assessment plan to generate evidence regarding the quality of their programs. The department chair or program director has formal responsibility for submitting the Academic Learning Compact for a baccalaureate degree program to the Director of the Center for University Teaching, Learning, and Assessment for review and the appropriate College Dean for approval. Department members are responsible for incorporating relevant elements of the Academic Learning Compact in new course proposals as well as new degree programs. Relevant student learning outcomes related to the ALC should be included in the design of course syllabi.

The UWF Academic Learning Compact incorporates student learning outcome activity across five domains that should characterize the skills and abilities of a UWF graduate, regardless of major. Every ALC will address the three domains specified by the Board of Governors:
- discipline knowledge and skills
- communication
- critical thinking

and two additional domains as follows:
- integrity/values
- project management.

These five domains represent student learning outcomes identified by faculty as essential to the UWF baccalaureate degree. Departments may elect to include a sixth domain that uniquely characterizes work in their major (e.g., "risk/hazard management" in chemistry).

Academic Learning Compacts should be written in jargon-free language that will be understandable to potential students. Each department or program will generate a two-sided handout that includes the following elements:
- Mission statement of the department
- Student learning outcomes associated with each ALC domain
- Roster of possible kinds of employment related to completion of the major
- Summary of the assessment plan by which the students would demonstrate the outcomes
- URL address for the web site of the program or major.

Physical copies of the ALC handouts will be made available to students through the department and electronic copies will be available online at the web sites of the program/department and of the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment. The UWF Catalog will address the role of Academic Learning Compacts in general terms.

Each program will identify a minimum of one direct (e.g., portfolio analysis, capstone performance) and one indirect (e.g., exit survey, alumni satisfaction survey) measure as the foundation of its assessment plan. The commitment of the Academic Learning Compact is that students who graduate from any baccalaureate program will have had the experiences designed to develop competence in the targeted

domains of the university plan.

The department chair or program director of the major or a designee will systematically review and revise the outcomes as influenced by the data generated by the respective departmental assessment plans. At minimum, departments or programs will devote at least one formal meeting per year to review of their assessment data and planning for curricular refinement.

Academic departments will ensure that the ALC is a current representation of the curriculum and goals of the undergraduate program. Departments will create an ALC for each new undergraduate program proposal and make appropriate revisions to the ALC of existing programs that undergo significant program revision. New and revised ALCs will be submitted prior to final approval of new programs or program revisions.

STATEMENT OF PROCEDURES

Posting Current ALC Documents on the Web
To ensure that all representations of ALC documents on the web are consistent, the current electronic copy of department ALC documents will be archived on the web site of the Center for University Teaching, Learning, and Assessment. Departments should provide a link to these documents from the departmental web page(s). All other web sites (including the departmental web site) should access this electronic document by linking to the appropriate file maintained on the CUTLA web site.

Content of an ALC
Academic Learning Compact will include the following elements:
- Mission statement of the department
- Student learning outcomes across five domains:
  1. discipline knowledge and skills (content)
  2. communication
  3. critical thinking
  4. integrity/values
  5. project management
  6. (optional sixth domain elected by departments that uniquely characterizes discipline-specific skills in the major not identified by the other domains).
- Roster of possible kinds of employment related to completion of the major
- Summary of the assessment plan by which the students would demonstrate the outcomes
- URL address for the web site of the program or major.

Assessment and Review of Student Learning
Each program or department will identify a minimum of one direct (e.g., portfolio analysis, capstone performance) and one indirect (e.g., exit survey, alumni satisfaction survey) measure as the foundation of the program assessment plan. The commitment of the Academic Learning Compact is that students who graduate from any baccalaureate program will have had the experiences designed to develop competence in the targeted domains of the university plan. The assessment plan must be submitted to the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment or its designee for approval and feedback.

Curriculum Maps/Matrices
Each program will create a curriculum map/matrix in which the location of learning activities related to student learning outcomes for ALC domains and program-related embedded assessments are identified. Curriculum maps/matrices should clearly identify the program-level student learning outcomes and embedded assessment activities in terms of specific courses and other curriculum components. Curriculum maps/matrices will be housed on departmental web sites with a link to the CUTLA web site.

Reporting of Assessment Activity
Programs and departments will make progress reports on their insights from assessment in the annual report submitted to Academic Affairs and posted on the university's planning information system (UPIC).

These reports will include a description of assessment methods and activities, examples of assessment methods used, and descriptions of the improvements in undergraduate programs and/or assessment processes motivated by the review and interpretation of assessment evidence.

The Director of the Center for University Teaching, Learning, and Assessment will develop and post an annual overarching assessment report to the university information system to summarize activity, highlight particular achievements, and facilitate appropriate institutional planning related to curriculum development.

Yearly Audit
The Office of Academic Affairs and the Center for University Teaching, Learning, and Assessment will conduct a yearly audit to ensure that current ALCs are posted on the CUTLA web site and that links from departmental web pages to these documents are functional.

Validation of Assessment Strategies
UWF programs and departments will seek external validation of the selected outcomes and assessment plans. Evaluation of the assessment program will be a standard feature of the seven-year program review. Departments may also pursue other venues of confirmation (e.g., comparisons with national test data, comparisons against benchmarks for comparable programs).

Regular Review of Assessment Data
The department chair or program director or a designee (such as an assessment or curriculum committee) will systematically review the student learning outcomes, review data generated by their respective assessment plans, and make recommendations for ALC revisions and/or program modifications based on the evidence from assessment activity. At a minimum, departments or programs will devote at least one formal meeting per year to review of their assessment data and planning for curricular refinement.

Use of Assessment Data
The university is committed to the recursive nature of assessment. The information gained through measuring student achievement should influence department curricular design, which should in turn influence student achievement. As such, student learning outcomes and assessment plans will be in continuous improvement mode.

Periodic Review of ALCs and Assessment Data
- At minimum, departments or programs will devote at least one formal meeting per year to review of their assessment data, planning for curricular refinement, and evaluation of instructional strategies. This review may include revision of the ALC document.
- When departments initiate changes to degree programs, the student learning outcomes from their current ALC will be imported into the CCR system. The CCR review process will include an evaluation of whether program changes require alteration of the SLOs and ALC document.
- Departments undergoing periodic program reviews or discipline-specific accreditation reviews will include an evaluation of program SLOs to ensure that the current ALC is representative of the goals of the program at the time of the program review.
- Data from periodic assessment activities, review of assessment data, and associated modifications of programs, teaching strategies, and assessment methods will be used to meet SACS standards concerning continuous assessment, review, and improvement of program effectiveness.

Revision of ALC Documents
- Initiation of ALC revisions will reside with the individual departments.
- Once a revision has been made by a department, the revised document should be sent to CUTLA, where it will be reviewed for language (including ensuring that all student learning outcomes are measurable) and formatting.
- The document will then be routed to the appropriate College Dean for approval.
- Documents that have been approved by the College Dean will then be posted to the CUTLA web site.
- The previous version of the document will be archived by CUTLA.

Note:
We are indebted to our colleagues at Florida Atlantic University and the University of North Florida for providing useful models. The ALC Policies and Procedures developed by Thomas Pusateri when he served as Assessment Director at Florida Atlantic University provided a thoughtful overview on the critical issues related to ALC implementation. Robert A. Smallwood, Associate Provost for Assessment at the University of North Florida, also provided useful insights into the appropriate components of these Policies and Procedures. We have adapted their reporting structure to address policies and procedures related to the design and use of ALCs at UWF.