

**BOARD OF GOVERNORS**  
**State University System of Florida**

**ACADEMIC LEARNING COMPACTS**

**BOARD OF GOVERNORS REGULATION**

**Introduction**

“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.

**University Infrastructure for Developing, Implementing, and Reviewing Academic Learning Compacts and Related Assessment Processes**

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.

1) POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

- a) Each university Board of Trustees must approve a process for certifying that each baccalaureate graduate has completed a program with clearly articulated core student learning expectations in content/ discipline knowledge and skills, communication skills, and critical thinking skills.
- b) Each university must construct clearly defined policies and procedures for developing, implementing, and reviewing Academic Learning Compacts and related assessment activities. These policies and procedures must be aligned with this System regulation.

2) PROCESSES: 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\*;
  - iii) critical thinking skills.\*
- 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.

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\* It will be a university decision as to whether there will be institutional-level definitions and/or required outcomes in the areas of communication and critical thinking skills. Some institutions may decide instead that definitions and/or required outcomes will be established (or supplemented) at the program level.

### 3) PRODUCTS:

- 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.

## **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.