

## **ALC Tip Sheet #7 Project Management**

***The Board of Ed specified that SUS members need to address content, communication, and critical thinking in the Academic Learning Compact. Why are we going beyond the basic ALC requirements at UWF to include “project management?”***

We decided to include two extra domains—*project management* and *integrity/character*—to capture the distinctive nature of programs at UWF. An assessment program should facilitate your ability to take full credit for the good work you do with students. Common characteristics of our graduates is their “can do” attitudes along with developing the skill sets that can make things happen. Therefore, it makes sense to build the assessment plans in such a way that we can showcase these important characteristics.

### ***What constitutes a “project?”***

Each program should review the nature of projects that take place in the curriculum so you know what kinds of active learning/projects you have to work with. A project could be planning and delivering a panel discussion, designing a brochure, completing a thesis, conducting a study, writing a poem, or developing a business plan. A project should be sufficiently complex that it requires some skill in completing the work well and on deadline. It should have a strong discipline base. It could be a short or long-term project. It could be a project that one person could complete or it could be a group project.

### ***What kinds of outcomes make sense to include in project management?***

Examples:

- design strategies to complete a project based in \_\_X\_\_ discipline
- develop appropriate timelines to accomplish a complex task
- collaborate with diverse personalities
- design a project in keeping with specified criteria
- describe strategies to deal with obstacles
- set reasonable, logical, and achievable goals
- provide appropriate documentation of the process
- establish criteria for successful completion
- describe strengths and weaknesses in performance
- work effectively with environmental constraints

### ***How sophisticated must the nature of the project be?***

Keep in mind that our target performance for all specified outcomes is the level that we would expect from an *average* graduate from the program. You don’t want to obligate yourself and your department to achieving stellar performance from all your graduates.

That difference can be illustrated in project management outcomes related to business. Is it likely that every business graduate could independently develop a successful business plan? Perhaps not, but they might be able to

contribute strategies to a successful business plan as part of project management. This option provides the right level of achievement for a more typical graduate of the program.

***How many outcomes would be ideal in this domain?***

The fewer, the better. Bear in mind that specifying an outcome leads to your obligation to provide evidence (data) that the program is helping students achieve the outcome. The faculty will need to provide feedback to students as they develop in the curriculum about how well they are meeting the outcomes. Design the outcomes to address what you actually *teach* students about project management before the students graduate.

***What if we don't really provide project management in the existing curriculum?***

Since we have defined projects broadly, almost any active learning experience could lend itself to project experience. However, if you really don't provide an opportunity for students to develop their project skills, we encourage you to think about ways to incorporate project management in the major curriculum. Move away from straight lecture and try to imagine more creative ways to give students an opportunity to learn experientially. Think about the kinds of projects that your graduates might be asked to do upon being hired if you need some inspiration. Complex projects that could be the focus of the capstone course would be especially useful.

***How are things looking at this point? What's left to do to meet the Nov. 19 outcome deadline?***

Many departments have been generating a good set of outcomes and have moved ahead to start looking at creating a curriculum audit to ensure that the outcomes fit with existing curriculum. We have one more tip sheet to help with the November 19 goal. Tip Sheet #8 will address integrity/character. We also hope to publish a general format to assist your putting the outcomes in final form to submit for review.