

ALC Tip Sheet #8 Integrity FAQs and an Update

First, the update:

With a deadline of November 19 looming for the submission of the working draft of major program outcomes, we are in GREAT shape. I've seen about 15 program drafts and, to date, the outcome generation is very impressive. The quality of the work justifies the approach we are taking that underscores the "different by design" tradition at UWF.

When the ALCs are completed, departments should email the list to my address jhalonen@uwf.edu at which point I edit the submission to make the outcome as lean as possible. That goal not only helps make your outcome easier to discuss and measure but also facilitates student understanding. I sometimes also suggest that an outcome could be deleted as duplicative or relocated because it may be better expressed in a different domain. I strive to keep the intent of your ALC construction as you submitted it. As we get completed drafts of student learning outcomes, we will be posting them on the CUTL website.

Remarkably, many departments have already moved ahead to complete the curriculum review and articulate their assessment plan. We will continue to provide help in the future through tip sheets in the future that will address strategies for the review and for assessment design.

I've seen various titles used for this particular domain. Which is it? Integrity? Values? Ethics? Or Character?

You've probably seen multiple references to the title of this domain because we haven't yet settled on the right title. We need a title that works broadly to cover all of those issues which argues for "values." Yet, that title can be a little misleading since it looks like we are trying to legislate values with our assessment plan. We do want to focus on integrity as a specific academic and professional value, but we don't want to lose other value-related discipline experiences. "Character" has some appeal as an encompassing term, but that may mute integrity. What to do? What to do?

Regardless of what we officially settle on calling this domain, the student learning outcomes should refer to fostering good decision-making skills on the part of the student in keeping with professional standards of the academy and the specific discipline in which you practice.

What scope should this domain encompass?

The obligation for the program level ALCs is to capture the discipline's professional expectations about ethics and integrity. Disciplines vary in their own evolution of disciplinary codes and the your departmental expectations for students should reflect the discipline's progress in articulating ethical expectations.

For example, some of the practice-oriented disciplines, such as nursing, med tech, and psychology, have very specific ethical codes. Learned societies

or accrediting bodies formally govern ethical oversight of the practice of professionals in those fields. Does that mean students should be able to know the code of ethics down to the small details? Probably not. Even seasoned professionals in practice may have to scrutinize the code to figure out an ethical course of action. However, the department should figure out what level of ethical reasoning is appropriate for an undergraduate “apprentice” in your discipline to build your ALC expectations.

In situations where the discipline has not evolved a more formal code of ethics, your department has a bigger challenge. Perhaps the discipline itself needs to step up to the plate and develop such standards. [Here is an opportunity for teaching scholarship]. At the very least, the program faculty may want to reinforce the importance of academic integrity.

What are some examples of ethics-related outcomes?

Here are some wonderful examples from the Criminal Justice Department’s rough draft of their ALCs:

- Recognize legal and ethical problems that occur in criminal justice.
- Identify, articulate, and apply ethical principles in criminal justice contexts.
- Exhibit professional and disciplinary standards in ethical reasoning.
- Analyze complex ethical situations in criminal justice and design appropriate solutions.
- Recognize and respect the views and opinions of others.

Notice how their five outcomes reflect not just issues of ethics and integrity, but also include a social interaction “value” about respect that is very consistent with best practice in criminal justice and will be relevant to other liberal arts and professions as well.

What are the classroom implications of concentrating on integrity as a domain in the UWF plan?

It will encourage the department to look more formally and systematically at the ways we socialize students in ethical matters. Often, such instruction is fairly haphazard. Or worse, we involve ourselves in ethical instruction more directly as a consequence of having to deal with obvious violations of ethics. Students may get socialized about ethics from negative examples rather than understanding the value of positive practices. Students are likely to benefit more from formal discussion systematically built into the curriculum of the wisdom of adhering to ethical practices than reactive instruction.

Should departments require a course on professional ethics?

Not necessarily. If your curriculum already has such a course, then it is a natural place to concentrate on the teaching and assessment of ethical reasoning. However, it is not a requirement. Departments can ensure that students get an opportunity to learn about ethical expectations and grapple with their implementation at designated points in the curriculum. Even if the department does offer a formal course in ethics, students are more likely to learn

this skill/value set if the faculty infuse opportunities to discuss ethics strategically throughout the curriculum.

How should we address the importance of academic integrity in the program ALCs?

If your discipline has not articulated professional ethical standards, then your emphasis is likely to involve good practices related to academic integrity (working independently when asked to do so, not plagiarizing, etc.). However, academic integrity is essential to all programs. Once our collective ALCs are submitted and reviewed, we may return to you with a request to include an outcome specific to academic integrity.

When the program ALCs are completed, our attention will shift to general education and the way that lower level courses can provide a firmer foundation in the skill sets that are relevant to the UWF plan. We anticipate that the library staff will be helping to develop some expectations about information literacy as a foundation skill for critical thinking. Similarly, we would expect some specific courses in general education to help lay a firm foundation about ethical reasoning and/or academic integrity.

How much responsibility should faculty take for what appears to be a general decline in moral responsibility?

A recent poignant example of our national problem in declining morality comes from a report by a UWF community member following Ivan. He was shocked to observe a neighbor, whose house had been spared by Ivan, standing on his roof ripping up the shingles. Although the staff member also could have chosen to take advantage of the widespread Ivan damage and confusion to capture a new roof from his insurance company, his ethical standards didn't even allow for the possibility until he witnessed his neighbor's actions. Even then, he adhered to the appropriate ethical course.

David Callahan, author of *The Culture of Cheating*, will be visiting our campus on Monday, November 15, to help us explore the national dimensions of this problem and also to initiate our conversations about what our own responsibilities should be for promoting more ethical behavior. Please try to join us at 3 p.m. for a general session about cheating and academic life or the more formal address at 7 p.m.