



**LAWSON STATE**  
SACS Reaffirmation of Accreditation  
Compliance Certification Report

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**Comprehensive Standard 3.5.3**

The institution defines and publishes requirements for its undergraduate programs, including its general education components. These requirements conform to commonly accepted standards and practices for degree programs. **(Undergraduate program requirements)**

**Compliance** \_\_\_ **Partial Compliance** \_\_\_ **Non-Compliance** \_\_\_

**Narrative:**

Lawson State Community College defines and publishes requirements for its undergraduate programs, including general education components. These requirements conform to commonly accepted standards and practices for degree plans.

**Publication and Dissemination of Program Requirements**

Lawson State Community College publishes defines and publishes—in print and online-- all degree requirements for its undergraduate programs, including all General Education requirements in its bi-annual catalog ([2007-2009 Catalog pages 58-60](#)). The catalog outlines course content, minimum and maximum credit hours, and general education core requirements for each program of study in the College Catalog ([Programs of Study, pages 1-113, 2007-2009 Catalog](#)).

Lawson State Community College has degree and certificate programs that include General Education courses/credits linked to General Education competencies. Alabama State Board of Education Policy 712.01: Degrees and Awards ([Policy 712.01](#)) requires that the distribution of courses within the Associate in Arts, the Associate in Science, the Associate in Applied Science, the Associate in Occupational Technology and certificates contain general education components. Alabama State Board of Education Policy 715.01: Graduation Requirements: Degrees ([Policy 715.01](#)) mandates that for a student to receive either of the aforementioned awards, he or she must satisfactorily complete a minimum of 29-60 semester hours (depending on degree or certificate requirements) of institution credit in an approved program of study, including prescribed general education courses. Alabama State Board of Education Policy 907.01: Institutional Effectiveness: General Education Core ([Policy 907.01](#)) indicates that the Chancellor has the responsibility of defining and establishing a core of general education courses for each formal award authorized by the Alabama State Board of Education and that the Chancellor will review this core of general education courses at least once every three

years. These general education courses, along with their descriptions, are listed in the Alabama Statewide Course Directory found on the website of the Alabama College System (**Course Directory**).

There is no differentiation among on-campus, off-campus, and distance learning courses. Faculty, staff and administrators thoroughly review the College Catalog prior its publication to ensure accuracy of program information.

### **General Education**

Associate of Arts degrees (AA) and Associate in Science (AS) degrees require a General Education core of 35 semester hours credit. The General Education core includes study in the areas of Written Composition, Humanities and Fine Arts, Natural Sciences and Mathematics, and Social and Behavioral Sciences (**AA & AS Degree Plan Samples**)

Associate in Occupational Technologies (AOT) and Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degrees require 26 semester hours of credit. The General Education core includes study in the areas of Written Composition, Humanities and Fine Arts, Natural Sciences and Mathematics, and Social and Behavioral Sciences, (**AAS & AOT Degree Plan Samples**)

### **Program Degree Designs**

Each degree plan listed in the catalog outlines specific goals for each academic department (**Humanities Department Sample, pg. 82**). Degree programs are outlined in the catalog by area, to include: Area I: Written Composition; Area II: Humanities and Fine Arts; Area III: Natural Science or Mathematics; Area IV: History, Social and Behavioral Sciences; Area V: Pre-Professional Courses. When a student enrolls in Lawson State Community College, they are assigned a specific advisor who works with students to develop a correct path to a degree. Students are typically advised to complete all developmental sequences, if applicable and all introductory courses prior to enrolling and advanced level courses (**Locating Your Advisor insert**).

### **Mission & Goals**

Lawson State Community College embeds into its general education requirements offerings that align with the mission (**Mission**) of the college and goals (**Goals**). The comprehensive mission statement outlines the following:

Lawson State Community College is a comprehensive, public, two-year, multi-campus college which seeks to provide accessible quality educational opportunities, promote economic growth and enhance the quality of life for people in its service area. The College is dedicated to providing affordable and accessible lifelong learning opportunities in order to prepare students for employment or career advancement, enable students to transfer to senior colleges and universities, and provide customized training needs for business and industry.

Lawson State undergraduate programs, including General Education support the mission in the following ways:

- (1) Lawson State provides accessible quality educational opportunities on both campuses to include all College Transfer programs, Allied Health programs, and Business Technologies.
- (2) Lawson State maintains an open-door policy providing access to higher education for high school graduates and those that successfully pass the General Education Development (GED) exam.
- (3) Lawson State provides affordable tuition rates that are comparable to peer institutions. **(Fee Schedule)**
- (4) Lawson State (via its STARS membership and accreditation status) provides the opportunity for its students to transfer to state and out-of-state four year colleges.

### **Statewide Articulation of Credit**

Lawson State is a member of the Statewide Transfer and Articulation Reporting System.

The AGSC ...[which] stands for the Alabama **Articulation and General Studies Committee**...was created in March of 1994 by the **(State Legislative Act 94-202)** in an effort to streamline the transfer process between two-year institutions and four-year colleges. As result, the AGSC... developed and has implemented a statewide general studies and articulation program that facilitates the transferability of coursework among all Alabama public colleges and universities. The AGSC continues to serve as a monitoring committee for the articulation program. They oversee and maintain the program on an on-going basis. Finally, the AGSC works to resolve any student appeals related to transfer of coursework as it relates to the articulation program.

Associate level degrees at Lawson State Community College are compatible with other two year community colleges and aligned with the acceptable STARS related program requirements. Indeed, each transferable program, every two years, is reviewed and assessed based on the STARS guide and modified, if necessary. For example, in 2004, CIS130 Microcomputer Applications was an acceptable transferable course for most Associate degree majors and transfer colleges; however, a pattern formed in STARS where CIS146 Microcomputer Applications became the more acceptable transferable course. As a result, all degree plans under the Associate level were changed to reflect this trend **(INSERT: Sample Degree Plans)**. In addition, every Associate degree plan at Lawson State refers students to the STARS guide for specific and relevant course selection. Indeed, the catalog **(INSERT: Step-by Step STARS Guide from Catalog )** as well as every schedule booklet **(INSERT: Step-by-Step STAR Guide, Schedule Booklet)** includes a step-by step STARS guide that instructs students through the STARS registration process. Once the guide is created is serves as a contract between the Lawson State Community College student and their transfer institution.

Students who successfully complete their undergraduate programs may transfer up to 64 semester credit hours to their desired four-year institution. To ensure successful transfer, all students are required to formulate an Articulation STARS Agreement with that institution. Lawson State Community College is in compliance with other comparative institutions **(STARS Student Sample)**

## Quality of Programs

Faculty, staff, and administrator input is critical to the design and assessment of programs. In fact, faculty members and administrators regularly assess programs using a comprehensive curriculum review process that allows them to determine programmatic strengths, potential areas for improvement, and adherence to the Alabama Department of Postsecondary Education and the Alabama Board of Education mandates, particularly compliance with general education core requirements and adherence to standards agreed upon in the Statewide Articulation Reporting System. Departments hold routine departmental meetings to evaluate the effectiveness of individual courses' student learning outcomes and to ensure academic rigor. Those departmental meetings also allow faculty members to ensure that students who matriculate to the sequential courses in order to complete their undergraduate requirements and matriculate to four-year institutions meet undergraduate degree seeking requirements. This is determined at the departmental level ([Departmental minutes](#))

Units also work to development, improve and assess their programs via an annual Unit Plan

## Common Syllabi and Construction

Another way that Lawson State Community College protects the integrity and quality of education is through the standardization of its textbooks and Student Learning Outcomes per course. Syllabi and course objectives outline specific minimums per course, regardless of instructor ([Sample Syllabi](#)). Full-time faculty (within each academic department) as well as Department Chairs establish and review these standards via a syllabus review. In 2007, the Academic Affairs office issued a mandated syllabus review and restructure to include outlined Student Learning Outcomes per course and the following template was issued to all academic departments for syllabus alignment and uniformity ([Syllabus Template](#)).

The effectiveness of the curriculum is monitored by faculty. They are responsible for designing and administering assessments in their courses to measure and verify student achievement and competence at the established level of proficiency. Faculty also work within their units (as a team) to evaluate results and to adjust the curriculum to improve student learning. Faculty often will work among divisions to bridge curriculum gaps and to strengthen curriculum ([Sample Minutes Between Developmental Education and Mathematics](#)). Faculty also participate in Program Reviews, Unit Planning, and Student Learning Outcomes Evaluations. They are directly responsible for working with their Department Chair in crafting Unit Plans, tracking outcomes, evaluating data and improving academic programs on a continuous basis. If a department requires a curriculum change or if a change is initiated through post-secondary, they must seek approval by the Academic Standards Committee ([Developmental Education Curriculum Change and Approval](#)). If approved by the Academic Standards Committee ([Academic Standards and Curriculum Committee](#)), the change is then submitted to the Administrative Cabinet and President for final adoption ([Example of Committee to Cabinet Approval](#)).

## Unit Plans and SLO's

As noted earlier, each year the College sets institutional goals that are realistic and measurable as a means to attaining its mission. The Institutional Planning and Accountability Committee coordinates the development of specific goal indicators. These indicators serve as measurable statements and are used to focus assessment and evaluation. Each academic and educational support unit within the College is responsible for submitting an action plan

[\(Unit Plans\)](#) which outlines an area's specific goals designed to help meet the institutional goals. These unit level action plans focus on the department/unit's strengths, weaknesses, needs and and targets for improvements.

General Education Student Learner Outcomes assessment involves College Transfer, Business Technologies and Career Technical Departments along with faculty, Department Chairs, Associate Deans and the Academic Dean in tracking, analyzing and assessing General Education Student Learner Outcomes [\(Gen Ed Student Learner Outcomes Report\)](#). Lawson State has identified the following General Education Outcomes:

Each General Education Student Learning Outcome is assessed, measured and evaluated annually using the following criteria: (1) Expected Outcome; (2) Assessment Method; (3) Expected Result; (4) Actual Results Obtained; and (5) Use of Results. Every spring, results are reported using the Student Learning Outcomes form for Instructional Units and are presented in detail to the Planning and Evaluation Hearing Committee at Lawson State's official Planning and Evaluation Hearing procedures. Once approved, the report is accepted and a new cycle begins.

In addition to Unit Plans which focus on departmental/division improvement, each Instructional Program is required to measure specific Student Learning Outcomes per program offered at the college that has viable graduates. Student Learning Outcomes [\(Student Learning Outcomes Template\)](#) are developed by the department and are measured throughout each evaluation cycle—from fall to spring. Each program, including General Education is assessed, measured and evaluated annually using the following criteria: (1) Expected Outcome; (2) Assessment Method; (3) Expected Result; (4) Actual Results Obtained; and (5) Use of Results. Every spring, results are reported using the Student Learning Outcomes form for Instructional Units and are presented in detail to the Planning and Evaluation Hearing Committee at Lawson State's official Planning and Evaluation Hearings where Unit Plans, Program Reviews and Student Learning Outcomes [\(Gen Ed Student Learner Outcomes Report\)](#) are reviewed, assessed and approved. Once approved, the report is accepted and a new cycle begins.

### **Program Review**

Annually, the Vice President for Instructional Services coordinates the review of twenty percent of the College's instructional programs (**Program Review Template and Example**) to assess centrality of the program to the institution's role and mission, program viability and demand, use of resources, and uniqueness. Recommendations, suggestions, and commendations are made, if needed, for each program reviewed. The report addresses issues of quality and quantity through the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, and discusses performance in relation to the past five years and looking ahead to the next five years and beyond. Indicators of quality will vary among programs and may include: enrollment management, collegiate transfer, career and technical programs, health professions programs, developmental studies, learning resources technology, student development services, financial and physical resources and

workforce training and adult education. The results of program reviews are factored into the institution-wide planning and evaluation process.

### External Accreditations

Lawson State offers undergraduate degrees in programs that are under professional accreditation. The Lawson State Business Technology program is accredited by the **(ACBCP) Association of Collegiate Business School Programs** and the Nursing Program is approved and accredited by the NLNAC (National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission).

The College's commitment to quality in academic excellence is grounded not only in its mission, strategic priorities and vision, but also in its responsibilities to the highest principles of performance accountability. The College recognizes that external reviews provide a valuable opportunity for the self-study of academic units and programs within the framework of rigorous standards. The review process also permits the College to receive valuable feedback from highly-regarded peers and to continuously monitor and improve programs and activities.

Results from these accreditations help Lawson State Community College strengthen its programmatic offerings. An example of the use of results from external accreditation reviews include:

- As a result of the 2007 Self-Study for the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission, Inc., additional funds to purchase state-of-the-art equipment and software for the nursing programs on the Birmingham and Bessemer campuses were identified and generated through externally awarded grants. In 2008-2009, the Birmingham campus received an initial allocation of \$200,000 from an external source with the possibility of another \$200,000 available in the 2009-2010 year. The Bessemer campus will receive an additional amount in excess of \$200,000 for the 2009-2010 year from external funds.

The College has a number of programs that do not have recognized external accrediting agencies. These programs follow guidelines in State of Alabama Board of Education **Policy 903.01 (LINK) Instructional Program Review**. The policy establishes the principles for such review, the criteria for review, the procedures, and the responsibilities of the various entities and persons involved.

### Documentation:

2007-2009 Student Catalog and Handbook, pages 58-60	<a href="#">(2007-2009 Catalog pages 58-60)</a> .
2007-2009 Student Catalog and Handbook, Degree Plan Samples	<a href="#">(Programs of Study, pages 1-113, 2007-2009 Catalog)</a> .
State Board Policy 712.01	<a href="#">Policy 712.01</a>
State Board Policy 715.01	<a href="#">(Policy 715.01)</a>

State Board Policy 907.01	<a href="#">Policy 907.01</a>
Course Directory	<a href="#">(Course Directory).</a>
AS and AA Degree Plan Samples	
AAS/AOT Degree Plan Samples	
Humanities Department Sample Goals, page 82, Catalog Section	
Locating Your Advisor Section, 2008 Spring Schedule Booklet	
Mission Statement, Catalog	<a href="#">(Mission)</a>
Institutional Goals, Catalog	<a href="#">(Goals).</a>
Fee Schedule, 2008 Spring Schedule Booklet	
State Legislature Theory, Act 94-202	<a href="#">State Legislature through ACT 94-202</a>
Sample Degree Plans	<a href="#">(Degree Plan Samples)</a>
Step-by-Step STARS Directions, Catalog	
Step-by-Step STARS Directions, Schedule Booklet	
Departmental Minutes, Samples	<a href="#">(Departmental minutes)</a>
Syllabus Template	<a href="#">(Sample Syllabi).</a>
Syllabus Example	<a href="#">(Syllabus Template).</a>
Sample Minutes (Dev. Math and Math Team)	<a href="#">(Sample Minutes Between Developmental Education and Mathematics).</a>
Dev. Education Curriculum Change & Approval	<a href="#">(Developmental Education Curriculum Change and Approval).</a>
Academic Standards and Curriculum Committee Minutes	<a href="#">(Academic Standards and Curriculum Committee)</a>
Example of Committee to Cabinet Approval	<a href="#">(Example of Committee to Cabinet Approval).</a>
Unit Plan Sample	<a href="#">(Unit Plans)</a>
Student Learning Outcomes Template	

Student Learning Outcomes Report (Sample)	
Program Review Sample	
Associate of Collegiate Business Schools & Programs	<a href="#">Association of Collegiate Business School and Programs</a>
National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission)	