THE ROLE of the CAS GENERAL STANDARDS
in FUNCTIONAL AREA STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) was established in 1979 as a consortium of professional associations whose members championed student learning and development in a variety of functional areas. From the outset, CAS identified its primary mission as the development and promulgation of professional standards that higher education practitioners could use to guide, develop, and assess programs and services. By 1986, with a repayable grant from the American College Testing Program (ACT), CAS had created 16 sets of functional area standards and published them in the first CAS "Blue Book." It was clear by the time of the initial publication that there were a number of characteristics common to all functional areas, commonalities that demanded inclusion in all current and future CAS standards. As a result, a set of boilerplate, General Standards were devised that CAS Board members unanimously agreed were relevant to all the student learning and development programs championed by CAS member associations. As the CAS General Standards evolved over the years, the Council consistently held to the principle that the fundamental commonalities underlying student learning and development are of the essence and must be maintained within the context of all CAS standards.

Those who use CAS standards for program evaluation, development, and enhancement will note the importance of the 16 specified outcome domains and the fact that they are viewed as highly desirable for all functional areas to pursue. To facilitate assessment of the various outcome domains, the General Standards include a table listing the 16 domains along with examples of assessment indicators that can be used to guide the assessment process. The indicators represent examples of observable student behaviors that practitioners can use to judge learning and developmental achievement. CAS has now also published the Frameworks for Assessing Learning and Development Outcomes to further assist practitioners in implementing outcomes assessment activities. In effect, the General Standards recognize the potential educational impact that functional area programs can have upon student learning and development and reflect the need for them to emphasize and influence that learning as a significant part of their missions. It is anticipated that over time the student learning and development emphases among student support programs and services will increase and that ultimately these programs that currently complement formal academic learning will become coordinate in status as a recognized vehicle for student learning and development.

Although the CAS General Standards were not designed to stand alone, they are presented here to remind and inform educators about the commonalities that exist among the many student support programs and services throughout higher education. There can be little doubt that if those who lead and practice in such programs combine their collective powers to make an educational difference in the lives of the students they serve, the resulting educational trust will carry student support programs and services to new heights of achievement for all concerned.

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CAS General Standards
CAS Standards and Guidelines

Part 1. MISSION
Each program and service in higher education must incorporate student learning and student development in its mission. The program and service must enhance overall educational experiences. The program and service must develop, record, disseminate, implement, and regularly review its mission and goals. Mission statements must be consistent with the mission and goals of the institution and with the standards in this document. The program and service must operate as an integral part of the institution's overall mission.

Part 2. PROGRAM
The formal education of students consists of the curriculum and the co-curriculum, and must promote student learning and development that is purposeful and holistic. Programs and services must identify relevant and desirable student learning and development outcomes and provide programs and services that encourage the achievement of those outcomes.

Relevant and desirable outcomes include: intellectual growth, effective communication, realistic self-appraisal, enhanced self-esteem, clarified values, career choices, leadership development, healthy behaviors, meaningful interpersonal relationships, independence, collaboration, social responsibility, satisfying and productive lifestyles, appreciation of diversity, spiritual awareness, and achievement of personal and educational goals.

Each program and service must provide evidence of its impact on the achievement of student learning and development outcomes.

The table below offers examples of evidence of achievement of student learning and development.

Student Learning and Development Outcome Domains

Intellectual growth
Examples of achievement indicators
- Produces personal and educational goal statements;
- Employs critical thinking in problem solving; Uses complex information from a variety of sources including personal experience and observation to form a decision or opinion;
- Obtains a degree; Applies previously understood information and concepts to a new situation or setting; Expresses appreciation for literature, the fine arts, mathematics, sciences, and social sciences

Effective communication
Examples of achievement indicators
- Writes and speaks coherently and effectively; Writes and speaks after reflection; Able to influence others through writing, speaking, or artistic expression; Effectively articulates abstract ideas; Uses appropriate syntax; Makes presentations or gives performances

Enhanced self-esteem
Examples of achievement indicators
- Shows self-respect and respect for others; Initiates actions toward achievement of goals; Takes reasonable risks; Demonstrates assertive behavior; Functions without need for constant reassurance from others

Realistic self-appraisal
Examples of achievement indicators
- Articulates personal skills and abilities; Makes decisions and acts in congruence with personal values; Acknowledges personal strengths and weaknesses; Articulates rationale for personal behavior; Seeks feedback from others; Learns from past experiences

Clarified values
Examples of achievement indicators
- Articulates personal values; Acts in congruence with personal values; Makes decisions that reflect personal values; Demonstrates willingness to scrutinize personal beliefs and values; Identifies personal, work, and lifestyle values and explains how they influence decision-making

Career choices
Examples of achievement indicators
- Articulates career choices based on assessment of interests, values, skills, and abilities; Documents knowledge, skills, and accomplishments resulting from formal education, work experience, community service, and volunteer experiences; Makes the connections between classroom and out-of-classroom learning; Can construct a resume with clear job objectives and evidence of related knowledge, skills, and accomplishments; Articulates the characteristics of a preferred work environment; Comprehends the world of work; Takes steps to initiate a job search or seek advanced education

Leadership development
Examples of achievement indicators
- Articulates leadership philosophy or style; Serves in a leadership position in a student organization; Comprehends the dynamics of a group; Exhibits democratic principles as a leader; Exhibits ability to visualize a group purpose and desired outcomes

Healthy behavior
Examples of achievement indicators
- Chooses behaviors and environments that promote health and reduce risk; Articulates the relationship between health and wellness and accomplishing life-long goals; Exhibits behaviors that advance a healthy community

Meaningful interpersonal relationships
Examples of achievement indicators
- Develops and maintains satisfying interpersonal
relationships; Establishes mutually rewarding relationships with friends and colleagues; Listens to and considers others' points of view; Treats others with respect.

Independence
Examples of achievement indicators
- Exhibits self-reliant behaviors; Functions autonomously;
- Exhibits ability to function independently; Accepts supervision as needed; Manages time effectively.

Collaboration
Examples of achievement indicators
- Works cooperatively with others; Seeks the involvement of others; Seeks feedback from others; Contributes to achievement of a group goal; Exhibits effective listening skills.

Social responsibility
Examples of achievement indicators
- Understands and participates in relevant governance systems; Understands, abides by, and participates in the development, maintenance, and/or orderly change of community, social, and legal standards or norms; Appropriately challenges the unfair, unjust, or uncivil behavior of other individuals or groups; Participates in service/volunteer activities.

Satisfying and productive lifestyles
Examples of achievement indicators
- Achieves balance between education, work, and leisure time; Articulates and meets goals for work, leisure, and education; Overcomes obstacles that hamper goal achievement; Functions on the basis of personal identity, ethical, spiritual, and moral values; Articulates long-term goals and objectives.

Appreciating diversity
Examples of achievement indicators
- Understands one’s own identity and culture; Seeks involvement with people different from oneself; Seeks involvement in diverse interests; Articulates the advantages and challenges of a diverse society; Challenges appropriately the abusive use of stereotypes by others; Understands the impact of diversity on one’s own society.

Spiritual awareness
Examples of achievement indicators
- Develops and articulates personal belief system; Understands roles of spirituality in personal and group values and behaviors.

Personal and educational goals
Examples of achievement indicators
- Sets, articulates, and pursues individual goals; Articulates personal and educational goals and objectives; Uses personal and educational goals to guide decisions; Understands the effect of one’s personal and educational goals on others.

Programs and services must be (a) intentional, (b) coherent, (c) based on theories and knowledge of learning and human development, (d) reflective of developmental and demographic profiles of the student population, and (e) responsive to needs of individuals, special populations, and communities.

Part 3. LEADERSHIP
Effective and ethical leadership is essential to the success of all organizations. Institutions must appoint, position, and empower leaders within the administrative structure to accomplish stated missions. Leaders at various levels must be selected on the basis of formal education and training, relevant work experience, personal skills and competencies, relevant professional credentials, as well as potential for promoting learning and development in students, applying effective practices to educational processes, and enhancing institutional effectiveness. Institutions must determine expectations of accountability for leaders and fairly assess their performance.

Leaders of programs and services must exercise authority over resources for which they are responsible to achieve their respective missions.

Leaders must:
- articulate a vision for their organization
- set goals and objectives based on the needs and capabilities of the population served
- promote student learning and development
- prescribe and practice ethical behavior
- recruit, select, supervise, and develop others in the organization
- manage financial resources
- coordinate human resources
- plan, budget for, and evaluate personnel and programs
- apply effective practices to educational and administrative processes
- communicate effectively
- initiate collaborative interaction between individuals and agencies that possess legitimate concerns and interests in the functional area

Leaders must identify and find means to address individual, organizational, or environmental conditions that inhibit goal achievement.

Leaders must promote campus environments that result in multiple opportunities for student learning and development.

Leaders must continuously improve programs and services in response to changing needs of students and other constituents, and evolving institutional priorities.
Part 4. ORGANIZATION and MANAGEMENT

Guided by an overarching intent to ensure student learning and development, programs and services must be structured purposefully and managed effectively to achieve stated goals. Evidence of appropriate structure must include current and accessible policies and procedures, written performance expectations for all employees, functional workflow graphics or organizational charts, and clearly stated service delivery expectations.

Evidence of effective management must include use of comprehensive and accurate information for decisions, clear sources and channels of authority, effective communication practices, decision-making and conflict resolution procedures, responsiveness to changing conditions, accountability and evaluation systems, and recognition and reward processes. Programs and services must provide channels within the organization for regular review of administrative policies and procedures.

Part 5. HUMAN RESOURCES

The program and service must be staffed adequately by individuals qualified to accomplish its mission and goals. Within established guidelines of the institution, programs and services must establish procedures for staff selection, training, and evaluation; set expectations for supervision; and provide appropriate professional development opportunities. The program and service must strive to improve the professional competence and skills of all personnel it employs.

Professional staff members must hold an earned graduate degree in a field relevant to the position they hold or must possess an appropriate combination of educational credentials and related work experience.

Degree or credential-seeking interns must be qualified by enrollment in an appropriate field of study and by relevant experience. These individuals must be trained and supervised adequately by professional staff members holding educational credentials and related work experience appropriate for supervision.

Student employees and volunteers must be carefully selected, trained, supervised, and evaluated. They must be trained on how and when to refer those in need of assistance to qualified staff members and have access to a supervisor for assistance in making these judgments. Student employees and volunteers must be provided clear and precise job descriptions, pre-service training based on assessed needs, and continuing staff development.

Each organizational unit must have technical and support staff members adequate to accomplish its mission. Staff members must be technologically proficient and qualified to perform their job functions, be knowledgeable of ethical and legal uses of technology, and have access to training. The level of staffing and workloads must be adequate and appropriate for program and service demands.

Salary levels and fringe benefits for all staff members must be commensurate with those for comparable positions within the institution, in similar institutions, and in the relevant geographic area.

Programs and services must institute hiring and promotion practices that are fair, inclusive, and non-discriminatory. Programs and services must employ a diverse staff to provide readily identifiable role models for students and to enrich the campus community.

Program and services must create and maintain position descriptions for all staff members and provide regular performance planning and appraisals.

Programs and services must have a system for regular staff evaluation and must provide access to continuing education and professional development opportunities, including in-service training programs and participation in professional conferences and workshops.

Part 6. FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Each program and service must have adequate funding to accomplish its mission and goals. Funding priorities must be determined within the context of the stated mission, goals, objectives, and comprehensive analysis of the needs and capabilities of students and the availability of internal or external resources.

Programs and services must demonstrate fiscal responsibility and cost effectiveness consistent with institutional protocols.

Part 7. FACILITIES, TECHNOLOGY, and EQUIPMENT

Each program and service must have adequate, suitably located facilities, adequate technology, and equipment to support its mission and goals efficiently and effectively. Facilities, technology, and equipment must be evaluated regularly and be in compliance with relevant federal, state/provincial, and local requirements to provide for access, health, safety, and security.

Part 8. LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Staff members must be knowledgeable about and responsive to laws and regulations that relate to their respective responsibilities. Staff members must inform users of programs and services and officials,
as appropriate, of legal obligations and limitations including constitutional, statutory, regulatory, and case law; mandatory laws and orders emanating from federal, state/provincial, and local governments; and the institution’s policies.

Staff members must use reasonable and informed practices to limit the liability exposure of the institution, its officers, employees, and agents. Staff members must be informed about institutional policies regarding personal liability and related insurance coverage options.

The institution must provide access to legal advice for staff members as needed to carry out assigned responsibilities.

The institution must inform staff and students in a timely and systematic fashion about extraordinary or changing legal obligations and potential liabilities.

Part 9. EQUITY and ACCESS
Staff members must ensure that services and programs are provided on a fair and equitable basis. Facilities, programs, and services must be accessible. Hours of operation and delivery of and access to programs and services must be responsive to the needs of all students and other constituents. Each program and service must adhere to the spirit and intent of equal opportunity laws.

Programs and services must be open and readily accessible to all students and must not discriminate except where sanctioned by law and institutional policy. Discrimination must be avoided on the bases of age; color; creed; cultural heritage; disability; ethnicity; gender identity; nationality; political affiliation; religious affiliation; sex; sexual orientation; or social, economic, marital, or veteran status.

Consistent with their mission and goals, programs and services must take affirmative action to remedy significant imbalances in student participation and staffing patterns.

As the demographic profiles of campuses change and new instructional delivery methods are introduced, institutions must recognize the needs of students who participate in distance learning for access to programs and services offered on campus. Institutions must provide appropriate services in ways that are accessible to distance learners and assist them in identifying and gaining access to other appropriate services in their geographic region.

Part 10. CAMPUS and EXTERNAL RELATIONS
Programs and services must establish, maintain, and promote effective relations with relevant individuals, campus offices, and external agencies.

Part 11. DIVERSITY
Within the context of each institution’s unique mission, diversity enriches the community and enhances the collegiate experience for all; therefore, programs and services must nurture environments where commonalities and differences among people are recognized and honored.

Programs and services must promote educational experiences that are characterized by open and continuous communication that deepens understanding of one’s own identity, culture, and heritage, and that of others. Programs and services must educate and promote respect about commonalities and differences in their historical and cultural contexts.

Programs and services must address the characteristics and needs of a diverse population when establishing and implementing policies and procedures.

Part 12. ETHICS
All persons involved in the delivery of programs and services must adhere to the highest principles of ethical behavior. Programs and services must develop or adopt and implement appropriate statements of ethical practice. Programs and services must publish these statements and ensure their periodic review by relevant constituencies.

Staff members must ensure that privacy and confidentiality are maintained with respect to all communications and records to the extent that such records are protected under the law and appropriate statements of ethical practice. Information contained in students’ education records must not be disclosed without written consent except as allowed by relevant laws and institutional policies. Staff members must disclose to appropriate authorities information judged to be of an emergency nature, especially when the safety of the individual or others is involved, or when otherwise required by institutional policy or relevant law.

All staff members must be aware of and comply with the provisions contained in the institution’s human subjects research policy and in other relevant institutional policies addressing ethical practices and confidentiality of research data concerning individuals.
Staff members must recognize and avoid personal conflict of interest or appearance thereof in their transactions with students and others.

Staff members must strive to insure the fair, objective, and impartial treatment of all persons with whom they deal. Staff members must not participate in nor condone any form of harassment that demeans persons or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive campus environment.

When handling institutional funds, all staff members must ensure that such funds are managed in accordance with established and responsible accounting procedures and the fiscal policies or processes of the institution.

Staff members must perform their duties within the limits of their training, expertise, and competence. When these limits are exceeded, individuals in need of further assistance must be referred to persons possessing appropriate qualifications.

Staff members must use suitable means to confront and otherwise hold accountable other staff members who exhibit unethical behavior.

Staff members must be knowledgeable about and practice ethical behavior in the use of technology.

Part 13. ASSESSMENT and EVALUATION
Programs and services must conduct regular assessment and evaluations. Programs and services must employ effective qualitative and quantitative methodologies as appropriate, to determine whether and to what degree the stated mission, goals, and student learning and development outcomes are being met. The process must employ sufficient and sound assessment measures to ensure comprehensiveness. Data collected must include responses from students and other affected constituencies.

Programs and services must evaluate periodically how well they complement and enhance the institution's stated mission and educational effectiveness.

Results of these evaluations must be used in revising and improving programs and services and in recognizing staff performance.

General Standards were revised and adopted in 2002.