The Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF)

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

The Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) is a competency-based framework that supports the development of adult literacy programming delivered through the Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Program. LBS helps learners transition to their goals of work, further education and training, or independence.

For more information on the OALCF please visit the OALCF website at http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/oalcf/.

Please contact us at **oalcf@ontario.ca** with any question or requests for further information about the OALCF.

Learner Plan

Q1. The learning plan posted on the OALCF website does not include a spot for milestones. Will this be edited?

The learner plan posted recently on the OALCF website does not include milestones or culminating tasks because the template is for 2011-2012 and currently the milestones and culminating tasks are under development and review. EOIS-CaMS will generate a learner plan that will be populated with data that is recorded by the service provider. As milestones are chosen, the service provider can enter them in the learner plan as the ones the learner intends to complete. Upon successful completion of each milestone, the service provider will enter the number assigned to the milestone. In EOIS-CaMS, the service provider will report when the learner successfully completes the goal path related culminating task.

Milestones and Culminating tasks

Q2. When will milestones and culminating tasks become available to service providers?

The development of the culminating and milestone task assessment activities is on schedule. The projects are on track and are undergoing a rigorous series of reviews to ensure that they are appropriate to goal paths, streams, sectors and regional service providers and learners. They will be distributed by the Ministry in time for use in April 2012.

Q3. Would it be possible to have the name of each milestone task as they become available? As well, could the competency, task group and level indicator be included for each milestone?

Each milestone task (60 in English and 60 in French) is aligned to the *Competency Indicators*. If you go to page 6 of the curriculum framework introduction, you will find a chart of all the competencies, task groups and levels which states all the indicators. For example, the indicator for AI is *Read continuous text* and the indicator for C1.2 is *Make low-level inferences to calculate costs and expenses that may include rates such as taxes and discounts*. The milestone task assessment activity will be based on the indicators. We will release all the milestones and culminating task assessment activities with accompanying user guides as a full package to the field in time for use April 1, 2012. Some milestones will apply to more than one goal path but all goal paths and all indicators will be covered by the milestone tasks.

Q4. Will the milestones and culminating tasks have the competencies, task group and level indicators identified on them and in the learning plan?

The milestones will be identified by the same letter and numbering system that you can find in the chart on page 6 in the document, "*Introduction to the Curriculum Framework*" (posted on the OALCF website at http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/oalcf/).

Each milestone corresponds to an indicator but has the further description of the goal path to which it corresponds. Culminating tasks will provide a description of which competencies, task groups and levels are included in the assessment activity.

Q5. Is there any way we could get the master list of the milestone titles & culminating tasks for the OALCF competency, task group and level?

Please refer to the document, "Introduction to the Curriculum Framework", page 6 which provides a chart of the indicators for all competencies, task groups and levels. The document is posted at: http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/oalcf/index.html

The indicators are the milestones for which assessment activities by goal path are being developed. There is no publicly available list of the names of each of the 60 milestone assessment activities in English and the 60 in French at this time, as they are still undergoing final review.

Culminating tasks are more complex and include more than one competency, task group and level and therefore they are not as easy to describe by indicator statements. The six culminating tasks (one per goal path except for apprenticeship which has two (2), one for apprenticeship and one for skills training) and the 120 milestones will be available in time for use in April 2012.

Q6. Who is responsible for administering the milestone and the culminating tasks if there are multiple instructors/courses within the same service provider?

Service providers will receive instructions on the administrative protocols to be used for the Milestone and Culminating Tasks Assessment Activities through a User Guide. The decisions as to who will administer the assessment activities will be determined by the service provider.

Q7. How many milestones do we have to report for each learner?

To indicate learner progress, the learner is required to do at least one (1) Milestone Task. There is no maximum number of milestones to report for each learner. The service provider uses their professional judgement to determine which milestones a learner needs to demonstrate to be ready for transition beyond the LBS Program. *The Milestone User Guide* will provide the service provider with additional information.

Q8. There is a concern that if there are only 60 milestone tasks, there may not be a milestone task that is relevant to each student's goal. Would it be just as acceptable to create "milestone tasks" which are similar in degree of difficulty that would be more relevant to a learner?

The milestones are being carefully developed so that all indicators of each competency, task group and level are included in a milestone and that they will cover all goal paths. An extensive process of consultation and trialing of products has been undertaken to ensure the applicability of milestones to the five goal paths.

It is desirable to have some milestones applicable to more than one goal path as it signals to the learner that their achievements are transferable to other contexts and it also means that if a learner changes goal path, their achievements still count.

The milestones are aligned to the curriculum framework and the Performance Management Framework uses milestones as a performance indictor for effectiveness measures. In time, program decisions will be made based on the data collected through EOIS-CaMS and therefore the Ministry must be assured that performance indicators have been applied equitably and under the same circumstances.

In time, there may be more milestones, but this decision will be based on the use of milestones and feedback from LBS service providers using them.

Service providers are welcome to develop tasks that will be used for practice but not as indicators reported on in EOIS-CaMS.

Q9. Why is it necessary to keep milestone tasks secure? After all once a task is used it is no longer "secure". A practitioner may teach to the milestone once it has been used, and a student may be able to remember how to approach some of the thinking questions. Would it not make more sense to post these as typical and standard milestone tasks, but allow practitioners to create another task to the same standard?

Service providers will use a Milestone Selection Guide, which will have all the assessment activities for the milestones and will have an administration and scoring guide in April 2012. Within the guide, there will be a clear explanation as to why it is important to maintain the standards of security that will be outlined.

The milestones are an effectiveness performance indicator and program improvement decisions will be based on the data that is collected on these indicators. It is important that service providers understand why the assessment protocol must be followed. It is in the interests of public accountability and program improvement to collect data consistently and accurately.

The milestones are not tests. They are indicators that the learner is increasing their ability to apply their newly acquired skills and abilities. The administration guide will give the service provider suggestions on how to introduce and administer the milestone learner activities.

Q10. How will we handle culminating tasks for single subject learners i.e. math only, chemistry only, physics only, and biology only etc.?

In order to record in EOIS-CaMS that the LBS learner successfully completed their goal path, three (3) performance indicators must be attained. The mandate of the LBS

Program is to provide the instructional and other supports (e.g., referral, training support, etc.) a learner needs to be prepared for transition to their next steps beyond LBS. In order for the ministry to know if its services are in fact doing this, information on the completion of performance indicators is reported in EOIS-CaMS. For measuring goal path completion there are three (3) performance indicators: milestones, culminating tasks and learning activities.

For students who are just taking one subject (only chemistry, only physics, only biology), the instructor will determine which milestones apply to the learner (because LBS is not only about skill development, it is also about enabling learners to use and transfer their skills for authentic purposes) and the postsecondary goal path culminating task will show that the learner has the other important competencies expected at the post secondary level (reading/ writing/ thinking).

Often a student who is only taking one ACE course at the college already has a secondary school diploma or equivalency. Having a credential, however, is not always a guarantee that all required competencies, skills and knowledge are present. Since LBS is not a credentialing body, having the student do milestones, and a culminating task along with their learning activities (the ACE course work in this example) is not a college determined requirement for his or her transition to postsecondary. The performance indicators for goal completion, therefore, are not a requirement for the college registrar for transition. However, they are requirements for the funded organization to demonstrate accountability to the ministry that they are providing learners with services related to the LBS mandate which is to prepare learners for successful transition.

Q11. How do you propose to ensure accuracy and consistency among professional teachers marking the Culminating Tasks?

The Culminating Tasks will include the assessment activity and an administration and scoring guide for the assessor. Where necessary, there will be exemplars (anchor papers) provided to guide practitioners in their assessment judgments.

Only through use and experience will it be discovered where assessors differ in their interpretation and understanding of the administration and scoring guide. LBS Support Organizations could be approached by service providers to develop a process in a sector or a community where practitioners would discuss the common interpretation and assessment of learner. This process in the past was called common assessment and may be a useful model to revive, adapt and apply for this purpose.

Q12. What happens if a learner does not complete the culminating task?

In a situation where the learner has completed the required milestones and learning activities, but not the culminating task, the service provider will not able to report that the learner has successfully completed the requirements of the goal path. The culminating task is one of three performance indicators for the measure Completion of Goal Path. Completing milestones, however, will still count towards the Learner Progress measure. Completing the learning activities will be counted as completion of one performance indicator for Completion of Goal Path.

Q13. How can we debrief results of a learner's culminating task without showing the learner the graded task and ensure security of the task?

The Culminating Task User Guide will provide practitioners with the guidance they need to provide learners with feedback, without compromising the security of the assessment activities.

Q14. Is it possible to have more / different versions of the one culminating task per path to increase security?

For April 2012, there will be one culminating task for each goal path and two for the Apprenticeship goal path - one for apprenticeship and one for skills training - for a total of six culminating tasks. The Culminating Task User Guide will outline the requirements for secure use of the assessment activities.

In order to determine if there is a) a need for more security and b) a need for additional choices, the ministry will consider recommendations from the culminating task developers, feedback from service provider's use of the culminating tasks and input from the sector organizations.

Q15. We've noticed that some culminating tasks are focused exclusively on language-based skills. For those students who are upgrading their skills in only mathematical or scientific areas, how are these tasks relevant to their training?

In order to record in the EOIS-CaMS that the student successfully completed their goal path, three performance indicators must be attained. As the mandate of the LBS Program is to provide the instructional and other supports (e.g., referral, training support, etc.) a learner needs to be prepared for transition to their next steps beyond LBS. In order for the Ministry to know if transition is occurring, information on the completion of performance indicators is reported in EOIS-CaMS. For the measure goal path completion there are 3 performance indicators: milestones, culminating task and learning activities.

In the example you have provided, the student's learning activities are included in the mathematical or scientific areas course. The practitioner will determine which milestones apply to the learner (because LBS is not only about skill development, it is about enabling learners to use and transfer their skills) and the postsecondary goal path culminating task will show that the learner has the other important competencies expected at the post secondary level (reading/writing/thinking). Having a credential is not always a guarantee that all the required competencies, skills and knowledge are present. Since LBS is not a credentialing body, having the learner do milestones and a culminating task along with their learning activities is not a requirement for his or her transition to postsecondary. Although not stated in your example, it is presumed that this student already has the credential or mature student status that has been accepted by the college registrar.

So, the performance indicators are not a requirement for transition but they are requirements for the funded organization to demonstrate accountability to the ministry that they are providing learners with services related to the LBS Program mandate.

If the learner only wants a mathematical or scientific areas course and does not want to do milestones or a culminating task, it is ultimately their choice and, in this case, the service provider would respect that and will only report in EOIS-CaMS that the learning activities were completed successfully. However, it is the expectation of the LBS Program that it is preparing learners for transition and at this point demonstrating that you have the competencies (milestones), the knowledge (learning activities) and the ability to integrate apply learning to a complex task is what the ministry feels is important for successful transitions.

Every effort should be made to have the learner do all three of the above, to indicate completion of goal path. At this early stage of the performance management framework, it is very important that service providers report accurately in EOIS-CaMS what actually happens in their programs. Over time, the data will be analyzed to know if adjustments are needed or whether there is clear evidence that links performance indicators with short, medium and long term impacts.

Q16. If a student registers with our program to get a prerequisite for a post-secondary program (i.e. ACE Chemistry) and completes the program requirements, must the student also complete the "culminating task" that seems to be focused on "reading/writing/thinking" in order for our program to be able to record in EOIS-CAMS that the student was successful in completion?

Yes, in order to record in EOIS-CaMS that the student successfully completed their goal path, three performance indicators must be attained. The mandate of the LBS Program is to provide the instructional and other supports (e.g., referral, training support, etc.) a

learner needs to be prepared for transition to their next steps beyond LBS. In order for the ministry to know if our services are in fact doing this, information on the completion of performance indicators is reported in EOIS-CaMS. For the measure goal path completion there are three performance indicators: milestones, culminating task and learning activities.

In the example you have provided, the student's learning activities are included in the ACE Chemistry course. The practitioner will determine which milestones apply to the learner (because LBS is not only about skill development, it is about enabling learners to use and transfer their skills) and the postsecondary goal path culminating task will show that the learner has the other important competencies expected at the post secondary level (reading/writing/thinking). Having a credential is not always a guarantee that all the required competencies, skills and knowledge are present. Since LBS is not a credentialing body, having the learner do milestones and a culminating task along with their learning activities is not a requirement for his or her transition to postsecondary. Although not stated in your example, it is presumed that this student already has the credential or mature student status that has been accepted by the college registrar. So the performance indicators are not a requirement for transition but they are requirements for the funded organization to demonstrate accountability to the ministry that they are providing learners with services related to the LBS Program mandate.

If the learner only wants a chemistry course and does not want to do milestones or a culminating task, that is their choice and, in this case, the service provider would respect that and will only report in EOIS-CaMS that the learning activities were completed successfully. This is also a very good result. At this early stage of the performance management framework, it is very important that service providers report accurately in EOIS-CaMS what actually happens in their programs. Over time, the data will be analyzed to know if adjustments are needed or whether there is clear evidence that links performance indicators with short, medium and long term impacts.

Q17. Will there be a series of culminating tasks to choose from or is there only one culminating task per OALCF level?

In 2012 - 13, there will only be one culminating task per goal path (except for apprenticeship which has two – one for apprenticeship and one for skills training). In time there may be more culminating task assessment activities developed and this will be part of the ongoing management of the OALCF.

Goal path

Q18. In the "Introduction to the Goal Path Descriptions" document it states "The goal path refers to the preparation required to exit LBS and transition to the goal and is delivered by an LBS service provider." So, is it accurate to say that an LBS service provider must be able to get the learner into that destination if they have a learner on that goal path?

The goal path prepares the learner for an anticipated transition to their next step (goal). Whether the learner actually gets there will be captured either at exit, 3, 6, or 12 months after. The service provider is only responsible for the preparation of the learner and any referrals that are made to other services and programs will be valued as indicators of the service coordination measure.

Q19. We have always used the terms "long term" and "short term" with respect to goals, and were just beginning to understand these as explained by the OALCF. Now those terms seem to have been replaced by "goal" and "goal path" and this is confusing.

The terms goal path and goal were chosen to help us to do 2 things:

1. Distinguish between the preparation (what LBS service providers do with learners) and the destination (which most likely involves more training or additional services). For example, the learner may want to be an apprentice but, once having the necessary grade 12 level of knowledge and credentials, the person will still need to get a job, become registered as an apprentice and undergo the multi year program.

2. Acknowledge that the service provider is only accountable for providing the literacy and basic skills preparation needed to transition to the entry point of the goal and is not responsible for the learner attaining their goal, which often involves more training or education or other services.

The Goal Path Descriptions provide the practitioner with a description of where the learner wants to go (their goal) in order for the learner's program (goal path) to include all that is necessary for the learner to be prepared.

We will continue to use the terms goal and goal path to distinguish between what the learner aspires to achieve some day (goal) and the content of the literacy service program to prepare the learner (goal path).

Q20. Why is ACE not considered a goal path?

The five OALCF goal paths were identified by LBS service providers in a consultation process held in 2008. It was agreed that these goal paths covered the broad range of purposes that learners had for coming to LBS and were easily understood by members of the public without requiring additional explanation. Goal paths do not suggest curriculum but do point the service provider to the expectations and requirements for the learner to successfully transition from LBS.

The LBS Program is not curriculum-based. MTCU does not prescribe curriculum but depends on the professional judgment of service providers to provide learner-centred programming. Learners are assessed to determine gaps in knowledge and their programming is tailored to provide learners with what they are specifically missing in order to achieve their goals.

ACE is the content that is delivered by colleges as learners prepare for postsecondary, apprenticeship or some employment goals. The ACE Certificate (issued by Colleges) is what some learners want to earn while in postsecondary preparation programming.

Neither ACE courses nor an ACE Certificate is a goal path, just as the GED and the OSSD are not goal paths. The goal paths capture the broad purposes for why an adult would come to the LBS Program. It is the service provider who determines together with the learner, what the specific program content (e.g., ACE courses) and mode of delivery will be based on the person's prior learning, available time and needs. As a result, no two learner plans are the same and that is what is unique and essential about an adult education program such as LBS.

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