

Assurance Argument
Adler Graduate School - MN

7/30/2019

2 - Integrity:
Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

2.A - Core Component 2.A

The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows policies and processes for fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.

Argument

2.A - The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows policies and processes for fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.

AGS has clear and specific policies and procedures in place to orient, support, and hold all parts of the institution accountable for behaving fairly and ethically. These policies and procedures are described in the AGS Board Manual, the AGS Employee Handbook, and the [AGS Faculty Handbook](#). In addition, expectations about students' conduct, including but not limited to academic integrity, are described in the Catalogue/Student Handbook and in all syllabi.

Governing Board:

Members of AGS Board of Directors understand that the board has a fiduciary responsibility toward the college, which consists of overseeing financial sustainability through resource generation and management and of hiring and evaluating the college's president. Routinely, the board meets ten times a year, with additional meetings scheduled as needed. The board has two standing committees, each with specific charges. The board's understanding of this fiduciary obligation is illustrated in the AGS [Board of Directors Policies and Procedures Manual](#), with specific policies and procedures presented in more detail as appropriate in other sections of this assurance argument. Selected [minutes of Board of Directors meetings](#) illustrate how the board discharges its fiduciary obligation to AGS.

The Governance Committee is charged with monitoring the health and functioning of the Board of Directors. In addition to its oversight function related to the board itself, this committee is charged with 1) annually [evaluating the college president's performance](#) and presenting their findings to the whole board; and 2) periodically reviewing the institution's [bylaws](#), ethical conduct and conflict of interest policies and other governance policies and practices, and make recommendations to the Board as appropriate. Details about this committee's composition and operations can be found in the [Governance Committee Charter](#).

The Finances Committee assists the Board in fulfilling its responsibility for ensuring AGS's long-term financial health and in formulating policies regarding, making decisions about, and overseeing the institution's financial performance and condition. The Committee directs and oversees AGS's financial activity and performance with a set of financial and investment policies designed to: 1)

Protect the assets of the organization; 2) Ensure the maintenance of accurate records of the organization's financial activities; 3) Provide a framework for the organization's financial decision making; 4) Establish operating standards and behavioral expectations; and 5) Ensure compliance with federal, state, and local legal and reporting requirements. Details about responsibilities and operations of this committee can be found in the [Finances Committee](#) Charter and the Committee's process for overseeing the feasibility and prioritization of major expenses is exemplified in the [study of the possible impact](#) of unplanned expenses on the financial health of the School. The Finances Committee meets regularly in the week prior to full-board meetings to examine the financial report presented by the Vice-President for Finances.

Additional Board practices that assure fair and ethical behavior, including a clear commitment to its fiduciary obligation toward the institution, include a [code of conduct](#) for Board members, a [conflict of interest policy](#) that must be acknowledged by all Board members, processes for [Board self-evaluation](#) and for Board [training by outside consultants](#), and Board participation in the [institution-wide planning retreat](#).

Administration:

AGS's administrative practices rely on a shared leadership model, consistent with the Adlerian values that guide all School operations. These values include a commitment to encouragement and fostering a sense of belonging and significance in all stakeholders, a commitment to democratic living and horizontal functioning, and a commitment to accountability.

In order to honor these values, all operations must be transparent and decisions, to the highest extent possible, shared. As such, a Leadership Committee consisting of the President; the Vice-President for Finances; the Directors of Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance, Admissions, and Student Success Services; a Program Chairs representative; and the HR/Administrative Assistant meets each week to share information about the different institutional units, to identify areas for improvement, and to identify possible solutions. Each representative then takes items of interest to their respective units for further discussion, bringing feedback to the group, which then makes and/or approves decisions as needed. A representation of this administrative structure can be found in the attached [organizational structure](#). Units and programs also have autonomy to make operational decisions specific to them, during unit or program meetings.

AGS's administration also recognizes the importance of sharing information with and obtaining feedback from all faculty (full-time and adjuncts). With this objective, the School's President established a [faculty forum](#), lead by the professional development coordinator, with the mission of serving in an advisory capacity to the President on issues that impact faculty welfare. Issues examined by the forum this year include faculty ranking, adjunct contracts, and allocation of professional development funds.

As part of AGS's commitment to fair and ethical treatment of its employees, AGS engages in training for HR staff and professional consultation on employment issues. In addition to providing training through the Society for Human Resources Management to its Human Resources Assistant, the School also subscribes to and regularly consults with the [Associated Bank HR Hotline](#), a free service through our business insurance. In order to guarantee adherence to best practices, AGS's human resources department consistently consults with Hotline professionals.

Academic Unit:

The academic division also operates within a [shared leadership model](#), aimed at increasing critical examination of all types of academic issues, with a commitment to considering input from all faculty while simultaneously allowing for efficient time management and effective decision-making processes. The unit is led by an Academic Council, comprised of the Chairs of each program, the Registrar, the Academic Librarian, the Director of Assessment and Online Education, the Director of Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance, and the President. This group meets twice a month and analyses curriculum needs and makes curricular decisions; addresses issues related to improvement of student learning and student dispositions, including academic integrity; and is responsible for creating processes for assessment of student learning and program evaluation, and for developing academic policies and procedures. In the interest of ethical practice, fairness, and transparency, 1) the minutes of academic council meetings (exemplified [here](#)) are available to all full-time faculty and to the members of the leadership group, who are free to share them within their respective institutional units; and 2) Program Chairs serve as conduits between the Academic Council and program faculty, discussing within their programs issues being addressed by the council and bringing back feedback from their faculty to the council.

AGS's policy of [academic integrity](#) is published in the [Faculty Handbook](#), [Catalogue/Student Handbook](#), and in all course syllabi. Policies on [copyright](#) and [plagiarism](#) are also published in both handbooks. The college also has a policy on [intellectual property](#), which is published in the Faculty Handbook. [Resources](#) for prevention of plagiarism are made available to students via course work and by the writing center and Academic Librarian, and a process is in place for remediation of instances of plagiarism prior to course failure and/or dismissal from AGS.

In the course of the 2018-19 institutional evaluation process, we realized that although we did hear and respond to students' complaints and grievances we did not keep good track of these complaints and grievances, nor did we have consistent and clearly described policy and procedures for this. As a result, with input from faculty and Student Success Services staff, the Leadership Group developed a [complaints, grievance, and appeals policy](#) and step-by-step procedures that optimize the process and allow for accurate record-keeping. This policy entered into effect with the start of the 2019-20 academic year.

As part of the culture of transparency, we have also created a [page on AGS website](#) where information related to the processes of quality assurance and assessment, student and graduate measures of satisfaction and success, and financial information (audits) is presented and available to anyone who visits the website. A separate page informs stakeholders and the public in general of AGS's [relationships with accrediting agencies](#).

Faculty and staff:

As stated in the Faculty Handbook, all faculty are required to abide by the code of ethics that regulates their profession. This includes codes of ethics of the American Counseling Association, American Association for Marriage and Family Therapists, National Association of Social Workers, or American Psychological Association. In addition, faculty and staff are required to abide by the AGS standards of conduct, described in the Employee Handbook.

All new faculty and staff participate in an [onboarding and orientation process](#), upon hiring. This process is lead by the Professional Development Coordinator and by the human resources representative and includes an overview of the institutional culture, as well as policies and procedures. All full-time employees (faculty and staff) receive a copy of the AGS [Employee Handbook](#), and all faculty (full or part-time) also receive a copy of the [Faculty Handbook](#) and of the

[Online Learning](#) Policies and Procedures manual. While the Employee Handbook addresses school-wide policies in detail, the Faculty Handbook and the Online Learning Policies and Procedures manual focus on aspects of ethical functioning and procedures specific to those in the faculty role.

As stated earlier, AGS's mission is "*Preparing mental health and human service professionals with a strong Adlerian foundation to foster encouragement, collaboration, and a sense of belonging to the individuals, families, and culturally diverse communities they serve*". As such, AGS faculty is charged with being gatekeepers to professions that require both appropriate knowledge and skills and high ethical standards. In order to help students to develop a strong professional identity, based on best standards of practice and on ethical behaviors described in the American Counseling Association Code of Ethics (2014), the faculty developed a [process](#) for evaluation of students' [professional dispositions](#) (attitudes and behaviors) that allows for early detection of potential problems and the development of a corrective plan that promotes student success.

Sources

- ACAD_Academic Council_Minutes
- ACAD_Academic Integrity
- ACAD_Copyright
- ACAD_Dispositions Form
- ACAD_Dispositions Process
- ACAD_Intellectual Property
- ACAD_Online Learning Manual
- ACAD_Plagiarism Policy
- ACAD_ProfessionalDispositions_Protocol
- BOD_AGS Bylaws.pdf
- BOD_Code of Conduct
- BOD_Conflict of Interest
- BOD_Finance Committee_Charter.pdf
- BOD_Governance Committee_Charter.pdf
- BOD_Impact of CRM and Building
- BOD_Minutes_Governance Committee
- BOD_Policies_Procedures_Manual
- BOD_Sample minutes
- BOD_Self-Evaluation
- BOD_Training_January 2019
- HR_HR Hotline
- HR_Onboarding and Orientation Process
- PRES_Academic Affairs_Shared Leadership
- PRES_Faculty Forum
- PRES_Org Structure
- QAA_Planning Retreat Summary Report.pdf
- QAA_Policies_Grievance
- QAA_QAA webpage.pdf
- SSS_Plagiarism Tutorial
- WEB_Accreditation

2.B - Core Component 2.B

The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.

Argument

2.B - The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.

AGS's website clearly and completely describes the School, its programs, admission requirements, and cost of education and financial aid opportunities and requirements. Stakeholders can also access through the website the School's catalogue/student handbook, and faculty and employee handbooks. [Print materials](#) used by the admissions department when recruiting new students also present this information clearly and completely. Board, [faculty](#), and [staff](#) directories, as well as individual faculty and staff pages linked to this directory, provide information about personnel credentials and contact information.

The website also contains a page dedicated to [Quality Assurance and Assessment](#). On this page, stakeholders can find information about quality assurance, student outcomes (including learning outcomes; persistence, retention, and completion rates; and graduate career outcomes), and processes used for assessment. A link within this page directs interested parties to an accreditation page where information about our accreditation and documentation of our history of accreditation can be found. The page also contains a link to the Board of Directors page, which includes contact information for Board members, minutes of Board meetings, and a schedule of upcoming Board meetings.

All pages of the AGS's website display the [marks of affiliation](#) for both the Higher Learning Commission which links to the HLC website where details of AGS's accreditation can be found, and for NC-SARA, which links to the Council's website where stakeholders can find explanations about the benefits, requirements, and process involved in becoming a NC-SARA-approved institution.

Sources

- ADM_Viewbook 2019
- QAA_QAA webpage.pdf
- WEB_footing_screenshot.pdf
- WEB_Sample_Staff Directory

2.C - Core Component 2.C

The governing board of the institution is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity.

1. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.
2. The governing board reviews and considers the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.
3. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties when such influence would not be in the best interest of the institution.
4. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters.

Argument

AGS is an independent not-for-profit organization and the AGS's Board of Directors is an independent board focused exclusively on the best interests of the college.

2.C.1 - The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.

As stated in the [Board of Directors' Policies and Procedures Manual](#), "The Board actively monitors progress in achieving the milestones and objectives laid out in the [Institutional Effectiveness Plan](#)." This plan provides the framework for institutional assessment and continuous improvement. Additional evidence that the board's deliberations reflect the priorities identified in this institutional effectiveness plan can be found in these samples of Board of Directors [meeting minutes](#).

2.C.2 - The governing board reviews and considers the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.

As discussed above, the Board's strategic priorities and deliberations are strongly grounded on the [institutional effectiveness plan](#), which is directly related to the interest of internal and external constituencies by focusing on:

- the quality of education provided by AGS;
- how the institution employs Adlerian principles (democratic and strength-based functioning, encouragement, and accountability) to promote the well being of both internal and external constituents;
- the School's commitment to diversity/equity to promote student growth and both internal and external community development;
- aspects of functioning that promote institutional sustainability.

Evidence of the Board's commitment to considering the institutional effectiveness plan can be found in this sample of [Board meeting minutes](#). This Board-requested [report](#) offers additional evidence of Board attention to relevant interests of internal and external constituents, as does the [Board Strategic Planning Retreat Report](#).

2.C.3 - The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties when such influence would not be in the best interest of the institution.

AGS's Board of Directors is an independent board and its only fiduciary obligation is to AGS. The Board has clear policies to avoid conflict of interest, described in the [Board's Code of Conduct](#).

2.C.4 - The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters.

AGS's President is responsible for leading day-to-day management of the college, as established in [Article VI of AGS's Bylaws](#), and academic affairs are overseen by the [Academic Council](#), which is composed of 6 faculty members, the Academic Librarian, the Registrar, and the President.

Sources

- ACAD_Shared_Leadership
- BOD_8-22-18 minutes.pdf
- BOD_AGS Bylaws_Excerpt.pdf
- BOD_Code of Conduct
- BOD_Institutional Effectiveness
- BOD_Internal and external constituencies
- BOD_Policies_Procedures_Manual
- BOD_Sample minutes
- BOD_Shared Leadership
- BOD_Strategic Planning Retreat.pdf
- PRES_2025 Position Paper.pdf

2.D - Core Component 2.D

The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

Argument

2.D - The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.

AGS is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning, and demonstrates this in a number of ways. Freedom of expression is specifically addressed in the Faculty Handbook and in the Catalogue/Student Handbook, and supported by an open door policy and a [grievance resolution process](#) that protects students, faculty members, and staff members who may believe their rights were denied.

Academic policies delineated in the [Faculty Handbook](#), [Catalogue/Student Handbook](#), and in all syllabi demonstrate AGS's commitment to academic integrity and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning. These policies include a general policy on [academic integrity](#), as well as policies on [copyright](#), [intellectual property](#), and [plagiarism](#). In addition, faculty members are expected to follow the code of ethics of their profession, which for most is the American Counseling Association (ACA) but can also be the American Psychological Association (APA) or American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT), and students are expected to follow the Code of Ethics of the ACA. Each of these codes of ethics have specific sessions addressing ethical behavior in research and publishing activities, including collaborative work between faculty and students. Although AGS is not a research institution, the School does have an [Institutional Review Board](#) whose responsibility is to protect potential research participants if/when faculty members develop research projects that may involve human subjects.

Sources

- ACAD_Academic Integrity
- ACAD_Copyright
- ACAD_Intellectual Property
- ACAD_Plagiarism Policy
- QAA_Policies_Grievance
- WEB_IRB

2.E - Core Component 2.E

The institution's policies and procedures call for responsible acquisition, discovery and application of knowledge by its faculty, students and staff.

1. The institution provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.
2. Students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources.
3. The institution has and enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

Argument

AGS is committed to ethical and responsible acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge by all its constituents and has policies and procedures to support this commitment. Policies on academic integrity are published in the faculty handbook and in the catalogue/student handbook, and are included on all syllabi.

2.E.1 - The institution provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.

As previously discussed, AGS's faculty and students abide by professional ethics codes that provide clear guidelines for the ethical engagement in research and scholarly practice. Students are introduced to these practices in the second course they take at the School, and receive re-enforcement throughout their career at AGS.

AGS is a teaching institution, not focused on research. However, scholarly inquiry is encouraged and at times faculty or a team of faculty and student(s) may choose to engage in research projects. For this reason, AGS has an [Institution Review Board](#) (IRB) and all projects that may involve research with human subjects must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval prior to the project's start. Proper procedures for developing a research proposal and submitting it for IRB review are described in the AGS website.

2.E.2 - Students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources

Students are introduced to best practices in the use of information sources (such as, but not limited to differences between peer-reviewed sources and other types of information sources; appropriate authorship attribution; copyright; plagiarism and how to avoid it) in the very [first course](#) at AGS. Faculty guidance to students in the ethical use of informational resources continues in all other courses, where [writing rubrics](#) for papers and online discussions contain sections that speak to this best practice and are used by faculty to provide specific feedback to students.

Student support staff also help students learn best practices in the use of information resources. The [Academic Librarian](#) assists students and faculty in accessing information through the collection and the digital databases, as well as on authorship attribution, citation, copyright issues, and plagiarism. The writing center also offers one-on-one support and supportive resources, such as [plagiarism tutorials](#). Students who committed plagiarism for the first time are required to engage in a remediation plan that includes participating in a tutorial about intentional and unintentional

plagiarism and passing a quiz based on the tutorial.

2.E.3 - The institution has and enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.

The AGS [academic integrity policy](#) is published in the [faculty handbook](#), [catalogue/student handbook](#), and all course syllabi. Students are introduced to this policy at the start of their career at AGS, and academic integrity is one of the [professional dispositions](#) evaluated at [specific points](#) in the curriculum and at any other time as needed for remediation. In addition, AGS has clearly defined policies on [copyright](#) and [plagiarism](#), which are also published in these resources and apply to all faculty and students.

Sources

- ACAD_512_Syllabus
- ACAD_Academic Integrity
- ACAD_Copyright
- ACAD_Dispositions Form
- ACAD_Dispositions Process
- ACAD_Library Report.pdf
- ACAD_Plagiarism Policy
- ACAD_Writing Rubrics
- SSS_Plagiarism Tutorial
- WEB_IRB

2.S - Criterion 2 - Summary

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

Summary

AGS has clear and specific policies and procedures in place to orient, support, and hold all parts of the institution accountable for behaving fairly and ethically. The Board of Directors' recognition of its fiduciary obligation to AGS is expressed in the Board's structure, with standing committees responsible for governance (including Board functioning and annual evaluations of the President) and for overseeing institutional finances, as well as policies related to code of conduct, conflict of interest, self-evaluation, and ongoing training. Administrative practices are guided by democratic principles, transparency, and shared leadership. All Board members, faculty, and staff are mandated to function according to the ethical codes of their professions and the AGS code of conduct. Faculty and students must abide by academic integrity policies, published in the faculty and student handbooks.

Information about AGS's programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships are readily available to the public on the AGS website, which is kept up to date. The website has pages dedicated to sharing information about 1) assessment and quality assurance: 2) accreditation: and 3) Board of Directors. Printed materials used for recruitment of new students accurately reflect admission requirements, program goals and specific course requirements, and cost of education.

AGS's Board of Directors is an independent and autonomous board with clear policies to avoid conflict of interest and focused exclusively on the best interests of the School. While delegating control of institutional operations to the President, the Board actively monitors progress in achieving the milestones and objectives laid out in the institutional effectiveness plan.

The institution demonstrates its commitment to freedom of information and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning in a number of ways, including specific policies addressing freedom of expression published in faculty and student handbooks and a grievance process designed to protect students, faculty, and staff.

AGS also has clear policies protecting academic integrity, which are published in the faculty handbook and catalogue/student handbook and included in all syllabi. Students are supported in learning and abiding by these ethical guidelines through classroom instruction, academic advising, and support offered by student support staff. Although AGS is not a research institution, occasionally faculty may engage in research that includes human subjects; to guarantee ethical researcher behavior and public safety, all such project proposals must be submitted for approval of an Institutional Review Board.

Sources

There are no sources.