Tip Sheet for Developing Subject-Specific Information Literacy Standards

Information Literacy Advisory Committee
Association of College and Research Libraries
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The *Tip Sheet for Developing Subject-Specific Information Literacy Standards* provides general guidance for the required structure of subject-specific information literacy standards documents and outlines the recommended process for creating such documents, including participation of an Information Literacy Consultant; involvement of disciplinary faculty and/or associations; gathering comments; resolving conflicting suggestions; obtaining approval from the ACRL Information Literacy Advisory Committee, ACRL Standards and Accreditation Committee, and ACRL Board; and seeking endorsement from other interested professional organizations. This *Tip Sheet* is intended to reduce ambiguity and confusion about procedures, improve the efficiency in the process for all involved, and provide consistency among and credibility for the final products created by various ACRL units, including Sections and other groups. This document is organized in three sections: "Framework for Subject-Specific Information Literacy Standards Documents," "Procedures," and "Document Structure." This *Tip Sheet* will be maintained by the Information Literacy Advisory Committee.

1. Framework for Subject-Specific Information Literacy Standards Documents

A. Relationship to the *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education*

In an introductory statement, the subject-specific information literacy standards should acknowledge the *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* as the foundation document for the subject-specific information literacy standards and the five standards from that document should be apparent in the subject-specific standards. The five standards may be included verbatim or adapted as appropriate to a discipline as long as the essence of the five standards is retained.

B. Relationship to Disciplinary Learning Standards

The subject-specific information literacy standards should also articulate a relationship with any learning standards that the discipline may have. If the discipline does not have a set of learning standards, the subject-specific information literacy standards should be placed in context of the discipline's dialogue on teaching and learning issues.

C. Role of the ACRL Information Literacy Advisory Committee

Before beginning work on the development of the subject-specific information literacy standards, the ACRL unit will notify the ACRL Information Literacy Advisory Committee of their intention. The ACRL Information Literacy Advisory Committee will ask the ACRL Institute for Information Literacy Executive Committee to identify an Information Literacy Consultant to work with the ACRL unit throughout the document development process.

Upon completion of the draft document, the ACRL unit will send the document to the ACRL Information Literacy Advisory Committee to conduct the final review of subject-specific information literacy standards, with particular attention to the structure, formatting and content of the document. The ACRL Information Literacy Advisory Committee will provide any comments to the ACRL unit to review for possible changes before the document is submitted to the ACRL Standards and Accreditation Committee for review and transmittal to the ACRL Board for official approval.

D. Role of the Information Literacy Consultant

An Information Literacy Consultant will assist the ACRL unit in the creation of a document that meets the requirements outlined herein and that has solid content related to information literacy and educational outcomes. The ACRL Institute for Information Literacy Executive Committee will work with the ACRL unit to identify an Information Literacy Consultant to work with them throughout their process. The Information Literacy Consultant is not responsible for the final review of the standards document and recommendation to the ACRL Board; these tasks are the responsibility of the ACRL Information Literacy Advisory Committee and Standards and Accreditation Committee.

E. Role of ACRL Standards and Accreditation Committee

The *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* and any subject-specific information literacy standards are learning standards for students rather than standards for the profession. As such, while the ACRL Standards and Accreditation Committee will conduct a review of subject-specific information literacy standards, that review pertains only to the non-content editorial reviews and process used to develop the standards, not to the content of the standards themselves. The ACRL Standards and Accreditation Committee will receive the subject-specific document and comments from the ACRL Information Literacy Advisory Committee, and submit their recommended actions to the ACRL Board, ACRL Information Literacy Advisory Committee, and ACRL unit that created the document.

F. Role of ACRL Board

ACRL Board reviews the recommendations from the ACRL Standards and Accreditation Committee and ACRL Information Literacy Advisory Committee and makes the official decision whether to approve the standards.

2. Document Structure

Subject-specific information literacy standards should be drafted in a manner that demonstrates alignment with the *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* and any relevant documents and language within the discipline.

A set of subject-specific information literacy standards could:

- include the five information literacy standards from the *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* using the same language and order

A set of subject-specific information literacy standards should:

- include an introduction and/or appendix that either lists or generally describes:
  - scope and purpose of the standards
  - disciplines and fields of study addressed

        - students addressed (e.g., undergraduates, distance learners, etc.)
        - intended audience for the document
        - relationship of the subject-specific information literacy standards to the foundation document
        - special challenges related to information literacy in that discipline
        - sources used in preparation of the standards
        - brief description and timeline of the development process.
    - list performance indicators and outcomes for student learning that are:
        - aligned with the meaning and intent of the standard or indicator to which they are connected
        - clearly worded and in simple statements
        - concise and specific as possible
        - assessable through either quantitative or qualitative approaches; refer to Bloom's Taxonomy for appropriate language for outcomes [Bloom, Benjamin S., Ed. (1956). *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals, Handbook I: Cognitive Domain*. New York: Longmans.]
        - cohesive and non-duplicative when viewed as a whole; the same indicators and outcomes should not be repeated for different standards.

3. Procedures

The procedures that follow are descriptive of the recommended approach to developing subject-specific information literacy standards. Some deviation from these procedures is anticipated since different ACRL units have their own internal procedures and since collaboration with disciplinary faculty or associations demands flexibility on the part of librarians and ACRL.

A. Procedure to Initiate the Process

ACRL units wishing to develop subject-specific information literacy standards should complete these actions as the first steps:

- Inform the ACRL Information Literacy Advisory Committee of their intention to begin work on subject-specific information literacy standards, including the disciplinary scope of the planned document and information about any other disciplinary or professional organizations with which they plan to partner.
- Charge a committee or task force (as appropriate to their internal procedures) with developing the standards. The committee or task force may also include disciplinary faculty representatives as advisors or consultants, or the Section may approach ACRL to appoint a joint task force with another professional organization. The committee/task force should have a clear charge and timeframe and be familiar with this *Tip Sheet* and the *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education.*
- Select, from a list of approved Information Literacy Consultants provided by the ACRL Information Literacy Advisory Committee, a person to work as a consultant to their committee/task force throughout the process. Contact the person and confirm their interest and availability.
- Notify The ACRL Information Literacy Advisory Committee with the name of the chosen consultant once a commitment from person has been secured.

B. Procedure for the Development Process

The specific chronology of and procedures for the following components may vary by ACRL units but all are expected to be present in each development process:

- Literature review in the discipline to identify faculty interest, existing or developing learning objectives for the discipline, and any accreditation standards for the discipline and related disciplinary programs.
- Consultation with any appropriate subject-specific library associations (e.g., Medical Library Association, American Association of Law Libraries, American Chemical Society's Chemical Information Division, and various sections of the Special Library Association) or appropriate units elsewhere in ALA.
- Consultation with disciplinary faculty and associations, particularly leaders of relevant teaching/learning focused committees or task forces within such organizations.
- Initial review of the draft document by ACRL unit leadership (e.g., a Section's Executive Committee).
- Distribution of the subject-specific standards in draft form, and explicitly identified as a draft, for comment by librarians and library organizations, and by disciplinary faculty and organizations (e.g. a Section's discussion list, Section's web site, or Section's newsletter).

C. Procedure for Review and Approval

The subject-specific information literacy standards need to obtain approval from several ACRL groups as follows:

The ACRL unit's leadership (e.g., Executive Committee or chair of a Section's information literacy standards task force) reviews the revised subject-specific information literacy standards document, paying particular attention to the structure, content, and formatting of the document, as well as conformity to the processes in this *Tip Sheet*.

- If further substantive revisions are requested, they return the document to the committee or task force with specific feedback and ask for the document to be resubmitted to them for review once revised.
- If no substantive revisions are needed, they give preliminary approval of the revised document and submit the document to the ACRL Information Literacy Advisory Committee.

The ACRL Information Literacy Advisory Committee reviews the subject-specific information literacy standards document, paying particular attention to the structure, content, and formatting of the document, as well as the conformity to the processes in this *Tip Sheet*.

- The Information Literacy Advisory Committee may seek additional information from the ACRL unit submitting the document, Information Literacy Consultant who worked with the unit throughout the development process, as well as other Information Literacy Consultants who have experience with similar documents.
- If no revisions are needed, ILAC will forward the document with a recommendation to the ACRL Standards and Accreditation Committee.
- If further revisions are requested, ILAC will return the document to the ACRL unit's leadership with specific feedback. These two groups

should aim to reach agreement about revisions within a reasonable time frame and with minimal iterations.

- If an agreement cannot be reached about requested revisions within a reasonable time frame, ILAC will forward the document to the ACRL Standards and Accreditation Committee and then the ACRL Board with a rationale provided for each of the alternatives; the ACRL Board may seek an external consultant to help make the final decision.

The ACRL Standards and Accreditation Committee will review the document for conformity to the processes in this *Tip Sheet* and other relevant ACRL and ACRL unit policies. They will submit their committee's review, the ACRL Information Literacy Advisory Committee's review, and a final recommendation to the ACRL Board for its action.

The ACRL Board has the authority to approve or deny approval to a set of subject-specific information literacy standards. The ACRL Board will convey its decision to the ACRL unit initiating the document, the ACRL Information Literacy Advisory Committee, the ACRL Standards and Accreditation Committee, and the ACRL staff responsible for the Standards and Guidelines website. If approval is denied, the ACRL unit and ACRL Information Literacy Advisory Committee may choose to meet to discuss how to address the concerns, and the ACRL unit may choose to revise and resubmit the document for approval.

D. Procedure for Publication and Announcement

Once approved, the subject-specific information literacy standards may be officially announced. Possible avenues include:

- Publishing the standards document on the unit's web site
- Creating a link to the standards document on the ACRL Standards web site as a sub-listing underneath the *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* (http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlstandards/standardsguidelines.htm)
- Submitting a short news article with the URL to C&RL News
- Submitting for inclusion in the Instruction Section's Information Literacy in the Disciplines site (http://www.ala.org/ala/acrlbucket/is/projectsacrl/infolitdisciplines/)
- Submitting a short news article to other relevant professional organizations

E. Procedure for Endorsements

Other professional organizations may be interested in endorsing the subject-specific information literacy standards at any point in the process, and ACRL is interested in obtaining endorsements from other professional and education-related organizations. Following ACRL's *Guide to Policies and Procedures*, units need to obtain ACRL Board approval before initiating or approving any related endorsements. Contact the ACRL Executive Director to discuss how to handle external requests or proactively initiate the process.

4. Timeline

This timeline outlines timing for stages of the process in an ideal scenario. Exact times may be affected by a variety of elements, including but not limited to: committee members' ability to work efficiently between conferences, the number of partners included in the process, the extensiveness of revisions requested by review bodies, and the timing of the final product in relation to the ACRL Board meetings. Further details about these steps are included in the "Procedures" section of this document.

About 12 months before approval

- Inform ILAC of intention to create subject-specific information literacy standards.
- Notify ILAC of the name of the Information Literacy Consultant secured to work with your group.
- Charge a committee or task force to develop the standards.

About 11 months before approval

- Identify relevant literature and accreditation standards for the discipline.
- Consult with subject-specific library associations including ALA units, as relevant.
- Consult with disciplinary faculty and associations, as relevant.

About 9 months before approval

- Draft document and submit to the leadership of your ACRL unit.
- Receive comments and revise draft document as appropriate.

About 8 months before approval

- Call for comments to the draft document from your unit's membership.
- Share draft with disciplinary faculty and associations, as relevant.
- Receive comments and revise draft document as appropriate.
- Submit to your unit's leadership for review.

About 7 months before approval

- Review by your unit's leadership, leading to revisions or approval for next step.
- Once approved, submit to ILAC for review.

About 6 months before approval

- Review by ILAC, leading to revisions or approval for next step.
- Once approved, will be submitted by ILAC to Standards and Accreditation Committee.

About 4 months before approval

- Review by Standards and Accreditation Committee, leading to revisions or approval for next step.
- Once approved, will be submitted to ACRL Board for action at its next meeting.

Once approved

- Publish and announce subject-specific information literacy standards officially.