



The Flight Commander's Edge

Course Director Handbook

8 April 2025



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Welcome to the Edge!

The previous Air Force Chief of Staff, General Goldfein, charged Air Education and Training Command with helping the Air Force better prepare flight-level leaders as part of his effort to strengthen squadrons. This is a challenge that Air University accepted in 2018. The result was *The Flight Commander's Edge*. Today, that program, reimagined for a wider audience is now available to everyone across the force to support the development of leadership competencies and improve unit performance!

The new program capitalizes on nearly four years of experience with the online flight commander community. Updated and rebranded, the new program provides lesson plans and tools for developing leadership to anyone with an internet connection. Just like units over the past four years, you may use these lesson plans and guides to develop your own flight-level leadership development program at the small group, unit, or base level.

Where did all this information come from? You, the leader in the field.

In early 2018, Air University's Global College of Graduate Professional Military Education conducted an informal survey of flight commander course directors across the force. They asked for information on what was needed to improve performance at the local level. The answer? Leadership education. Specifically, more material on how to teach and apply leadership across the force, and guidance on how to ensure course participants could apply and continue to develop leadership skills in their own unique environments after a course is over.

The result of that survey was this Course Director's Handbook and the lessons and subject guides that support it. This handbook provides a framework to build a new flight-level leader development program (or modify an existing program) in a way that preserves unit-level control over content and delivery. We don't give you all the answers – because we can't. Every MAJCOM, NAF, and Wing is different. Instead, we provide you an approach you can tailor to meet your needs. And, best of all, no teaching experience is needed. *The Flight Commander's Edge* uses a discussion-based model for leadership instruction which you can execute without robust preparation or expertise. Just add leaders...and your program will help take our Air Force into the future.

Always learning, always leading.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed to help you build and execute Flight Commander Leadership Courses (FCLC) at the MAJCOM, NAF, Wing, or other subordinate unit-level. It will help you create a well-designed and well-taught course, valued by your participants and one that prepares them for critical leadership roles within the squadron.

Part 1, Program Overview, presents the basic information about *The Flight Commander's Edge* program. Presented in FAQ format so you can easily find the answers to common questions you may have.

Part 2, Building a Flight Commander Leadership Course, describes how to design and structure a new course using resources available from your local unit(s) and *The Flight Commander's Edge*.

Part 3, Preparing a Flight Commander Leadership Course, outlines steps to schedule, select and prepare faculty, and start your students off on the right foot.

Part 4, To Learn More. If you would like to know more about how *The Flight Commander's Edge* program was developed and the materials we recommend, contact us using the information in this section and peruse the Appendices for additional information.

Part 1: Program Overview

Part 1, **Program Overview**, presents the basic information about *The Flight Commander's Edge* program. Presented in FAQ format so you can easily find the answers to common questions you may have.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is *The Flight Commander's Edge*?

The Flight Commander's Edge is a program established by The Air University and managed by the Global College of Professional Military Education (hereinafter, "Global College") to support the development of flight commander courses across the Air Force.

What is a Flight Commander Leadership Course?

A *Flight Commander Leadership Course* (FCLC) is designed to be a 2- to 5-day orientation for new flight commanders or similar level leaders focused on leadership development and application at the unit-level.

For more information on the distinction between the FCLC and a traditional unit-level flight commander course, see "[How is this program different from my unit's existing flight commander course?](#)"

What are the Flight Commander Leadership Course outcomes?

The course is designed to:

1. Improve understanding of flight commander roles, duties, and responsibilities.
2. Increase proficiency in key flight-level leadership skills and behaviors.
3. Orient flight commanders on unit policies, programs, plans, and procedures.

Who are the key stakeholders in this program?

Air University Global College of Professional Military Education – The Global College is the strategic enabler of the program. It provides recommended course leadership content and manages *The Flight Commander's Edge* website.

Course Director – The course director is responsible for overall execution of a unit-level FCLC, including course design, material and facilitator selection, implementation, and feedback. Course directors may be at the MAJCOM, NAF, Wing, or unit level, as necessary.

Facilitator – Each course has one or more facilitators. Facilitators are coordinated by the course director and may have a range of responsibilities depending on local course design. Some facilitators only lead single lessons. Others are responsible for larger portions of a course, or the execution of an entire course. Facilitators may be full-time or part-time (i.e., additional duty) personnel. The duties of the facilitator are at the discretion of the course director and should be defined as local circumstances warrant.

Presenters – Each course may have one or more presenters. Presenters are coordinated by the course director and serve as subject-matter experts on local content. Presenters may be

drawn from units, staffs, or base agencies to present locally-prepared materials. Typically, presenters provide materials in a briefing and “question and answer” format. They are not expected to facilitate discussion, nor drive engagement inside the group.

Participant – The intended audience. Newly-designated flight commanders, or leaders with commensurate flight-level leadership responsibilities.

Course Mentor – An experienced flight commander or higher-grade officer that plays an important role in the classroom. Mentors provide support to facilitators and presenters, help the participants learn the curriculum, and answer in-depth questions. A mentor can provide invaluable assistance by “breaking the ice” in a new course, role-modeling introductions, and providing input to discussions.

Why does this program exist?

This program grew out of an initiative by the Air Force Chief of Staff at the time to reinvigorate Air Force squadrons. Air University, as the *Intellectual and Leadership Development Center of the Air and Space Forces*, was tasked with providing resources to support flight commander development outside traditional educational channels. The Global College is Air University's program lead.

Who is this program for?

This program is specifically for flight commander course directors at any level (MAJCOM, NAF, Wing, or individual-unit); however, the materials may be used in any classroom or small group setting (such as a college-level commissioning program, Officer Training School, Civil Air Patrol, etc.). Program materials are designed to support the development of locally-presented courses.

The program does not present online content directly to participants.

What will this program do for me?

This program will help you – the flight commander course director – construct a FCLC for your own units or improve your current flight commander course.

How is this program different from my unit's existing flight commander course?

Research conducted by Air University in March 2018 found that many existing flight commander courses at the unit-level function primarily as an orientation course. These courses do a good job at orienting a new flight commander to MAJCOM/NAF/Wing/unit policies and available base resources, but they lack structured leadership instruction and application practice. A FCLC combines the best parts of existing wing-level flight commander courses with informal, easy-to-present leadership instruction designed by Air University, to provide a tailored, flight commander development experience designed to improve overall performance.

Does this program replace my MAJCOM, NAF, or Wing-level Flight Commander program?

No. The resources provided in *The Flight Commander's Edge* are designed to complement existing flight commander courses. They are optional in their entirety. Should FCLC materials be used, they may be:

- inserted directly into an existing MAJCOM, NAF, or Wing-level program, or
- used with a recommended FCLC template which combines AU-provided leadership content with existing unit-level materials.

Does this program replace Squadron Officer School?

No. This program is not associated with Squadron Officer School.

Are *Flight Commander Leadership Courses* mandatory?

Yes and no. The FCLC materials provided as part of *The Flight Commander's Edge* are optional. They may be used as deemed fit to support local flight commander development.

Can I share my unit's materials? How can I contribute?

Yes. Email us at flightcommandersedge@us.af.mil and your materials may end up in a future lesson plan or guide!

Other Questions

If you have questions that are not answered here, contact *The Flight Commander's Edge* team at flightcommandersedge@us.af.mil.

Part 2: Building a Flight Commander Leadership Course

Part 2, **Building a *Flight Commander Leadership Course*** (FCLC), describes how to design and structure a course using resources available from your local unit(s) and *The Flight Commander's Edge*.

Course Concept

The FCLC concept grew out of a Global College informal survey of flight commander course directors. This survey found that many existing flight commander courses at the unit-level function primarily as an orientation course. These courses do a good job orienting a new flight commander to MAJCOM/NAF/Wing/unit policies and available base resources, but they often lack structured leadership instruction and application practice. The FCLC combines the best parts of existing orientation courses with informal, easy-to-present leadership instruction to provide a tailored, flight commander development experience.

A FCLC is not a packaged course from the Global College. Rather, it is an approach that can be used to build new or enhance existing flight commander courses at any organizational level.

A course built using FCLC methodology (see Appendix B) provides two important improvements over most unit-level flight commander courses. One, a FCLC is leadership-based. It provides an orientation to critical leadership skills and behaviors that every flight commander will need to succeed. Two, it is application-focused. FCLC leadership lessons use an experiential (activity-based) method. This method reinforces key flight-level leadership skills and behaviors through dialogue and action.

Course Structure

A FCLC has three distinct phases: pre-course, in-course, and post-course.

Phase 1: Pre-Course

Pre-course activities prepare the participant for success in the FCLC classroom. Activities include a discussion with the squadron commander (or equivalent) for expectation and goal setting, and any pre-readings which the course director selects for awareness.

Phase 2: In-Course

During the actual course, participants engage in selected leadership (AU-provided) and local content lessons over several days. Courses can range from two (2) to five (5) days based on the needs of the local unit.

In AU-provided leadership lessons, participants review materials (videos, handouts), engage in conversation, complete exercises, and assess themselves on flight-level leadership behaviors.

In locally-provided lessons, participants receive important information about base agencies and programs, and gain perspectives from local leadership.

These in-course lessons culminate in an end-of-course assignment: the creation of a *Professional Development Plan* (PDP) to guide future development.

Phase 3: Post-Course

The in-course lessons are, in themselves, only the beginning of learning. After the course is complete, participants complete a *Professional Development Plan* which provides a roadmap for their future development. This plan is briefed to the participant's squadron commander (or equivalent) to garner feedback and developmental support, and may be used to fulfill local training requirements.

The *Professional Development Plan* – Critical to Success

The overarching concept of the leadership lessons within the FCLC is to drive individual leadership growth through self-reflection and assessment. This self-reflection and assessment culminates in the creation of a *Professional Development Plan* (PDP).

The first leadership lesson, *The Role of the Flight Commander*, leverages the pre-course commander discussion (Phase 1) and sets the stage for self-assessment at the end of each leadership lesson (Phase 2). After the final leadership lesson, *The Road Ahead*, participants draft their PDP and close the loop with their squadron commanders through a post-course PDP-based discussion (Phase 3). See figure 1.

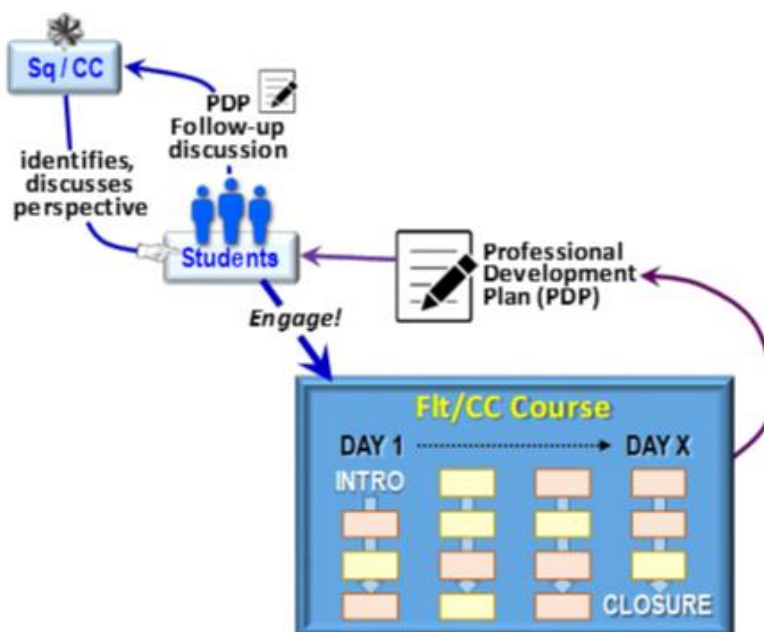


Figure 1.

This figure depicts the envisioned Flight Commander (participant), Squadron Commander, and FCLC relationship aimed at maximizing the student value proposition and further revitalizing the squadron.

The PDP is a key component of the experiential learning approach used throughout the course. Without this practical exercise as a capstone, behaviors may not be adequately reinforced and result in improved performance. The pre- and post-engagement with the squadron commander is critical for preparing the participant for the course; solidifying their understanding of the roles

they play within the organization, and charting a course for their further development as a leader.

The PDP is critical to close-the-loop in learning – learning which starts with the pre-course commander discussion, and ends with certificate presentation by the squadron commander *after* the PDP-based discussion. **The course director must ensure that all squadron commanders (or equivalents) understand the purpose of the PDP, and how it supports improved performance, *before the course begins.***

Course Content

Content for a FCLC comes from two places – *The Flight Commander's Edge* and the local unit. Air University provides recommended leadership content through *The Flight Commander's Edge* while units provide localized content specific to the base, region, or mission (or any other content desired by local leaders). Figure 2 shows samples of topics from AU-developed leadership lessons and locally-generated content.

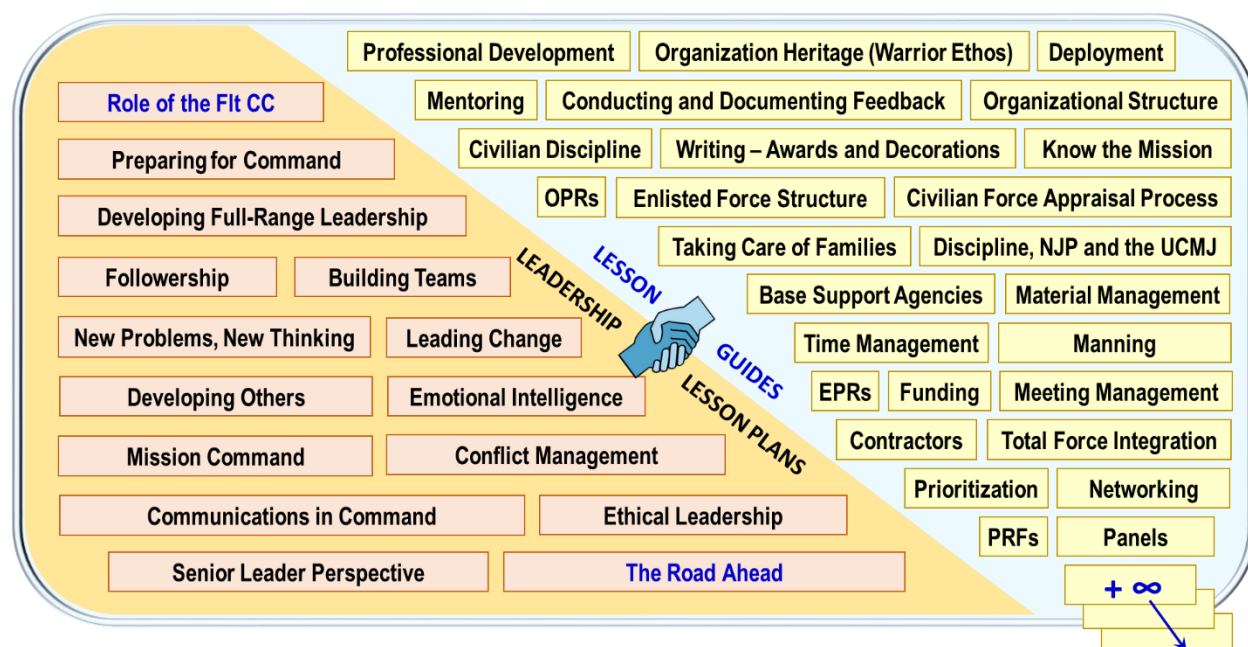


Figure 2.
Lesson Vault.

Leadership Lessons

Air University has developed 15 leadership-focused lessons for your use (Table 1). If you use the AU-provided materials, four **Core Lessons** are critical. These lessons provide the structure required to execute the **Recommended Lessons**. The remaining lessons support other facets of leadership development.

Full lesson plans are available online at *The Flight Commander's Edge* website.

AU-Provided Leadership Lessons	
Core Lessons	
The Role of the Flight Commander (First lesson)	Senior Leader Perspective (Second-to-last lesson)
Preparing for Command (Second lesson)	The Road Ahead (Last lesson)
Recommended Lessons	
Emotional Intelligence	Mission Command in Leadership
Followership	Building and Busting Teams
New Problems, New Thinking	Leading Change
Developing Full-Range Leadership	Conflict Management
Ethical Leadership	Developing Others
Communications in Command	

Table 1.
AU-Provided Leadership Lessons.

ACTION: To design your course, review the lesson plans from *The Flight Commander's Edge* website, then, select the lessons you want to include in your course.

As you do so, ensure you consider MAJCOM/NAF/Wing guidance and ascertain the intended focus for the course (lesson topic priority, weight of effort, emphasis areas, etc.).

Remember, no two courses will look alike. You should select content tailored to your unit's specific needs.

Locally-Produced Materials

Course content developed at the wing-level (or below) is referred to as "locally-produced" content throughout this handbook. The Global College has identified several recommended topics and provided lesson guides to help you structure your course (see Table 2). Lesson guides serve to help presenters tailor their presentations to the appropriate level. Course directors can use these guides as they build their courses, and mentors can use them to help identify linkages between leadership lessons and the locally-produced content.

ACTION: To design your course, review the lesson guides from *The Flight Commander's Edge* website, then coordinate with the appropriate base agency to prepare a presentation and commit to providing a presenter for your course.

Sample Lesson Guides (for Locally-Produced Content)	
Organizational Structure and the Mission	Civilian Appraisals
Organizational Heritage	Promotion Recommendation Forms
Civilian Force Structure	Awards and Decorations
Enlisted Force Structure	Discipline, NJP, and the UCMJ
The Total Force	Base Support Agencies
Taking Care of Families	Prioritization
Professional Development	Manning

Table 2.
AU-Provided Lesson Guides for Locally Produced Lessons.

Course Templates

Both leadership lessons and locally-produced materials may be added to an existing flight commander course or be used with one of four structured FCLC templates (see Table 3). These templates integrate Air University leadership lessons with your own local content in a logical manner.

2-day FCLC	3-day FCLC	4-day FCLC	5-day FCLC
Leadership-only course. A leadership-focused course with no local content. (Not recommended.)	Recommended minimum length. Allows inclusion of some/all leadership lessons and some local content.	Recommended classroom-only maximum. Allows inclusion of all leadership content and substantial local content.	Recommended for classroom / off-site activity events. Allows robust leadership presentation, local content, and off-site teambuilding.
Up to 16 hours of instruction.	Up to 24 hours of instruction	Up to 32 hours of instruction	Up to 40 hours of instruction

Table 3.
FCLC Templates Overview.

ACTION: Once you have determined the number of lessons in your course, negotiate the amount of time required for presentation with your leadership. Adjust your course content accordingly. After deciding on a course length, select an appropriate template from Appendix C to create your course timeline.

Detailed templates are provided in Appendix C.

Part 3: Preparing a Flight Commander Leadership Course

Once you have selected your course content (leadership and locally-produced) and developed your course timeline, you are ready to begin preparing for course presentation.

Course preparation consists of several discrete, but interrelated tasks:

- scheduling courses
- selecting and preparing leadership lesson facilitators
- selecting and preparing locally-produced content presenters
- preparing squadron commanders (or equivalents)
- preparing participants
- preparing the classroom

We have provided some ideas on what you should do in each of these areas to ready your course for presentation. See the **Facilitator Resources** section of *The Flight Commander's Edge* website for more tips on how to develop a dynamic and engaging course.

Scheduling Your Courses

How often should your course be presented? Twice a year? Once a quarter? Monthly? Only you and your organization's leadership can determine what will work best for your unit.

To determine how many, and when to offer, courses each year, consider the following:

- **Target Audience:** How many flight commanders do you need to orient?
- **Course Size:** What is your target course size? Most leadership lessons are designed for small group discussions. Design for 16-20 students to maximize conversation and engagement.
- **Facilitator/Presenter Schedules:** When will your desired facilitators/presenters be available?
- **Senior Leader Availability:** When will senior leaders be available for perspective sessions or panel discussions?
- **Resource Availability:** Are the facilities and equipment available during your target periods?
- **Time for Marketing:** How long will you advertise each course? What is your "registration" period?

Selecting and Preparing Your Leadership Lesson Facilitators

The most important course director task is selecting and preparing facilitators for leadership lessons. While the AU-provided leadership lessons are designed to be presented by individuals with minimal classroom training experience, it is important to select facilitators that are highly dynamic and can drive conversation around course topics.

Consider the following when selecting your leadership lesson facilitators:

- **Flight Commander Experience:** Most leadership lessons are designed for presentation by individuals with previous flight commander experience. Completion of SOS or ACSC in-residence is highly recommended, but not required.
- **Expertise:** Some lessons require specific expertise. Review the “Recommended Facilitator Qualifications” section of each lesson plan to ensure your facilitators have the required background.
- **Classroom Presence and Facilitator Skills:** Leading a discussion requires a good classroom presence and facilitator skills. Do not select a facilitator without watching how well they lead large and small group discussions in the classroom environment.

After selecting your leadership lesson facilitators, ensure they have plenty of time to prepare with the lesson plan and other lesson materials. Specific instructions for each lesson are included in the “Preparing the Facilitator” section of each lesson plan.

The **Facilitator Resources** section of *The Flight Commander's Edge* website provides tips for facilitators to become more comfortable with lesson techniques and content.

Selecting and Preparing Locally-Produced Content Presenters

While leadership lessons are critical to a successful FCLC, locally-produced content is what tailors a course to its participants. Locally-produced content presenters come from wing leadership, the staff, or base agencies and provide a subject matter expert perspective on a key local topic.

These presenters are responsible for explaining “how things work” at your unit, vice the general leadership content presented by leadership lesson facilitators.

Consider the following when selecting your local content presenters:

- **Expertise:** Some lessons require specific expertise. Review the “Recommended Presenter Qualifications” section of each lesson guide to ensure your presenters have the required background.
- **Classroom Presence:** More often than not, local content will be presented in the form of a briefing. How “good” of a briefer is the presenter? Do not select a presenter with poor classroom presence. The ability to engage and entertain the audience during a briefing-style presentation is critical to attention and learning.

After selecting your local content presenters, ensure they have plenty of time to prepare with the lesson plan and other lesson materials. Provide each presenter with an appropriate guide from the **Lesson Guide** section of *The Flight Commander's Edge* website to guide presentation development and ensure integration with other FCLC content.

Preparing Your Squadron Commanders (or Equivalents)

Squadron commanders (or their equivalents) are critical to a successful FCLC. Commanders:

- select flight commanders to attend the course;
- receive the **Unit Commander's Discussion Guide** from the course director;
- set flight commander expectations and goals during a pre-course discussion;
- 1. review and discuss Professional Development Plans with flight commanders AFTER the course is complete; and
- present course graduation certificates.

Commanders must be aware of these responsibilities before they nominate participants for the program.

Before the course, engagement between the squadron commander and flight commander should focus on mission and vision, expectations, goals, and arming the participant with the requisite knowledge to fully engage and get the most from the suite of leadership lessons. The discussion guides provided by the course director are designed to facilitate those discussions.

A post-course engagement between the squadron commander and flight commander should focus on an action plan for implementing their Professional Development Plan (PDP) to include establishing timelines and achieving goals. Additionally, this provides an opportunity for the squadron commander to present a course completion certificate to the flight commander.

The course director should provide instructions for both pre- and post-course engagement. Example instructions can be found in the **Facilitator Resources** section of *The Flight Commander's Edge* website in the "Pre- and Post-Course Discussion Guides" area.

Preparing Your Participants

The final step in preparing for a course is, of course, preparing your participants. At least one week before a course, participants should:

- Receive a welcome letter containing course timeline, dress expectations, and pre-work requirements (including the **Flight Commander Discussion Guide**).
- Conduct the pre-course discussion with their squadron commander.

Preparing the Classroom

Unlike most unit-level courses, the FCLC is specifically designed for experiential (active) learning. Participants need space to engage and collaborate in both small and large groups throughout the course. As such, avoid an auditorium or briefing room-like environment, as it is likely to be inadequate. The class needs to be able to get up and move around.

An FCLC classroom at a minimum should include:

- **Space for small group engagement and discussion** (separate tables). Groups should be restricted to four (4) or five (5) participants, and class size should not exceed 20 students to maximize participation and learning.
- **White boards or easels with butcher-block paper** – one per group.
- **Projection capability with audio.**

Additionally, some lessons require internet connectivity via either the NIPRNET or commercial internet. Videos used in leadership lessons require YouTube access.

All classroom technology should be prepared and checked before the start of a class. Additionally, to minimize delays in presentation, all slide materials should be pre-loaded to the appropriate machine.

Part 4: To Learn More

The Course Director's Handbook, lesson plans, and lesson guides are the start of your leadership development journey. Be bold. Develop great programs that meet your organizations' needs. And, of course, if you have questions, please don't hesitate to contact us:

Email: flightcommandersedge@us.af.mil


Website: <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/GCPME/Flight-Commanders-Edge/>

Good luck!


The Flight Commander's Edge Team

Appendix A: Program Guidance

The excerpt below, from the former Secretary and Chief of Staff's guidance for revitalizing the squadron, provides the original context and direction for this program.



**THE SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE
CHIEF OF STAFF, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON DC**



JUN 1 2018

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL COMMANDERS AND HAF/SAF STAFF

SUBJECT: Squadron Revitalization Implementation Plan

The health of our squadrons is fundamental to the Air Force priority of restoring readiness. Over the past year, a team of Airmen led by Brig Gen "S. L." Davis (stephen.l.davis12.mil@mail.mil), collected and analyzed feedback from Airmen across the Air Force. Their report, *Improving Air Force Squadrons – Recommendations for Vitality*, identified and confirmed multiple areas for revision or improvement and forms the basis for this implementation plan. The full report can be referenced at (<https://cs2.eis.af.mil/sites/11748/default.aspx>) (Hyperlink: [Focus Area Reports](#)).

At the same time, Secretary of Defense James Mattis published the National Defense Strategy (NDS) entitled, *Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge*. The strategy outlines our return to an era of great power competition compelling us to increase both lethality and readiness to compete, deter, and win. The unclassified portion of the strategy can be reviewed at (<https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>).

"Today's complex security environment is defined by rapid technological change, challenges from adversaries in every operating domain, and the impact on current readiness from the longest continuous stretch of armed conflict in our Nation's history. In this environment, there can be no complacency – we must make difficult choices and prioritize what is most important to field a lethal, resilient, and rapidly adapting joint force. America's military has no preordained right to victory on the battlefield."

Secretary of Defense James
Mattis
2018 National Defense
Strategy

Restoring Air Force readiness is vital to our national strategy. At the heart of our readiness is the fundamental fighting organization of the Air Force – the squadron. It is in the squadron (and in civilian-led squadron like organizations) where the missions of the Air Force succeed or fail. It is where lethality and readiness are generated, aligned, and sustained. It is where Airmen first arrive fresh out of tech school or training pipelines proudly displaying new Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC) badges. It is where the command team consisting of a commander, a senior NCO, and a volunteer lead spouse will have the most profound impact on our most precious resource – our Airmen.

(continued on next page)

This implementation plan is organized around three interdependent and mutually supporting lines of effort:

1. Focus on the Mission
2. Strengthen Squadron Leadership and Culture
3. Take Care of Airmen and Families

Of all of our duties as leaders, ensuring our Airmen are properly organized, trained, and equipped to fight and win ... and taking care of their families so they can take care of the mission ... is a moral obligation. Moving out smartly to execute the actions in this implementation plan is both commander and supporting staff business. In the weeks and months ahead, Brig Gen Chance Saltzman (bradley.c.saltzman.mil@mail.mil) will serve as our principal representative on the Air Staff responsible for coordination, cross-talk, measurement, and timely reporting to drive us forward to revitalize squadrons and squadron-like organizations across our Air Force.

Our specific guidance comes from page 5.

Strengthen Squadron Leadership and Culture

Strengthening the culture of a squadron begins by acknowledging that commanders set the standards for the unit and re-enforce them every day with actions, words, and deeds. While all the actions in this implementation plan will contribute to increased lethality and readiness, none will have a more profound impact on successful mission accomplishment than the selection of and development of an inspiring leadership team. The following actions are designed to improve how we select and prepare our most talented Airmen to become inspiring leaders in our most essential level of combat command – the squadron.

Establish Flight Commander Courses

Intent: Commanding a flight is the first level of command and an excellent opportunity for Wing, Group, and Squadron Commanders to assess potential of our most talented leaders and begin targeted development as part of an overall talent management effort. The path to exceptional Squadron Commanders begins by investing in our Flight Commanders.

Tasks: Wing Commanders will establish Flight Commander/leader courses focused on key skills needed to succeed in this first essential level of leadership. AETC will offer course content options but Wing Commanders will have ownership of the curriculum. SAF/IG and MAJCOM/IGs will include visits to these courses during staff assistance visits to ensure best practices are widely shared across active, guard, reserve, and civilian organizations.

The full-text of this letter is available on *The Flight Commander's Edge* website.

Appendix B: The Experiential Learning Model

The key to effective learning in the context of the FCLC leadership lessons is experiential learning. Shown in Figure 4, the **Experiential Learning Model (ELM)**, as adapted from Kolb¹, is the process of deriving meaning from direct experience. (It is more specifically defined as “learning through doing.”² This model, in its original form, is used successfully in the Squadron Officer School resident program curriculum, and in its adapted form (as shown below), in the Army Management Staff College and the Command and General Staff College resident programs.³

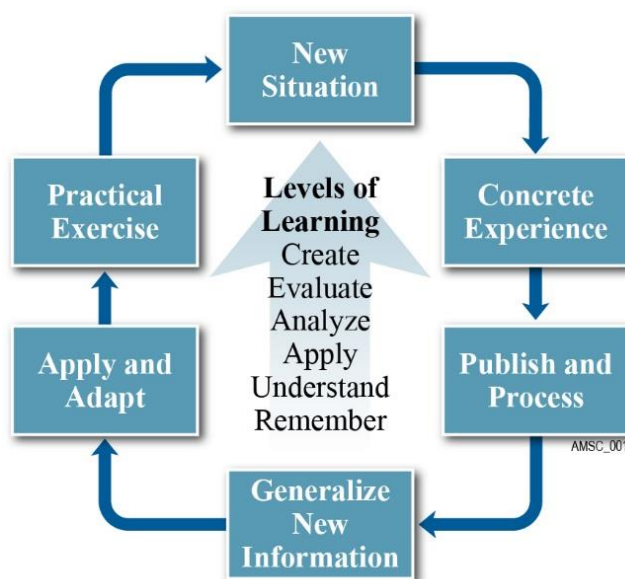


Figure 4. The Experiential Learning Model.

The experiential model focuses on continuous learning gained through personal and environmental experiences. In FCLC leadership lessons, we introduce students to *new situations* that are anchored to their previous experiences. From these new situations, we develop *concrete experiences* directly related to course content, desired learning objectives, and the types of situations they are likely to encounter in their new roles. Typically presented together in the form of a lesson introduction, these experiences create context and set the stage for future learning.

Following these stage-setting experiences, students *publish and process* results in much the same way as they would in an After-Action Review following a critical event or activity. Dialogue is key, and feedback is gained from peers and facilitators to identify and internalize lessons learned. It is at this point where learning begins.

¹ Kolb, D (1984). *Experiential Learning as the Science of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall

² Felicia, Patrick (2011). [Handbook of Research on Improving Learning and Motivation](#). p. 1003.

³ ELM is also the basis for U.S. Army Foundations of Instruction. *The Army University* “Common Faculty Development Instructor Course” pp. 53-57, n.d.

After processing, students *generalize new information* through dialogue or lecture. A Socratic (discussion-based) *or* traditional classroom (sometimes called “platform instruction”) approach is used to introduce doctrine, principles, and related topics that have not already been addressed through prior activities. This new information readies the students for application.

In application, students address how to *apply* the new knowledge in practice and *adapt* it to resolve ill-structured problems relevant to their own workplaces. Here, students (a) begin to externalize the new knowledge, developing an understanding of how it relates to their jobs, roles, and missions; and (b) start to think about creative ways to apply the new knowledge in activities and other situations.

The experiential cycle is capped with a *practical exercise* that helps the student transition the knowledge or skill from the classroom back into the real world where it will be used on the job. In FCLC lessons, this practical exercise is a reflective self-assessment of skills and behaviors required of a flight commander and the development of a comprehensive *Professional Development Plan* which will be used to guide future learning.

Appendix C: Sample Course Templates

Leadership and Local lessons may be added to an existing flight commander course or be used with one of four structured FCLC templates. These templates are designed to integrate Air University's leadership lessons with your own local lessons in a logical manner.

You may select a template based on how much time is allocated for your course. Two-, three-, four-, and five-day templates are provided for you to adapt to meet your unique requirements.

The majority of the lessons identified below are "leadership lessons" (soft skills); however, it is recommended that a course consist of a balance between leadership content and locally-relevant techniques and practical knowledge (hard skills) required of flight level leaders.

Two-Day Template

The two-day template is recommended for organizations that

- have minimum time for flight commander development,
- only want to present a leadership-based course, or
- have minimal local content to cover

15 (recommended) or 16 (maximum) hours of instruction is recommended using 50- and 70-minute FCLC lessons outlined in this document.

Time	Day 1	Day 2
Block 1	Admin/Icebreaker	<i>Local Content</i>
Block 2	The Role of the Flight Commander*	Mission Command in Leadership
Block 3	Preparing for Command*	Building and Busting Teams
Lunch	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Lunch</i>
Block 4	Emotional Intelligence	Leading Change
Block 5	<i>Local Content</i>	Developing Others
Block 6	Developing Full-Range Leadership	Senior Leader Perspective*
Block 7	<i>Local Content</i>	The Road Ahead*
Recap	<i>Daily Recap</i>	(open)

* Bookend Lesson

Three-Day Template

The three-day template is the recommended FCLC classroom minimum. This template allows inclusion of FCLC recommended leadership lessons and locally-produced materials.

15 (minimum) to 24 (maximum) hours of instruction using 25-, 50-, and 70-minute lesson blocks.

Time	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
Block 1	Admin/Icebreaker	<i>Local content</i>	Developing Others
Block 2	The Role of the Flight Commander*	Developing Full-Range Leadership	<i>Local content</i>
Block 3	Preparing for Command*	<i>Local content</i>	Conflict Management
Block 4	<i>Local content</i>	Mission Command in Leadership	Leading Change
Lunch	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Lunch</i>
Block 5	<i>Local content or peer networking</i>	<i>Local content or peer networking</i>	<i>Local content or peer networking</i>
Block 6	Emotional Intelligence	Building and Busting Teams	<i>Local content</i>
Block 7	<i>Local content</i>	<i>Local content</i>	Senior-Leader Perspective*
Block 8	Followership	Ethical Leadership	The Road Ahead*
Recap	Daily Recap	Daily Recap	(open)

* Bookend Lesson

Four-Day Template

The four-day template is the recommended FCLC classroom maximum. This template allows inclusion of FCLC recommended leadership lessons and substantial locally-produced materials.

15 (minimum) to 32 (maximum) hours of instruction using 25-, 50-, or 70-minute lesson blocks.

Time	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
Block 1	Admin/Icebreaker	<i>Local content</i>	<i>Local content</i>	<i>Local content</i>
Block 2	The Role of the Flight Commander*	Followership	Communications in Command	Leading Change
Block 3	Preparing for Command*	<i>Local content</i>	<i>Local content</i>	<i>Local content</i>
Block 4	<i>Local content</i>	New Problems, New Thinking	Building and Busting Teams	Developing Others
Lunch	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Lunch</i>
Block 5	Local content or peer networking	Local content or peer networking	Local content or peer networking	Local content or peer networking
Block 6	<i>Local content</i>	Developing Full-Range Leadership	Mission Command in Leadership	Senior Leader Perspective*
Block 7	Emotional Intelligence	<i>Local content</i>	<i>Local content</i>	The Road Ahead*
Block 8	<i>Local content</i>	Ethical Leadership	Conflict Management	(open)
Recap	Daily Recap	Daily Recap	Daily Recap	(open)

* Bookend Lesson

Five-Day Template

The five-day template is based on the four-day FCLC classroom maximum but includes substantial time for a flight commander teambuilding activity. This is shown on Day 5 of the course but could be relocated to Days 2 through 4.

This template allows inclusion of FCLC recommended leadership lessons and substantial locally-produced materials.

15 (minimum) to 40 (maximum) hours instruction using 25-, 50-, or 70-minute lesson blocks and an extended-time teambuilding activity.

Time	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Block 1	Admin/Icebreaker	<i>Local content</i>	<i>Local content</i>	<i>Local content</i>	<i>Local content</i>
Block 2	The Role of the Flight Commander*	New Problems, New Thinking	Communications in Command	Conflict Management	Senior Leader Perspective*
Block 3	Preparing for Command*	<i>Local content</i>	<i>Local content</i>	<i>Local content</i>	<i>Teambuilding activity</i>
Block 4	<i>Local content</i>	Followership	Building and Busting Teams	Leading Change	(cont.)
Lunch	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Lunch</i>	(cont.)
Block 5	Local content or peer networking	Local content or peer networking	Local content or peer networking	Local content or peer networking	(open)
Block 6	<i>Local content</i>	Developing Full-Range Leadership	Mission Command in Leadership	Developing Others	(open)
Block 7	Emotional Intelligence	<i>Local content</i>	<i>Local content</i>	<i>Local content</i>	(open)
Block 8	<i>Local content</i>	<i>Local content</i>	Ethical Leadership	The Road Ahead*	(open)
Recap	<i>Daily Recap</i>	<i>Daily Recap</i>	<i>Daily Recap</i>	<i>Daily Recap</i>	(open)

* Bookend Lesson

Recommended Team-building Activities:

- Class Picnic/Barbeque with senior-leader participation
- Project based (team problem solving activities)
- Service project (base or local community)
- Local industry tour (leadership or team focused)