

BACKGROUND PAPER  
ON  
THE FLIGHT COMMANDER'S EDGE

1. In 2018, the CSAF tasked AU to create course content options for wings to execute mission-specific Flight Commander Leadership Courses (hereinafter, FCLC) and formally highlight the roles and responsibilities of command as defined in Air Force Instruction 1-2, *Commander's Responsibilities* (CSAF Memo, 1 Jun 18). *The Flight Commander's Edge* (hereinafter, *FCE*) is a program established by the eSchool of Graduate Professional Military Education (hereinafter, eSchool) for this effort.
2. The eSchool, through *FCE*, provides a variety of tools and products which support local flight-level leadership course development. The use of eSchool-provided content is not required; however, wings have found it useful for quickly deploying local courses. Gen Goldfein personally promoted the program as a way for wing commanders to quickly provide quality, on-site development for first-level leaders.
3. The FCLC is a Wing Commander's program. The eSchool does not set nor mandate policy or guidance regarding the implementation or execution of these courses. Each wing determines how it will implement and allocate appropriate support for its own course. While there is no length requirement for the course, the eSchool recommended curriculum is designed for delivery over a minimum of two days. Wings are required to determine attendee requirements (grade, position, etc.) and course frequency.
4. Graduates of a FCLC should be equipped and motivated to strengthen their squadrons by leading, developing, managing, and communicating with competence and confidence. The eSchool has developed a Course Director Handbook, lesson plans, lesson guides, course templates, facilitator guidance, self-assessments, feedback forms, a multitude of exercises, handouts, and learning aids to support this goal. The eSchool-provided content is designed to (a) improve understanding of flight commander roles, duties, and responsibilities; (b) increase proficiency in key flight-level leadership skills and behaviors; and (c) orient flight commanders on unit policies, programs, plans, and procedures. Additionally, an online platform for collaboration between wing-level course developers is available to support the discussion of best practices and the sharing of content.
  - a. In eSchool-provided leadership lessons, participants review materials (videos, handouts, etc.), engage in guided discussion, complete exercises, and assess themselves on flight-level leadership behaviors.

b. Leadership lessons include:

*The Role of the Flight Commander*  
*Preparing for Command*  
*Emotional Intelligence*  
*Followership*  
*New Problems, New Thinking*  
*Developing Full-Range Leadership*  
*Communication in Command*  
*The Road Ahead (closing lesson)*

*Mission Command in Leadership*  
*Building Teams*  
*Leading Change*  
*Developing Others*  
*Conflict Management*  
*Ethical Leadership*  
*Senior Leader Perspective*

c. The eSchool also provides lesson guides which can be used by local units to develop key leadership-related content based on local policies and procedures, including:

*Organizational Structure*  
*Manning*  
*Civil Service Force Structure*  
*Total Force Integration*  
*Discipline, NJP, and the UCMJ*  
*Materiel Management*  
*Taking Care of Families*  
*Mentoring*  
*Officer Performance Reports*  
*Civilian Appraisals*  
*Promotion Recommendation Forms*  
*Prioritization*

*Organizational Heritage*  
*Funding*  
*Enlisted Force Structure*  
*Working with Contractors*  
*Base Support Agencies*  
*Deployment*  
*Professional Development*  
*Networking*  
*Enlisted Performance Reports*  
*Conducting/Documenting Feedback*  
*Awards and Decorations*  
*Time and Meeting Management*

5. Materials are delivered through Air University's Canvas Learning Management System (LMS). The Canvas LMS serves as an online community space which connects course directors across the force. Users are able to access AU-provided content and share locally-produced content with other wings and MAJCOMS. Currently (as of 1 Jun 20) FCE has 644 registered users spanning all MAJCOMS and 166 wings.

6. The community reaches leaders at all levels through a public web page, which contains multiple resources useful for leadership development. An eSchool-produced monthly newsletter (*The Leading Edge*), designed for flight-level leaders, and links to the AU-produced *Squadron Centered Learning* products are available on AFPIMS.

7. In June 2020, the eSchool conducted a review of FCE. Participant feedback was positive regarding the experiential (activity-based) design and lessons encouraging interaction with peers. Course Director feedback indicated some wings are using approximately 80% of materials provided by AU as-is, while supplementing with 20% local content. Additionally, multiple wings across 5 MAJCOMS have shared their version of course materials using the community system. A comprehensive lesson update is scheduled for 4Q20 with new lessons launching in 1Q21.