

# RESOURCE GUIDE 2018



HIGHER  
LEARNING  
COMMISSION

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**HLC'S RESOURCE GUIDE** is published each year in time for the annual conference. The next issue will be published in April 2019. For the most current information from HLC, visit [hlcommission.org](http://hlcommission.org).

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**HLC'S 2019 ANNUAL CONFERENCE**  
APRIL 5–9, ROADMAPS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

# PROCEDURES

## GUIDING VALUES

*The Higher Learning Commission's Criteria for Accreditation reflect a set of guiding values. HLC articulates these guiding values so as to offer a better understanding of the Criteria and the intentions that underlie them.*

The responsibility for assuring the quality of an institution rests first with the institution itself. Institutional accreditation assesses the capacity of an institution to assure its own quality and expects it to produce evidence that it does so.

Many of the Criteria for Accreditation should be understood in this light. HLC expects the governing board to ensure quality through its governance structures, with appropriate degrees of involvement and delegation. HLC emphasizes planning because planning is critical to sustaining quality. Assessment of student learning and focus on persistence and completion are ways in which the institution improves and thus assures the quality of its teaching and learning.

HLC expects that institutions have the standards, the processes, and the will for quality assurance in depth and throughout its educational offerings.

### **1 FOCUS ON STUDENT LEARNING**

For the purpose of accreditation, the Higher Learning Commission regards the teaching mission of any institution as primary. Institutions will have other missions, such as research, health care and public service, and these other missions may have a shaping and highly valuable effect on the education that the institution provides. In the accreditation process, these missions should be recognized and considered in relation to the teaching mission.

A focus on student learning encompasses every aspect of students' experience at an institution: how they are recruited and admitted; costs they are charged and how they are supported by financial aid; how well they are informed and guided before and through their work at the institution; the breadth, depth, currency and relevance of the learning they are offered; their education through cocurricular offerings; the effectiveness of their programs; and what happens to them after they leave the institution.

### **2 EDUCATION AS A PUBLIC PURPOSE**

Every educational institution serves a public purpose. Public or state-supported institutions make that assumption readily. Not-for-profit institutions receive their tax-exempt status on the basis of an assumption that they serve a public purpose. And although it may appear that a for-profit institution does not require a public purpose, because education is a public good its provision serves a public purpose and entails societal obligations. Furthermore, the provision of higher education requires a more complex standard of care than, for instance, the provision of dry cleaning services. What the students buy, with money, time and effort, is not merely a good, like a credential, but experiences that have the potential to transform lives, or to harm them. What institutions do constitutes a solemn responsibility for which they should hold themselves accountable.

### **3 EDUCATION FOR A DIVERSE, TECHNOLOGICAL, GLOBALLY CONNECTED WORLD**

A contemporary education must recognize contemporary circumstances: the diversity of U.S. society, the diversity of the world in which students live, and the centrality of technology and the global dynamic to life in the 21st century. More than ever, students should be prepared for lifelong learning and for the likelihood that no job or occupation will last a lifetime. Even for the most technical qualification, students need the civic learning and broader intellectual capabilities that underlie success in the workforce. HLC distinguishes higher education in part on the basis of its reach beyond narrow vocational training to a broader intellectual and social context.

### **4 A CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

Continuous improvement is the alternative to stagnation. Minimum standards are necessary but far from sufficient to achieve acceptable quality in higher education, and the strongest institutions will stay strong through ongoing aspiration. HLC includes improvement as one of two major strands in all its pathways, the other being assurance that member institutions meet the Criteria and the Federal Requirements.

A process of assessment is essential to continuous improvement, and therefore a commitment to assessment should be deeply embedded in an institution's activities. Assessment applies not only to student learning and educational outcomes but to an institution's approach to improvement of institutional effectiveness.

For student learning, a commitment to assessment would mean assessment at the program level that proceeds from clear goals, involves faculty at all points in the process, and analyzes the assessment results; it would also mean that the institution improves its programs or ancillary services or other operations on the basis of those analyses. Institutions committed to improvement review their programs regularly and seek external judgment, advice or benchmarks in their assessments. Because in recent years the issues of persistence and completion have become central to public concern about higher education, the current Criteria direct attention to them as possible indicators of quality and foci for improvement, without prescribing either the measures or outcomes.

Innovation is an aspect of improvement and essential in a time of rapid change and challenge; through its Criteria and processes HLC seeks to support innovation for improvement in all facets of institutional practice.

### **5 EVIDENCE-BASED INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING AND SELF-PRESENTATION**

Assessment and the processes an institution learns from should be well grounded in evidence. Statements of belief and intention have important roles in an institution's presentation of itself, but for the quality assurance function of accreditation, evidence is critical. Institutions should be able to select evidence based on their particular purposes and circumstances. At the same time, many of the Assumed Practices within the Criteria require certain specified evidence.

## **6 INTEGRITY, TRANSPARENCY, AND ETHICAL BEHAVIOR OR PRACTICE**

HLC understands integrity broadly, including wholeness and coherence at one end of the spectrum and ethical behavior at the other. Integrity means doing what the mission calls for and not doing what it does not call for; governance systems that are freely, independently and rigorously focused on the welfare of the institution and its students; scrupulous avoidance of misleading statements or practices; full disclosure of information to students before students make any commitment to the institution, even a commitment to receive more information; and clear, explicit requirements for ethical practice by all members of the institutional community in all its activities.

## **7 GOVERNANCE FOR THE WELL-BEING OF THE INSTITUTION**

The well-being of an institution requires that its governing board place that well-being above the interests of its own members and the interests of any other entity. Because HLC accredits the educational institution itself, and not the state system, religious organization, corporation, medical center or other entity that may own it, it holds the governing board of an institution accountable for the key aspects of the institution's operations. The governing board must have the independent authority for such accountability and must also hold itself independent of undue influence from individuals, be they donors, elected officials, supporters of athletics, shareholders, or others with personal or political interests.

Governance of a quality institution of higher education will include a significant role for faculty, in particular with regard to currency and sufficiency of the curriculum, expectations for student performance, qualifications of the instructional staff, and adequacy of resources for instructional support.

## **8 PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES TO ENSURE INSTITUTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY**

HLC does not privilege wealth. Students do expect, however, that an institution will be in operation for the duration of their degree programs. Therefore, HLC is obliged to seek information regarding an institution's sustainability and, to that end, wise management of its resources. HLC also watches for signs that an institution's financial challenges are eroding the quality of its programs to the point of endangering the institution's ability to meet the Criteria. Careful mid- and long-range planning must undergird an institution's budgetary and financial decisions.

## **9 MISSION-CENTERED EVALUATION**

HLC understands and values deeply the diversity of its institutions, which begins from the diversity of their missions. Accordingly, mission in some degree governs each of the Criteria. HLC holds many expectations for all institutions regardless of mission, but it expects that differences in mission will shape wide differences in how the expectations are addressed and met.

## **10 ACCREDITATION THROUGH PEER REVIEW**

Peer review is the defining characteristic of accreditation and essential for a judgment-based process in a highly complex field. But self-regulation can be met with public skepticism. Therefore, peer review for accreditation must (1) be collegial, in the sense of absolute openness in the relationship between an institution and the peer reviewers assigned to it as well as between the institution and HLC; (2) be firm in maintaining high standards, not mistaking leniency for kindness or inclusiveness; and (3) be cognizant of the dual role of peer reviewers in both assuring and advancing institutional quality.

# CRITERIA FOR ACCREDITATION AND ASSUMED PRACTICES

*The Criteria for Accreditation are the standards of quality by which HLC determines whether an institution merits accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation. The Criteria have been designed to seek evidence of continual improvement on the part of member institutions rather than to define minimum qualifications.*

*Foundational to the Criteria and their Core Components is a set of practices shared by institutions of higher education. Unlike the Criteria and Core Components, the Assumed Practices are (1) generally matters to be determined as facts, rather than matters requiring professional judgment, and (2) unlikely to vary by institutional mission or context.*

## DETERMINING WHETHER AN INSTITUTION MEETS THE CRITERIA

HLC reviews institutions against the Criteria and Core Components according to the evaluative framework described in HLC policy:

### **The institution meets the Core Component if:**

- a.** the Core Component is met without concerns, that is the institution meets or exceeds the expectations embodied in the Component; or
- b.** the Core Component is met with concerns, that is the institution demonstrates the characteristics expected by the Component, but performance in relation to some aspect of the Component must be improved.

The institution does not meet the Core Component if the institution fails to meet the Component in its entirety or is so deficient in one or more aspects of the Component that the Component is judged not to be met.

### **The institution meets the Criterion if:**

- a.** the Criterion is met without concerns, that is the institution meets or exceeds the expectations embodied in the Criterion; or
- b.** the Criterion is met with concerns, that is the institution demonstrates the characteristics expected by the Criterion, but performance in relation to some Core Components of the Criterion must be improved.

The Criterion is not met if the institution fails to meet the Criterion in its entirety or is so deficient in one or more Core Components of the Criterion that the Criterion is judged not to be met.

The institution meets the Criterion only if all Core Components are met. The institution must be judged to meet all five Criteria for Accreditation to merit accreditation.

The Commission will grant or reaffirm accreditation (with or without conditions or sanctions), deny accreditation, or withdraw accreditation based on the outcome of this evaluation.



### **FIND IT ONLINE**

[hlcommission.org/criteria](https://hlcommission.org/criteria)

# CRITERIA FOR ACCREDITATION POLICY NUMBER CRRT.B.10.010

## CRITERION 1. MISSION

The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

### Core Components

**1.A.** The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.

1. The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board.
2. The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.
3. The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission. (This sub-component may be addressed by reference to the response to Criterion 5.C.1.)

**1.B.** The mission is articulated publicly.

1. The institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.
2. The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application

of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, and religious or cultural purpose.

3. The mission document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.

**1.C.** The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.

1. The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.
2. The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

**1.D.** The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.

1. Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.
3. The institution engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.



## REVISING THE CRITERIA

HLC's Board of Trustees considers modifications to the Criteria for Accreditation and the Assumed Practices annually, usually with a first reading in February and a second reading in June. Every five years, HLC will also conduct a comprehensive review of the Criteria for Accreditation. HLC initiated this review process in February 2017. Based on internal analysis of team reports and interim monitoring and feedback from institutions and peer reviewers, HLC staff members have developed an alpha version of Criteria revisions, available at [hlcommission.org/criteria](http://hlcommission.org/criteria). Institutions and peer reviewers are encouraged to provide feedback on the proposed revisions. HLC staff will use this input to develop a beta version of the Criteria revisions, which will be submitted to HLC's Board in November 2018. HLC expects the revisions to go into effect in fall 2019.



## **CRITERION 2. INTEGRITY: ETHICAL AND RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT**

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

### **Core Components**

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

## **CRITERION 3. TEACHING AND LEARNING: QUALITY, RESOURCES, AND SUPPORT**

The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

### **Core Components**

- 3.A.** The institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education.
1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded.
  2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for its undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs.
  3. The institution's program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality).
- 3.B.** The institution demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs.
1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution.
  2. The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.
  3. Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.
  4. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work.

5. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their programs and the institution's mission.

**3.C.** The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.

1. The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both the classroom and the non-classroom roles of faculty, including oversight of the curriculum and expectations for student performance; establishment of academic credentials for instructional staff; involvement in assessment of student learning.
2. All instructors are appropriately qualified, including those in dual credit, contractual, and consortial programs.
3. Instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.
4. The institution has processes and resources for assuring that instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles; it supports their professional development.
5. Instructors are accessible for student inquiry.
6. Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising, and co-curricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported in their professional development.

**3.D.** The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.

1. The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.
2. The institution provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.
3. The institution provides academic advising suited to its programs and the needs of its students.
4. The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (technological infrastructure, scientific laboratories,

libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites, museum collections, as appropriate to the institution's offerings).

5. The institution provides to students guidance in the effective use of research and information resources.

**3.E.** The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.

1. Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.
2. The institution demonstrates any claims it makes about contributions to its students' educational experience by virtue of aspects of its mission, such as research, community engagement, service learning, religious or spiritual purpose, and economic development.

#### **CRITERION 4. TEACHING AND LEARNING: EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT**

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

##### **Core Components**

**4.A.** The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It assures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.

5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and Americorps).

**4.B.** The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

1. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.
2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.
3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

**4.C.** The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion that are ambitious but attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations, and educational offerings.
2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and completion of its programs.
3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.

4. The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)

## **CRITERION 5. RESOURCES, PLANNING, AND INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS**

The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

### **Core Components**

**5.A.** The institution's resource base supports its current educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

1. The institution has the fiscal and human resources and physical and technological infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.
2. The institution's resource allocation process ensures that its educational purposes are not adversely affected by elective resource allocations to other areas or disbursement of revenue to a superordinate entity.
3. The goals incorporated into mission statements or elaborations of mission statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources, and opportunities.
4. The institution's staff in all areas are appropriately qualified and trained.
5. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring expense.

**5.B.** The institution's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.

1. The governing board is knowledgeable about the institution; it provides oversight of the institution's financial and academic policies and practices and meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.

2. The institution has and employs policies and procedures to engage its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students—in the institution’s governance.
3. Administration, faculty, staff, and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.

**5.C.** The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.

1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities.
2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.
3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity. Institutional plans anticipate the possible impact of fluctuations in the institution’s sources of revenue, such as enrollment, the economy, and state support.
5. Institutional planning anticipates emerging factors, such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.

**5.D.** The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

1. The institution develops and documents evidence of performance in its operations.
2. The institution learns from its operational experience and applies that learning to improve its institutional effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability, overall and in its component parts.

**CRITERIA TERMINOLOGY**

There are a few words and phrases in the Criteria that require additional clarification—seemingly simple language that, in practice, may be used in different ways by different member institutions. This glossary explains how these words are used within the Criteria. Its intent is not to prescribe how institutions must use a particular word or phrase locally, but rather to offer a means to ensure a consistent reading of the meaning and expectations of the Criteria.

**Auxiliary**

Auxiliary denotes activities and services related to but not intrinsic to educational functions: dining services, student housing, faculty or staff housing, intercollegiate athletics, student stores, a Public Radio station, etc. In many institutions auxiliary simultaneously denotes a segregated budget and dedicated revenues.

**Assessment and Evaluation**

Assessment and evaluation are used as ordinary language synonyms. When a narrower referent is intended, the terms are modified, as in “assessment of student learning” or “evaluation of academic services.”

**Control**

Control as used in the Criteria refers to the institution’s status as a public, private not-for-profit, or private for-profit institution, and in the latter instances, to the institution’s ownership and the board’s power to direct its affairs.

**Dual Credit**

Dual credit refers to courses taught to high school students for which the students receive both high school credit and college credit. These courses or programs are offered under a variety of names; the Criteria on “dual credit” apply to all of them as they involve the accredited institution’s responsibility for the quality of its offerings.

**Faculty and Instructors**

Faculty and instructors refer to all those an institution employs or assigns to teach students. Faculty is used to refer to the group rather than to each individual instructional staff member, typically to distinguish faculty from administration.

**Goals and Outcomes**

Goals and outcomes are used inconsistently by member institutions in the context of assessment of student learning, to the extent that one institution’s goal may be another’s outcome and vice versa. When they use either term, the Criteria indicate through context whether the term refers to the learning intended or to how much students actually learn.

**Public**

Public in phrases such as “makes available to the public” or “states publicly” refers to people in general, including current and potential students. In phrases such as “the public good,” the Criteria refer to public, as opposed to private, good. The modifier public as used to describe governing board members is defined within the statement requiring such members.

## Wherever and However Delivered

Wherever and however delivered is intended to encompass all modes of delivery and all locations, modalities and venues, including but not limited to the main campus, additional locations, distance delivery, dual credit, and contractual or consortial arrangements.

## ASSUMED PRACTICES POLICY NUMBER CRRT.B.10.020

Foundational to the Criteria and Core Components is a set of practices shared by institutions of higher education in the United States. Unlike the Criteria and Core Components, these Assumed Practices are (1) generally matters to be determined as facts, rather than matters requiring professional judgment and (2) unlikely to vary by institutional mission or context.

### A. INTEGRITY: ETHICAL AND RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT

1. The institution has a conflict of interest policy that ensures that the governing board and the senior administrative personnel act in the best interest of the institution.
2. The institution has ethics policies for faculty and staff regarding conflict of interest, nepotism, recruitment and admissions, financial aid, privacy of personal information, and contracting.
3. The institution provides its students, administrators, faculty, and staff with policies and procedures informing them of their rights and responsibilities within the institution.
4. The institution provides clear information regarding its procedures for receiving complaints and grievances from students and other constituencies, responds to them in a timely manner, and analyzes them to improve its processes.
5. The institution makes readily available to students and to the general public clear and complete information including:
  - a. statements of mission, vision, and values
  - b. full descriptions of the requirements for its programs, including all pre-requisite courses
  - c. requirements for admission both to the institution and to particular programs or majors
  - d. policies on acceptance of transfer credit, including how credit is applied to degree requirements. (Except for courses articulated through transfer policies or institutional agreements, the institution makes no promises to prospective students regarding the acceptance of credit awarded by examination, credit for prior learning, or credit for transfer until an evaluation has been conducted.)
  - e. all student costs, including tuition, fees, training, and incidentals; its financial aid policies, practices, and requirements; and its policy on refunds
  - f. policies regarding academic good standing, probation, and dismissal; residency or enrollment requirements (if any)
  - g. a full list of its instructors and their academic credentials
  - h. its relationship with any parent organization (corporation, hospital, or church, or other entity that owns the institution) and any external providers of its instruction.
6. The institution assures that all data it makes public are accurate and complete, including those reporting on student achievement of learning and student persistence, retention, and completion.
7. The institution portrays clearly and accurately to the public its current status with the Higher Learning Commission and with specialized, national, and professional accreditation agencies.
  - a. An institution offering programs that require specialized accreditation or recognition by a state licensing board or other entity in order for its students to be certified or to sit for the licensing examination in states where its students reside either has the appropriate accreditation and recognition or discloses publicly and clearly the consequences to the students of the lack thereof. The institution makes clear to students the distinction between regional and specialized or program accreditation and the relationships between licensure and the various types of accreditation.

- b. An institution offering programs eligible for specialized accreditation at multiple locations discloses the accreditation status and recognition of the program by state licensing boards at each location.
  - c. An institution that provides a program that prepares students for a licensure, certification, or other qualifying examination publicly discloses its pass rate on that examination, unless such information is not available to the institution.
4. The governing board and its executive committee, if it has one, include some “public” members. Public members have no significant administrative position or any ownership interest in any of the following: the institution itself; a company that does substantial business with the institution; a company or organization with which the institution has a substantial partnership; a parent, ultimate parent, affiliate, or subsidiary corporation; an investment group or firm substantially involved with one of the above organizations. All publicly-elected members or members appointed by publicly-elected individuals or bodies (governors, elected legislative bodies) are public members.<sup>1</sup>
  5. The governing board has the authority to approve the annual budget and to engage and dismiss the chief executive officer.<sup>1</sup>
  6. The institution remains in compliance at all times with state laws including laws related to authorization of educational activities and consumer protection wherever it does business and state law applies.
  7. The institution documents outsourcing of all services in written agreements, including agreements with parent or affiliated organizations.
  8. The institution takes responsibility for the ethical and responsible behavior of its contractual partners in relation to actions taken on its behalf.

## **B. TEACHING AND LEARNING: QUALITY, RESOURCES, AND SUPPORT**

### 1. Programs, Courses, and Credits

- a. The institution conforms to commonly accepted minimum program length: 60 semester credits for associate’s degrees, 120 semester credits for bachelor’s degrees, and 30 semester credits beyond the bachelor’s for master’s degrees. Any variation from these minima must be explained and justified.
- b. The institution maintains structures or practices that ensure the coherence and quality of the programs for which it awards a degree. Typically institutions will require that at minimum 30 of the 120 credits earned for the bachelor’s degree and 15 of the 60 credits for the associate’s degree be credits earned at the institution itself, through arrangements with other accredited institutions, or through contractual relationships approved by the Commission. Any variation from the typical minima must be explained and justified.
- c. The institution’s policy and practice assure that at least 50% of courses applied to a graduate program are courses designed for graduate work, rather than undergraduate courses credited toward a graduate degree. (Cf. Criterion 3.A.1 and 2.)  
  
(An institution may allow well-prepared advanced students to substitute its graduate courses for required or elective courses in an undergraduate degree program and then subsequently count those same courses as fulfilling graduate requirements in a related graduate program that the institution offers. In “4+1” or “2+3” programs, at least 50% of the credits allocated for the master’s degree – usually 15 of 30 – must be for courses designed for graduate work.)
- d. The institution adheres to policies on student academic load per term that reflect reasonable expectations for successful learning and course completion.

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<sup>1</sup>Institutions operating under federal control and authorized by Congress are exempt from these requirements. These institutions must have a public board that includes representation by individuals who do not have a current or previous employment or other relationship with the federal government or any military entity. This public board has a significant role in setting policy, reviewing the institution’s finances, reviewing and approving major institutional priorities, and overseeing the academic programs of the institution.

- e. Courses that carry academic credit toward college-level credentials have content and rigor appropriate to higher education.
- f. The institution has a process for ensuring that all courses transferred and applied toward degree requirements demonstrate equivalence with its own courses required for that degree or are of equivalent rigor.
- g. The institution has a clear policy on the maximum allowable credit for prior learning as a reasonable proportion of the credits required to complete the student's program. Credit awarded for prior learning is documented, evaluated, and appropriate for the level of degree awarded. (Note that this requirement does not apply to courses transferred from other institutions.)
- h. The institution maintains a minimum requirement for general education for all of its undergraduate programs whether through a traditional practice of distributed curricula (15 semester credits for AAS degrees, 24 for AS or AA degrees, and 30 for bachelor's degrees) or through integrated, embedded, interdisciplinary, or other accepted models that demonstrate a minimum requirement equivalent to the distributed model. Any variation is explained and justified.

## 2. Faculty Roles and Qualifications

- a. Qualified faculty members are identified primarily by credentials, but other factors, including but not limited to equivalent experience, may be considered by the institution in determining whether a faculty member is qualified. Instructors (excluding for this requirement teaching assistants enrolled in a graduate program and supervised by faculty) possess an academic degree relevant to what they are teaching and at least one level above the level at which they teach, except in programs for terminal degrees or when equivalent experience is established. In terminal degree programs, faculty members possess the same level of degree. When faculty members are employed based on equivalent experience, the institution defines a minimum threshold of experience and an evaluation process that is used in the appointment process. Faculty teaching general education courses, or other non-occupational

courses, hold a master's degree or higher in the discipline or subfield. If a faculty member holds a master's degree or higher in a discipline or subfield other than that in which he or she is teaching, that faculty member should have completed a minimum of 18 graduate credit hours in the discipline or subfield in which they teach.

- b. Instructors teaching in graduate programs should hold the terminal degree determined by the discipline and have a record of research, scholarship or achievement appropriate for the graduate program.
- c. Instructors teaching at the doctoral level have a record of recognized scholarship, creative endeavor, or achievement in practice commensurate with doctoral expectations.
- d. Faculty participate substantially in:
  - a. oversight of the curriculum—its development and implementation, academic substance, currency, and relevance for internal and external constituencies;
  - b. assurance of consistency in the level and quality of instruction and in the expectations of student performance;
  - c. establishment of the academic qualifications for instructional personnel;
  - d. analysis of data and appropriate action on assessment of student learning and program completion.

## 3. Support Services

- a. Financial aid advising clearly and comprehensively reviews students' eligibility for financial assistance and assists students in a full understanding of their debt and its consequences.
- b. The institution maintains timely and accurate transcript and records services.

## C. TEACHING AND LEARNING: EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT

- 1. Instructors (excluding for this requirement teaching assistants enrolled in a graduate program and supervised by faculty) have the authority for

the assignment of grades. (This requirement allows for collective responsibility, as when a faculty committee has the authority to override a grade on appeal.)

2. The institution refrains from the transcription of credit from other institutions or providers that it will not apply to its own programs.
3. The institution has formal and current written agreements for managing any internships and clinical placements included in its programs.
4. A predominantly or solely single-purpose institution in fields that require licensure for practice is also accredited by or is actively in the process of applying to a recognized specialized accrediting agency for each field, if such agency exists.
5. Instructors communicate course requirements to students in writing and in a timely manner.
6. Institutional data on assessment of student learning are accurate and address the full range of students who enroll.
7. Institutional data on student retention, persistence, and completion are accurate and address the full range of students who enroll.

## **D. RESOURCES, PLANNING, AND INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS**

1. The institution is able to meet its current financial obligations.
2. The institution has a prepared budget for the current year and the capacity to compare it with budgets and actual results of previous years.
3. The institution has future financial projections addressing its long-term financial sustainability.
4. The institution maintains effective systems for collecting, analyzing, and using institutional information.
5. The institution undergoes an external audit by a certified public accountant or a public audit agency that reports financial statements on the institution separately from any other related entity or parent corporation. For private institutions the audit is annual; for public institutions it is at least every two years.<sup>2</sup>
6. The institution's administrative structure includes a chief executive officer, chief financial officer, and chief academic officer (titles may vary) with appropriate credentials and experience and sufficient focus on the institution to ensure appropriate leadership and oversight. (An institution may outsource its financial functions but must have the capacity to assure the effectiveness of that arrangement.)

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<sup>2</sup>Institutions under federal control are exempted provided that they have other reliable information to document the institution's fiscal resources and management.



# OBLIGATIONS OF AFFILIATION

## **POLICY NUMBER: INST.B.30.020**

While seeking and holding affiliation with the Commission, an institution voluntarily agrees to meet obligations set forth by the Commission as follows:

1. The institution participates in periodic evaluation through the structures and mechanisms set forth in Commission policies, submission of reports as requested by the Commission, filing of the Institutional Update, and any other requirements set forth in its policies.
2. The institution is candid, transparent, and forthcoming in its dealings with the Commission, including in its responses to any special inquiries or requests for information from the Commission. The institution agrees not to enter into any agreement that limits the nature or scope of its communications with the Commission or requires that a third party review and approve those communications prior to their transmission to the Commission.
3. The institution notifies the Commission of any condition or situation that has the potential to affect the institution's status with the Commission, such as a significant unanticipated reduction in program offerings or serious legal investigation. (A fuller list of such conditions or situations is included in the Commission's policy on special monitoring.)
4. The institution informs the Commission of its relationship with any related entity wherein institutional decision-making is controlled by that entity and of any changes in that relationship that may affect the institution's compliance with Commission accreditation requirements. (Definitions and process requirements are contained in the Commission's policy on institutions with related entities.)
5. The institution describes itself in identical terms to the Commission and to any other institutional accrediting body with which it holds or seeks affiliation with regard to purpose, governance, programs, locations, degrees, diplomas, certificates, personnel, finances, and constituents.
6. The institution notifies the Commission when it receives an adverse action from or has been placed on sanction by any other accrediting agency or if a state has issued a pending or final action that affects the institution's legal status or authority to grant degrees.
7. The institution assures its employees and students that it will consider fairly all complaints and third-party comments and not engage in retaliatory action against any who have submitted such information.
8. The institution accepts that the Commission will, in the interest of transparency to the public, publish outcomes from its accreditation process.
9. The institution portrays its accreditation status with the Commission clearly to the public, including the status of its branch campuses and related entities. The institution posts the electronic version of the Commission's Mark of Affiliation in at least one place on its Web site, linking users directly to the institution's status on the Commission's Web site.
10. The institution communicates to its constituencies and applicants any Public Disclosure Notice it receives from the Higher Learning Commission.
11. The institution maintains prominently on its Web site a telephone number that includes an option for both current students and the public to speak with a representative of the institution.
12. The institution submits timely payment of dues and fees and accepts the fact of surcharges for late payment.
13. The institution agrees to accept binding arbitration in the event of an action by the Commission's Board of Trustees that the institution disputes and is not able to resolve through the Commission's processes. This agreement follows procedures developed and published by the Commission. The institution also



### **FIND IT ONLINE**

[policy.hlcommission.org/obligations](https://policy.hlcommission.org/obligations)

agrees to grant immunity to the Commission from claims of civil liability related to judgments made by the Commission or its agents in the course of its work of accrediting institutions provided that it was acting in good faith and within the scope of its responsibilities.

14. The institution agrees that in the event it, or any third party with which the institution has a current or former contractual relationship, takes legal action against the Higher Learning Commission related to any accreditation action, and the institution or third party withdraws from that action or loses its case, to the extent allowed by state and tribal law the institution shall be responsible for all expenses, including but not limited to attorney, expert witness, and related fees, incurred by the Commission in defending the action.

#### **MEETING OBLIGATIONS OF AFFILIATION**

Institutions must remain in compliance with the Obligations of Affiliation at all times. The Commission shall determine when an institution is in violation of the Obligations of Affiliation. Commission staff, may at its discretion, make use of any means to determine whether the institution has violated an Obligation of Affiliation including, but not limited to, seeking written information from the institution or scheduling a peer reviewer or staff member to meet with one or more institutional representatives either on-campus or through other appropriate method.

#### **ADMINISTRATIVE PROBATION**

An institution that is determined by Commission staff or peer reviewers to have not met the Obligations of Affiliation shall be placed on Administrative Probation by the Commission's President for a period not to exceed ninety days. During this time the institution will be expected to remedy the situation that led to the imposition of Administrative Probation. The Commission President will notify the institution of the imposition of the Administrative Probation and the conditions for its removal.

If an institution fails to remedy the situation that led to Administrative Probation by the end of the ninety-day period, the Commission President shall take a recommendation concerning the institution to the Commission's Board of Trustees. That recommendation may be for the application of a sanction or the withdrawal of accreditation, in accordance with Commission policies and procedures.

#### **DISCLOSURE OF ADMINISTRATIVE PROBATION**

Administrative probation is noted on an institution's Statement of Affiliation Status along with the reason for the Administrative Probation.



# PATHWAYS FOR REAFFIRMATION OF ACCREDITATION

*HLC has three pathways for reaffirmation of accreditation: Standard, AQIP and Open. In addition to the regular monitoring that occurs through HLC's Institutional Update, substantive change requests, interim monitoring and other processes, institutions on each pathway complete reviews to ensure they continue to meet the Criteria for Accreditation and pursue institutional improvement.*

## EVALUATING PATHWAYS

HLC introduced the Standard and Open Pathways in 2012, transitioning institutions from PEAQ (Program to Enhance Academic Quality) to the pathways model over the course of three years. Between 2012 and 2015, the AQIP Pathway was also restructured from a seven- to eight-year cycle, and several of its processes were significantly revised. With multiple years of implementation now complete, HLC has conducted an evaluation to determine if HLC has met the goals it set out to attain with the creation of these pathways. The evaluation includes analysis of team reports, surveys of institutions and peer reviewers, and other sources of data. Findings will be shared later in the year.

## STANDARD PATHWAY

The Standard Pathway follows a 10-year cycle. Quality assurance and institutional improvement are integrated into comprehensive evaluations conducted during the cycle, as well as through interim monitoring, as required.

## COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATIONS

Comprehensive evaluations are conducted twice in the Standard Pathway, once in Year 4 and again in Year 10. The comprehensive evaluation includes an Assurance Review, a review of Federal Compliance Requirements, a student

opinion survey and an on-site visit by a team of HLC peer reviewers. The evaluation may also include a multi-campus review, if applicable.

The institution submits an Assurance Filing that demonstrates the institution is in compliance with HLC's Criteria for Accreditation and has pursued institutional improvement efforts. If a previous evaluation identified an area of the institution as needing improvement, the Assurance Argument and Evidence File should specifically address the institution's response to those concerns.

Both comprehensive evaluations follow the same general process, but the Year 10 evaluation leads to an action regarding the reaffirmation of the institution's accreditation and a determination regarding its pathway eligibility.

Most Year 4 evaluations do not include such action, but instead determine if follow-up monitoring is necessary. An exception to this rule is made in the case of institutions that are undergoing their first comprehensive evaluation following initial accreditation or removal of Probation. In these cases, reaffirmation of accreditation will be considered as part of the Year 4 comprehensive evaluation.

If reaffirmation is granted, the institution moves to Year 5 of the Standard Pathway cycle (a change of pathway is not an outcome of a Year 4 review).

## INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES

### Q&A Webinar

During these one-hour webinars, participants may ask questions about any topic related to the Standard Pathway, including the Assurance System, embedded improvement, monitoring, and so forth. This is not a formal presentation and attendees are encouraged to fully participate in an



### FIND IT ONLINE

[hlcommission.org/standard](http://hlcommission.org/standard)

open exchange. Representatives from all institutions on the Standard Pathway are welcome to participate. Upcoming webinars are listed at [hlcommission.org/calendar](https://hlcommission.org/calendar).

### **Standard Pathway Seminars**

Institutions that are within two years of a comprehensive evaluation are invited to attend a one-day, in-person seminar on addressing improvement in the Assurance Argument. At the seminar, institutional teams develop strategies to demonstrate improvement within the Criteria for Accreditation. Attendees receive assistance in formulating improvement plans and feedback on plans that have been drafted. Upcoming seminars are listed at [hlcommission.org/calendar](https://hlcommission.org/calendar).

### **HLC Staff Liaison Improvement Plan Review**

HLC staff liaisons are available to review and provide feedback on an institution's improvement plan during the academic year preceding the comprehensive evaluation. The staff liaison's comments are intended to clarify expectations regarding the issues to be addressed within the Assurance Argument. For instance, an institution's HLC staff liaison may point out an area of interest the institution had missed in the plan.

### **Sample Assurance Arguments**

[hlcommission.org/assurance-samples](https://hlcommission.org/assurance-samples)

Institutions can access demonstration sites that present full Assurance Filings, with Assurance Arguments and Evidence Files. They are intended to help institutions become familiar with the Assurance System and provide examples of how evidence may be organized and linked in the Assurance Argument.

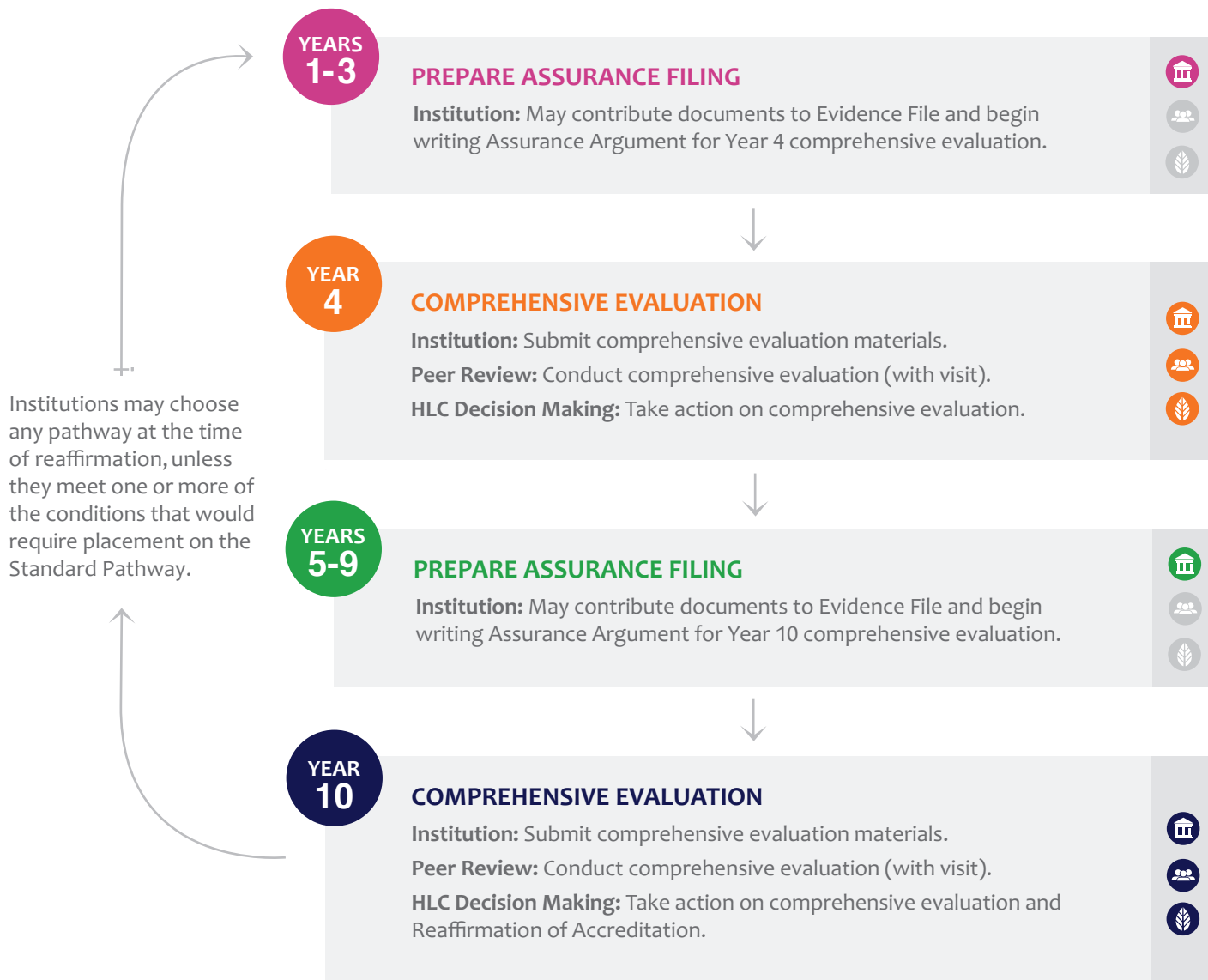
### **Assurance System Training Resources**

[hlcommission.org/assurance-system](https://hlcommission.org/assurance-system)

This page provides a general overview of accessing and using the Assurance System, as well as links to the user manual, training webinar and frequently asked questions.



# STANDARD PATHWAY 10-YEAR CYCLE



## AQIP PATHWAY

The AQIP Pathway is designed to assist institutions in achieving sustainable quality improvement while reaffirming their accredited status once in an eight-year cycle. In addition to the Criteria for Accreditation, institutions are reviewed against the six AQIP Categories: Helping Students Learn, Meeting Student and Other Key Stakeholder Needs, Valuing Employees, Planning and Leading, Knowledge Management and Resource Stewardship, and Quality Overview, which is focused on continuous quality improvement. These Categories provide a framework that institutions use to examine their key processes and analyze, understand and explore opportunities for improvement.

### ACTION PROJECTS

As part of the AQIP Pathway, institutions conduct multiple short-term projects that the institution believes will have the most impact on quality improvement. These Action Projects are identified, designed and initiated by each institution to suit its needs. Institutions are required to submit one Action Project for review annually. Institutions receive comments from peer reviewers subsequent to those filings through the Action Project Review.

### STRATEGY FORUMS

Institutions on the AQIP Pathway also attend Strategy Forums twice during an eight-year cycle. Institutions may attend a Strategy Forum either in Year 1 or 2 and then again either in Year 5 or 6 of the cycle. The Strategy Forum enables an institution to review the feedback gained through the Systems Appraisal reports or Comprehensive Quality Review to develop strategies for further progress in its quality improvement efforts. At least one Action Project should emerge from the Strategy Forum, along with the groundwork for several more.

### SYSTEMS PORTFOLIOS AND SYSTEMS APPRAISALS

In Year 3 and Year 7 of the pathway cycle, institutions submit a Systems Portfolio through the Assurance System that provides evidence on how the institution plans,

implements, reports and utilizes data for the AQIP Pathway Categories. These Categories derive from the traits and behaviors of high-performing institutions.

Peer reviewers conduct a Systems Appraisal in the Assurance System to review the Systems Portfolio and provide an institution feedback on its ongoing efforts to improve organizational performance.

The peer review team also screens evidence that the institution is meeting HLC's Criteria for Accreditation. This offers the institution time to attend to any areas that may require additional evidence before its comprehensive evaluation in Year 8. The peer review team also makes a recommendation to the Institutional Actions Council on whether the institution should continue on the pathway if monitoring is required.

### COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION

The Year 8 comprehensive evaluation includes a Comprehensive Quality Review (a review of the institution's Systems Appraisal and its Quality Highlights Report), a review of Federal Compliance Requirements, a student opinion survey and an on-site visit by a team of HLC peer reviewers. The evaluation may also include a multi-campus review, if applicable. Whenever possible, the peer review team is to be drawn in part from the team that conducted the institution's Year 7 Systems Appraisal. The peer review team will have the institution's entire record of AQIP Pathway activity over the preceding seven years, and will seek structured discussions with various institutional groups during the on-site visit. This team will also review results from any concerns or issues raised by the Systems Appraisal team in Year 7, particularly in relation to the Criteria for Accreditation and Core Components.

The comprehensive evaluation leads to an action regarding the reaffirmation of the institution's accreditation and a determination regarding its pathway eligibility. Since institutions attend a Strategy Forum shortly after reaffirmation (Year 1 or 2 of the next cycle), they may capitalize upon feedback received from the comprehensive evaluation along with the feedback received from the previous Systems Appraisal.

A comprehensive evaluation may also occur in Year 4 if significant concerns arise from a prior evaluation or the Systems Appraisal in Year 3, or upon institutional request or HLC determination. The peer review team will evaluate the institution's Year 3 Systems Appraisal and a follow-up Quality Highlights Report. This review includes an on-site visit by the peer review team.



**FIND IT ONLINE**

[hlcommission.org/aqip](https://hlcommission.org/aqip)

Because the AQIP Pathway includes a high degree of facilitation throughout its cycle, there is an additional financial commitment to participate in this pathway. See HLC's dues and fees at [hlcommission.org/dues](http://hlcommission.org/dues) for more information.

## **INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES**

### **Action Project Network**

[collaborate.hlcommission.org/aqip](http://collaborate.hlcommission.org/aqip)

This is the online system that institutions use to manage and submit updates on their Action Projects. The network includes features that allow institutions to search other institutions' projects, follow their progress and communicate with their project team members.

### **Action Project Directory Archive**

[apdarchive.hlcommission.org](http://apdarchive.hlcommission.org)

This site provides an archive of Action Projects from 2000 to 2016. Visitors may search the projects based on institution, location and AQIP Category.

### **Sample Systems Portfolio**

[hlcommission.org/assurance-samples](http://hlcommission.org/assurance-samples)

Institutions may access a read-only Systems Portfolio in the Assurance System to familiarize themselves with the system.

### **Assurance System Training Resources**

[hlcommission.org/assurance-system](http://hlcommission.org/assurance-system)

This page provides a general overview of accessing and using the Assurance System, as well as links to the user manual, training webinar and frequently asked questions.



# AQIP PATHWAY 8-YEAR CYCLE

YEARS  
1-2

## STRATEGY FORUM AND ACTION PROJECT

**Institution:** Attend one Strategy Forum during this period and submit an Action Project Update each year.

**Peer Review:** Conduct an Action Project Review each year.



YEAR  
3

## SYSTEMS PORTFOLIO AND ACTION PROJECT

**Institution:** Submit Systems Portfolio and an Action Project Update.

**Peer Review:** Conduct Systems Appraisal and an Action Project Review.

**HLC Decision Making:** Take action on Systems Appraisal, if monitoring is recommended.



YEAR  
4

## ACTION PROJECT AND POSSIBLE COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION

**Institution:** Submit an Action Project Update. Possible submission of Quality Highlights Report for comprehensive evaluation.

**Peer Review:** Conduct an Action Project Review. Possible comprehensive evaluation (with visit).

**HLC Decision Making:** Action on possible comprehensive evaluation.



YEARS  
5-6

## STRATEGY FORUM AND ACTION PROJECT

**Institution:** Attend one Strategy Forum during this period and submit an Action Project Update each year.

**Peer Review:** Conduct an Action Project Review each year.



YEAR  
7

## SYSTEMS PORTFOLIO AND ACTION PROJECT

**Institution:** Submit Systems Portfolio and an Action Project Update.

**Peer Review:** Conduct Systems Appraisal and an Action Project Review.

**HLC Decision Making:** Take action on Systems Appraisal, if monitoring is recommended.



YEAR  
8

## COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION AND ACTION PROJECT

**Institution:** Submit materials for comprehensive evaluation and an Action Project Update.

**Peer Review:** Conduct comprehensive evaluation (with visit) and an Action Project Review.

**HLC Decision Making:** Take action on comprehensive evaluation and Reaffirmation of Accreditation.



Institutions may choose any pathway at the time of reaffirmation, unless they meet one or more of the conditions that would require placement on the Standard Pathway.



## OPEN PATHWAY

The Open Pathway follows a 10-year cycle, with an Assurance Review in Year 4 and a comprehensive evaluation in Year 10. The Open Pathway also includes a separate improvement component, the Quality Initiative, that affords institutions the opportunity to pursue improvement projects that meet their current needs and aspirations.

### ASSURANCE REVIEW

In Year 4, institutions complete Assurance Reviews to ensure they are continuing to meet the Criteria for Accreditation. The institution submits an Assurance Filing that demonstrates the institution is in compliance with the Criteria and has pursued institutional improvement efforts. A peer review team evaluates these materials and makes a recommendation to the Institutional Actions Council on whether the institution is eligible to continue on the Open Pathway if monitoring is required. Year 4 Assurance Reviews do not typically include an on-site visit, unless requested by the peer review team.

### QUALITY INITIATIVE

Between Years 5 and 9, institutions on the Open Pathway undertake a Quality Initiative. The Quality Initiative may be designed to begin and be completed during this time, or an institution may continue a project that is already in progress or achieve a key milestone in the work of a longer initiative.

Institutions submit a proposal for the project, which is reviewed and approved by a panel of peer reviewers. At the end of the Quality Initiative period, institutions then submit a report on the results of the project. Peer reviewers evaluate the report and determine whether the institution has made a genuine effort to achieve the goals of the Quality Initiative. In Year 10, this recommendation is sent to the Institutional Actions Council along with the results of the institution's reaffirmation of accreditation in order to determine its continued eligibility to choose its pathway.

### Demonstrating and Recognizing “Genuine Effort”

Quality Initiatives are formalized by a peer review evaluation of the institution's Proposal and Report, both required in order to be recognized by HLC.

The proposal guidelines establish the criteria for peer reviewers in evaluating the institution's project. These include:

1. An evaluation of the project's scope and significance (for example, as demonstrated by its alignment with the institution's mission; or its connection to the campus's Strategic Plans; or in relation to its relevance or timeliness for the institution);
2. A clear expression of the purpose of the project (for example, as demonstrated by clearly set and explicit goals; the identification of important milestones; the presence of effective processes to evaluate the outcomes);
3. Evidence of the institution's commitment and capacity (for example, by the presence of key personnel and the appropriate allocation of resources);
4. An appropriate timeline that is consistent with the project's goals, aligned with the institution's other priorities, and reasonable within existing constraints.

The Quality Initiative Report documents how the institution has pursued its activities, allocated its resources, and collected sufficient evidence to demonstrate its effort to accomplish the goals outlined in its Quality Initiative proposal. Peer reviewers evaluate the report in relation to the institution's proposal, whether or not those objectives were actually realized. A positive evaluation of the institution's efforts will be designated as “**genuine effort**.” As a result, the term “**genuine effort**” will convey, HLC's recognition of the project's value in relation to the effort made to improve quality at an institution. The Quality Initiative Report will then be considered by the Institutional Actions Council (IAC), along with the institution's Assurance Review, following HLC's decision-making processes.

### COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION

In Year 10, institutions on the Open Pathway undergo a comprehensive evaluation that results in an action regarding the reaffirmation of the institution's accreditation and a determination regarding its pathway eligibility. The comprehensive evaluation includes an Assurance Review, a review of Federal Compliance requirements, a student opinion survey and an on-site visit by a team of HLC peer reviewers. The evaluation may also include a multi-campus review, if applicable.



FIND IT ONLINE

[hlcommission.org/open](https://hlcommission.org/open)

## **INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES**

### **Sample Quality Initiative Proposals**

[qi.hlcommission.org](http://qi.hlcommission.org)

The sample proposals provided on this website illustrate the wide range of projects that can be used as Quality Initiatives and demonstrate the information and level of detail that HLC's peer reviewers need when evaluating submitted proposals. In support of its Guiding Values that state "every educational institution serves a public purpose," HLC will feature Quality Initiatives that promote civic learning on campuses. Institutions that select projects for their Quality Initiative that promote civic engagement will be recognized for their commitment by HLC publishing their Quality Initiative Proposal on its website.

### **Sample Assurance Arguments**

[hlcommission.org/assurance-samples](http://hlcommission.org/assurance-samples)

Institutions can access demonstration sites that present full Assurance Filings, with Assurance Arguments and Evidence Files. They are intended to help institutions become familiar with the Assurance System and provide examples of how evidence may be organized and linked in the Assurance Argument.

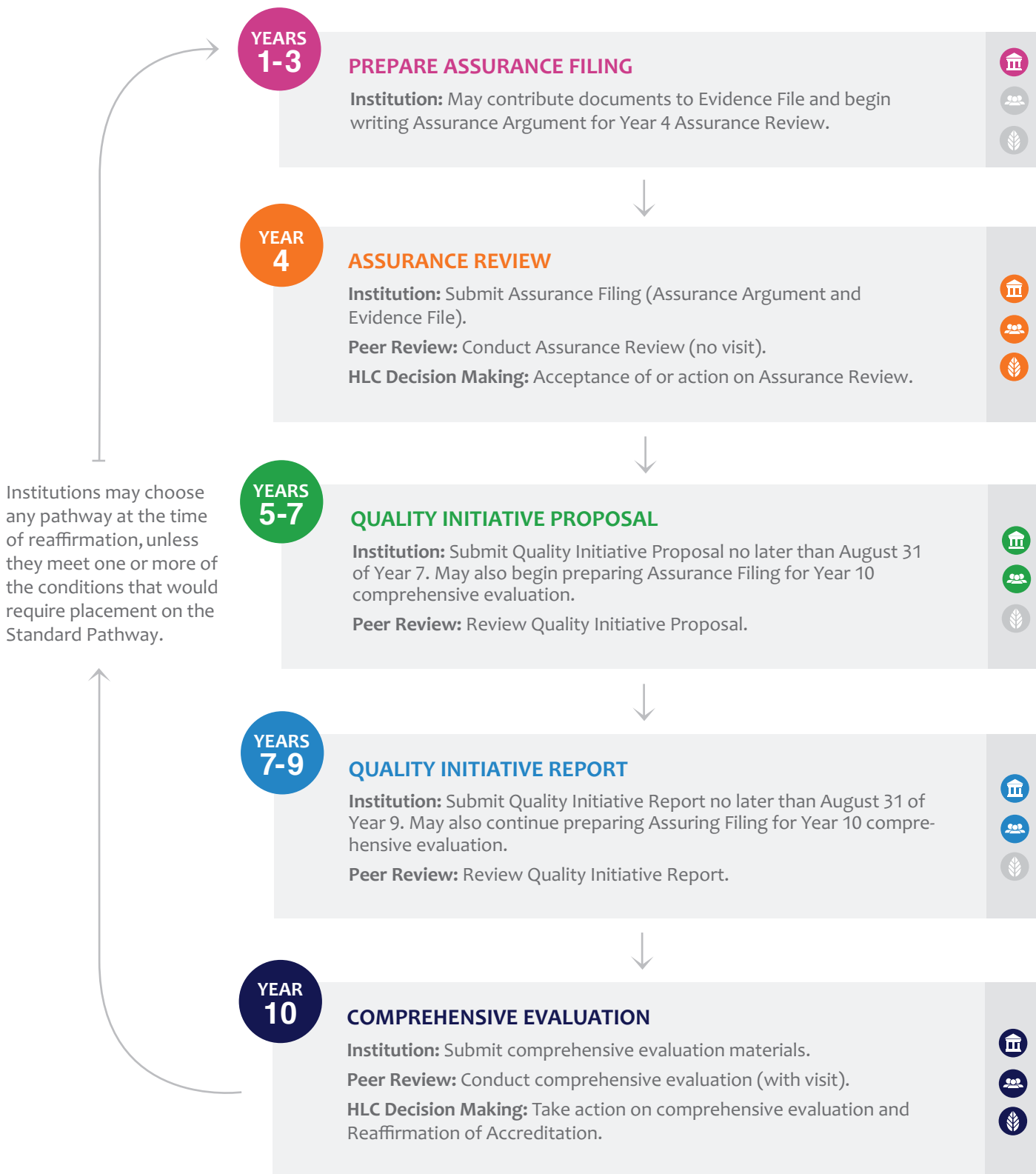
### **Assurance System Training Resources**

[hlcommission.org/assurance-system](http://hlcommission.org/assurance-system)

This page provides a general overview of accessing and using the Assurance System, as well as links to the user manual, training webinar and frequently asked questions.



# OPEN PATHWAY 10-YEAR CYCLE



# REMINDERS FOR ALL INSTITUTIONS

## HLC'S 2020 STRATEGIC PLAN: AN UPDATE

HLC is implementing the action steps of its strategic planning initiative. Focusing on VISTA: Value to Members, Innovation, Student Success, Thought Leadership and Advocacy, the work has resulted in these highlights:

### VALUE TO MEMBERS

To bring Value to Members, HLC has conducted an evaluation of the Pathways for Reaffirmation of Accreditation and is looking at areas in which HLC can provide greater clarity. HLC also offers Team Chair Webinars, providing team chairs the opportunity to connect with HLC in preparation for an evaluation.

In addition, HLC has launched a new, mobile-friendly website for ease of use for members and peer reviewers. Finally, HLC has begun the process to replace the database that feeds HLC's web directory of institutions and the Institutional Status and Requirements Report.

### INNOVATION

HLC has continued working to identify innovative ideas on the transformational role of quality assurance in higher education, answering the question, How should accreditation impact higher education? HLC's think tank, Partners for Transformation, has begun to conceptualize how HLC can lead as a 21st-century accrediting agency to support emerging practices that increase quality and completion.

In addition, HLC's Innovation Zone group has met twice and is poised to offer recommendations on how HLC can create space for innovative activities at member institutions. Finally, HLC has launched the HLC Portal for IAC members and peer reviewers, allowing for greater collaboration and group participation.

### STUDENT SUCCESS

HLC has assembled a working group from the higher education community to develop potential models for measuring student success and another group to provide comprehensive benchmarks and terminology for student success. These groups have and will continue to engage in discourse to showcase best practices in student success.

In addition, HLC's Criteria Revision project and the Student Success Initiatives are moving forward on parallel tracks toward emphasizing the breadth of assessment of student learning.

Finally, HLC has launched a new opportunity: Student Success Academy. Building on the foundation of the Persistence and Completion Academy, HLC has created a new Academy experience that looks comprehensively at the concept of student success.

### THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

HLC President Barbara Gellman-Danley continues to provide thought leadership by participating in national conversations on leadership, governance and the value of accreditation. HLC, as a member of the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC), has published the results of a national initiative to increase focus on helping institutions improve graduation rates.

In addition, HLC's Partners for Transformation have established three sub-groups to work on issues related to innovation and begun dialog with members on the direction of higher education in the 21st century.

### ADVOCACY

HLC's advocacy efforts included preparation for a NACIQI hearing to determine HLC's continued recognition from the U.S. Department of Education as well as participating in the C-RAC graduation rate project, providing data and analysis to educate policymakers on student success.

For more information, visit [hlcommission.org/strategic-plan](https://hlcommission.org/strategic-plan).

### INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES

HLC's policies can be found at [hlcommission.org/policies](https://hlcommission.org/policies). The policies are reviewed regularly by the Board of Trustees. HLC recognizes that higher education is rapidly changing and that its policy needs to reflect those changes. Therefore, HLC commits to review its policies and procedures regularly to evaluate their responsiveness to the higher education environment, their effectiveness in providing quality assurance and their usefulness in enhancing institutional and educational improvement.

The following policies were adopted or updated in the previous year (all changes are effective immediately unless otherwise noted):

### **Recruiting, Admissions and Related Institutional Practices**

Number: CRRT.C.10.010 (adopted November 2017; effective September 1, 2019)

### **Commission Approval of Institutional Teach-Out Arrangements**

Number: FDCR.B.10.010 (revised June 2017)

### **Notice**

Number: INST.E.10.010 (revised June 2017)

### **Fraud and Abuse**

Number FDCR.A.20.010 (adopted February 2017)

### **Obligations of Affiliation**

Number INST.B.30.020 (revised February 2017)

### **Processes for Seeking Approval of Change of Control**

Number: INST.F.20.070 (revised February 2017)

## **DUES AND FEES**

HLC's dues and fees schedule can be found at [hlcommission.org/dues](http://hlcommission.org/dues). Invoices for dues are sent to member institutions in July of each year, following Board action to approve changes to the dues and fees. Payment is due on receipt of the bill and is not refundable.

## **PUBLIC INFORMATION**

### **MARK OF AFFILIATION**

As part of HLC's Obligations of Affiliation, each institution is required to display the Mark of Affiliation on its website with coding provided by HLC. The Mark of Affiliation reflects the institution's current accreditation status and links visitors to the institution's Statement of Accreditation Status on the HLC website. An institution's domain name must be registered with HLC to enable the functionality of the interactive Mark of Affiliation. Requests for a Mark of Affiliation guidelines, as well as notification of domain changes, can be directed to [info@hlcommission.org](mailto:info@hlcommission.org).

### **USE OF HLC LOGOS AND IMAGES**

The HLC logos, including the leaf, are reserved for HLC-produced materials. HLC logos and images are not allowed on materials or websites presented by

affiliated institutions. This also prohibits use of the logo in social media posts, email signatures and other digital reproductions not originating from HLC.

For catalogs, brochures, advertisements and other promotional material, member institutions are encouraged to use this statement: "(Institution name) is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission ([www.hlcommission.org](http://www.hlcommission.org)), a regional accreditation agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education."

For candidate institutions, status should be stated as: "(Institution name) is a candidate for accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission ([www.hlcommission.org](http://www.hlcommission.org))..."

### **PUBLICATION OF ACTIONS AND ACCREDITED STATUS**

When an institution reports an HLC action regarding Reaffirmation of Accreditation, it may state that its accredited status has been continued or reaffirmed. If it wishes to disclose additional information, such as the scheduled year of the next comprehensive evaluation, it should also disclose other details, including any interim reports or monitoring required as part of the action. Accredited status is not for a specific period of time, but is a continuing relationship between the institution and HLC that is subject to reconsideration periodically or when necessary. Phrases such as "accreditation has been continued for a 10-year period" should not be used.

In keeping with federal requirements, when a college or university makes a reference to its affiliation with HLC, it includes HLC's website address and telephone number. HLC urges the careful placement of this information so as not to confuse the public to contact HLC as contrasted with how to contact the institution itself. Should an affiliated institution be under a sanction by HLC, the specific policies on that sanction dictate when and how it must be disclosed when the institution makes reference to its affiliation status with HLC.

An institution that is unaffiliated should make no reference to affiliation with HLC until it has been granted accredited status or candidate status.

### **PUBLIC DISCLOSURE NOTICES AND PUBLIC STATEMENTS**

The HLC Board of Trustees issues a Public Disclosure Notice following a sanction or an adverse action taken on an affiliated institution. The notice, posted on the HLC

website, includes a summary of the nature of the action and a brief analysis of the situation that prompted the action, as well as Board-mandated steps toward correction.

Additionally, Public Statements may be issued and posted by HLC when circumstances at an institution trigger inquiries, or when clarification is needed for HLC's involvement with a highly visible issue at a member institution.

## **INSTITUTIONAL STATUS AND REQUIREMENTS REPORT**

The Institutional Status and Requirements Report is a resource to allow CEOs or Accreditation Liaison Officers (ALOs) to review information regarding the institution's accreditation relationship with HLC. This report is intended to inform the institution only, and is not available to the public. The report may only be requested by the CEO or ALO of the institution by using the request form at [hlcommission.org/isr-request](https://hlcommission.org/isr-request).

Features of the Institutional Status and Requirements Report include complete institutional history with HLC, information on the status of current or upcoming accreditation events, and information on the institution's designated pathways and related events.

## **NEWS FROM HLC**

Email is HLC's primary means of communicating with member institutions. Institutions are asked to help ensure that email communications sent from HLC are delivered.

Five email addresses have been designated as official addresses for HLC, and member institutions are asked to add these addresses to their whitelists:

[hlc@hlcommission.org](mailto:hlc@hlcommission.org)

[accreditation@hlcommission.org](mailto:accreditation@hlcommission.org)

[peerreview@hlcommission.org](mailto:peerreview@hlcommission.org)

[academy@hlcommission.org](mailto:academy@hlcommission.org)

[annualconference@hlcommission.org](mailto:annualconference@hlcommission.org)

Be sure that the institution's HLC staff liaison's email address is also whitelisted. Each liaison's email address is first initial, last name@hlcommission.org (example: John Smith would be [jsmith@hlcommission.org](mailto:jsmith@hlcommission.org)).

## **NEW IN 2017: LEAFLET**

The Leaflet is a snapshot of the work HLC does to fulfill its mission. Published six times a year, it provides updates, news and resources regarding HLC, accreditation and the higher education industry. This includes information on proposed and adopted policies, new or updated procedures, professional development and training opportunities, profiles on members of the HLC community, information about HLC's outreach and advocacy efforts, and much more.

## **FOLLOW HLC ON SOCIAL MEDIA!**

To stay in touch with HLC and receive announcements of Board actions, notifications of new policies and procedures, news on programs and events, and examples of institutional best practices, follow HLC on Twitter and LinkedIn.



# INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

*HLC recognizes that change at institutions of higher education is constant, and it supports change to improve educational quality. HLC has outlined specific conditions under which an institution needs to inform HLC of change or obtain authorization before implementing changes.*

## TYPES OF CHANGE

Substantive changes in the following areas typically require HLC notification or prior approval:

- Programs
- Competency-based education programs
- Clock or credit hours
- Certificate programs
- Length of term affecting allocation of credit
- Branch campuses and additional locations
- Access to HLC's Notification Program for Additional Locations
- Distance delivery
- Consortial arrangements
- Contractual arrangements
- Mission or student body
- Corporate control, structure or governance

Visit [hlcommission.org/change](https://hlcommission.org/change) for a detailed list of changes that require notification or prior approval and HLC's procedures for each. Contact [changerequests@hlcommission.org](mailto:changerequests@hlcommission.org) for additional information.

Most change requests are subject to a fee. HLC's fee schedule can be found online at [hlcommission.org/dues](https://hlcommission.org/dues). The fee schedule is updated annually with the new or revised fees effective on September 1.



### FIND IT ONLINE

[hlcommission.org/change](https://hlcommission.org/change)

## HLC REVIEW PROCESSES

HLC will determine the appropriate process for review of an institution's proposed change: Change Panel, Change Visit or desk review. Requests for approval of changes to an institution's corporate control, structure or organization are reviewed through a fourth, unique process. Recommendations from these processes are forwarded to the Institutional Actions Council (IAC) for final action. If a change request is denied, an institution may choose to resubmit the change application, addressing issues raised by the IAC, no sooner than six months after the decision unless the waiting period is waived by the IAC.

### DESK REVIEW

A desk review consists of a review conducted by an HLC staff liaison of an institutional change application. If the liaison recommends that the request be approved, it is sent to the IAC for final action. If the liaison recommends denial, the institution is given an opportunity to review the recommendation prior to its consideration by the decision-making body.

### CHANGE PANEL

A Change Panel is made up of three HLC peer reviewers who review institutional change applications. The Change Panel may seek additional information from the institution if such information is being sought to explain or clarify the materials provided by the institution in its application for change. The panel may recommend that the change be approved, approved with modification or denied. The institution is given an opportunity to review the recommendation and provide an institutional response prior to consideration of the recommendation by the decision-making body. Alternatively, the panel may recommend that the change be further evaluated by an on-site evaluation team, either through a Change Visit or during a previously scheduled focused visit or comprehensive evaluation.

## CHANGE VISIT

A Change Visit involves a team of two or more HLC peer reviewers who review an institution's change application and conduct an on-site visit. Change Visits are set three months or more after the receipt of the change application. The peer review team may recommend that the change be approved, approved with modifications or denied. The institution is given an opportunity to review the recommendation and provide an institutional response prior to consideration of the recommendation by the decision-making body.

In some instances, the HLC staff liaison will embed the review of a change request into an upcoming comprehensive evaluation. Decision making for the embedded change visit will occur in conjunction with the associated visit. A request to embed the review of a change application into a comprehensive evaluation must be submitted at least six months in advance of the comprehensive evaluation visit.

## REVIEW OF CHANGE OF CONTROL, STRUCTURE OR GOVERNANCE

An institution must receive HLC approval prior to undergoing a transaction that affects, or may affect, how corporate control, structure or governance occurs at the institution. Such change requests follow a separate process and require a different type of documentation and fee schedule than other change requests. The final action for these requests is also made by HLC's Board of Trustees rather than the IAC. Institutions considering this type of change should write to [legalaffairs@hlcommission.org](mailto:legalaffairs@hlcommission.org).

## CERTIFICATE PROGRAM APPLICATION

Institutions should complete HLC's online application form for all new certificate programs. The form includes screening questions that determine if a program needs separate HLC approval. The form will display a message indicating when a certificate program does not require approval; this message should be saved for the institution's records. If a certificate program does require approval, the form will continue through the full application. A link to the form is available at [hlcommission.org/change](https://hlcommission.org/change).

## LOCATION AND CAMPUS UPDATE SYSTEM

The Location and Campus Update System is used by Accreditation Liaison Officers (ALOs) for updating their institution's existing additional locations and existing branch campuses. In addition, ALOs whose institutions are in the Notification Program for Additional Locations may also use this system to request new additional locations. The Location and Campus Update System is available at [lcu.hlcommission.org](https://lcu.hlcommission.org).





# OFF-CAMPUS ACTIVITIES

*New locations for institutions are established through HLC's Institutional Change Process. Once approved and established, these locations are monitored through peer review visits and are subject to a decision-making process depending on the location type.*

## DEFINITIONS

### CAMPUS OR BRANCH CAMPUS (SAME AS THE FEDERAL DEFINITION)

A location of an institution that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus. HLC considers a location of an institution to be independent of the main campus if the location has all four of the following attributes:

It is permanent in nature.

It offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential.

It has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization.

It has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

### ADDITIONAL LOCATION

A place, geographically separate from any main or branch campus, where instruction takes place and students can do one or more of the following:

Complete 50 percent or more of the courses leading to a degree program.

Complete 50 percent or more of the courses leading to a Title IV eligible certificate.

Complete a degree program that they began at another institution even if the degree completion program provides less than 50 percent of the courses leading to a degree program.

There is no base or threshold number of students or distance from the campus necessary for a facility to qualify as an additional location under this definition.

An additional location typically does not have a full range of administrative and student services staffed by the facility's personnel. Such services may be provided from the main campus or another campus.

A facility may provide access to instruction requiring students to be present at a physical location that receives interactive TV, video or online teaching. It is considered an additional location when 50 percent or more of a distance delivery program is available through one or more of these modalities at that facility.

An additional location has active status when students are enrolled. Its status is inactive when students are not enrolled. The status can change between active and inactive without approval from HLC. However, a location may only be classified as inactive with no student enrollment for a maximum of two consecutive years. At that point, HLC will require the institution to close the location.

### ADDITIONAL LOCATION CONFIRMATION VISIT

HLC will conduct an on-site visit to each of the first three active additional locations begun by an institution within six months of matriculation of students and the initiation of instruction at the additional location. The visit will be conducted by HLC peer reviewers and will confirm the accuracy of the information provided to HLC



#### FIND IT ONLINE

<http://www.hlcommission.org/Accreditation/locations.html>

concerning the quality and oversight of the education at the additional location when HLC originally approved it. Further monitoring of an institution's additional locations through HLC's established monitoring processes may be recommended. Such recommendations will be reviewed and acted upon by an HLC decision-making body.

## **CAMPUS EVALUATION VISIT**

An on-site evaluation of a new campus or branch campus must be conducted within six months of matriculation of students and initiation of instruction. These visits are conducted after HLC has approved a new campus through the substantive change process. If an institution is expanding into a previously approved campus from an active additional location with enrolled students and multiple degree programs, a campus evaluation visit may be conducted both to approve the campus and to assure its quality and its capacity to sustain that quality.

## **MULTI-LOCATION EVALUATION VISIT**

If an institution has more than three off-campus additional locations, HLC will conduct on-site visits of a representative sample of the additional locations in Years 3 and 8 for institutions on the Open or Standard Pathways and in Years 3 and 7 for institutions on the AQIP Pathway. The visit is made by HLC peer reviewers and is meant to confirm the continuing effective oversight by the institution of its additional locations. Further monitoring of an institution's additional locations through HLC's established monitoring processes may be recommended.

## **MULTI-CAMPUS VISIT**

A multi-campus visit is included as part of the comprehensive evaluation for institutions with multiple branch campuses. Peer reviewers will visit a sampling of the institution's branch campuses and inform the team conducting the comprehensive evaluation as to the quality of the branch campuses.

## **RECLASSIFYING A BRANCH CAMPUS AS AN ADDITIONAL LOCATION**

If an institution decreases its operation at an approved branch campus to the point where it would be considered an additional location, the institution should contact HLC to change its location classification. To do so, the institution should submit a letter explaining why the location no longer meets the branch campus definition and confirming that it has all the elements of the additional location definition. The letter should also include the exact name and street address of the branch campus in question.

Submit this information as a single PDF file to [changerequests@hlcommission.org](mailto:changerequests@hlcommission.org).

### **Please Note**

Once a branch campus has been reclassified as an additional location, the action cannot be reversed. In the event that the institution wishes to reclassify that location to a branch campus, it will have to reapply for the branch campus designation and host a campus evaluation visit upon approval.

# INSTITUTIONAL MONITORING

*HLC relies on constant contact with institutions to ensure quality higher education. Accredited institutions are required to submit interim reports and annual reports, as well as to participate in focused visits.*

*An institution attends to its affiliation status between comprehensive evaluations by honoring the stipulations of its accreditation, notifying HLC of substantive change, filing required reports and hosting any necessary focused visits.*

## INSTITUTIONAL UPDATE

Each year HLC requires each member institution to provide an update on organizational health through the Institutional Update. Certain financial and non-financial indicators of organizational health are reviewed to determine whether there are any trends that suggest HLC follow-up. Information provided to HLC through the Institutional Update also serves other purposes:

Some information is used to update the Statement of Accreditation Status posted on HLC's website.

Some changes may require review through HLC's policies and procedures on institutional change.

Some information is collected and monitored in compliance with federal requirements.

Student enrollment and instructional location data are used to calculate HLC membership dues.

## FINANCIAL INDICATORS

HLC reviews the financial data submitted in the Institutional Update to determine whether an institution operates with integrity in its financial functions (see Criterion 2, Core Component 2.A.).

The financial data submitted in the Institutional Update generate a Composite Financial Index (CFI). For private institutions, HLC uses the financial ratios provided by the U.S. Department of Education, and for public institutions, HLC relies on the financial ratios recommended in Strategic Financial Analysis for Higher Education: Identifying, Measuring & Reporting Financial Risks (Seventh Edition), by KPMG LLP; Prager, Sealy & Co., LLC; Attain LLC.



### FIND IT ONLINE

#### Institutional Update

[hlcommission.org/accreditation/institutional-update.html](https://hlcommission.org/accreditation/institutional-update.html)

#### Financial Indicators

[hlcommission.org/accreditation/indicators.html](https://hlcommission.org/accreditation/indicators.html)

## NON-FINANCIAL INDICATORS

HLC reviews non-financial data submitted in the Institutional Update for seven indicator conditions and requests responses from institutions when certain indicator conditions occur. The purpose of this process is to identify institutions that may be at risk of not meeting elements of the Criteria for Accreditation.

### HLC LOOKS AT THE FOLLOWING INDICATORS:

#### 1. Enrollment Changes

Three-year increase or decrease of 80 percent or more in enrollment for small institutions or 40 percent or more for large institutions.

#### 2. Degrees Awarded

Three-year increase or decrease of 75 percent or more in degrees awarded for small institutions and 65 percent or more for large institutions.

#### 3. Full-time Faculty Changes

Three-year decrease of 75 percent or more for small institutions or 50 percent or more for large institutions in the headcount of full-time faculty (not full-time equivalent).

#### 4. Student Default Rates

Three-year student loan default rate of 30 percent or more for 2-year institutions or 25 percent or more for other institutions.

#### 5. Minimal Full-time Faculty

The headcount of full-time faculty (not full-time equivalent) divided by the number of degree programs offered is less than one.

#### 6. Student to Teacher Ratio

The number of undergraduate full-time equivalent students divided by the number of undergraduate full-time equivalent faculty is greater than or equal to 35.

#### 7. Weak Graduation/Persistence Rates Compared to Peers

The number of full-time equivalent undergraduate students divided by undergraduate degrees awarded is in the top percentages of the institution's peers. Peer groups are either 2-year small or large undergraduate institutions or 4-year small or large undergraduate institutions.

#### Note

Indicator Conditions 6 and 7 do not apply to graduate-only institutions. "Small institutions" are those with less than 1,000 students while "large institutions" are those with 1,000 students or more.



# FEDERAL COMPLIANCE

*As a federally recognized accrediting agency, HLC is required to assure that all of its member institutions are meeting their Title IV program responsibilities as well as complying with the expectations of specific federal regulations. Compliance with these requirements by both institutions and HLC is necessary to ensure that institutions accredited by HLC are eligible for federal financial aid.*

## WHEN FEDERAL COMPLIANCE IS REVIEWED

HLC reviews an institution's compliance with federal requirements at multiple points in the accreditation relationship. Federal Compliance Reviews are conducted as part of the following evaluations:

1. Comprehensive evaluations that take place during the cycle of each Pathway for Reaffirmation of Accreditation:
  - Standard Pathway: Year 4 and Year 10
  - AQIP Pathway: Year 8 and possibly Year 4 (if required by HLC or requested by the institution)
  - Open Pathway: Year 10
2. Comprehensive evaluations for institutions applying for candidacy or initial accreditation
3. Sanction visits for institutions on Probation or Show Cause
4. Certain advisory visits

## FEDERAL COMPLIANCE FORM

HLC provides two forms that institutions must submit, along with supporting documentation, prior to a Federal Compliance Review. The forms—the Federal Compliance Filing by Institutions and Worksheet on the Assignment of Credit Hours and Clock Hours—notify institutions of what information is required and ensure that Federal Compliance Filings are complete. They are available on HLC's website at [hlcommission.org/federal-compliance](http://hlcommission.org/federal-compliance).

## AREAS ADDRESSED IN FEDERAL COMPLIANCE

The following areas are addressed in the Federal Compliance Process:

1. Assignment of Credits, Program Length and Tuition, Assignment of Credit Hours and Clock Hours
2. Institutional Records of Student Complaints
3. Publication of Transfer Policies
4. Practices for Verification of Student Identity
5. Title IV Program Responsibilities
  - General Program Responsibilities
  - Financial Responsibility Requirements
  - Default Rates
  - Campus Crime Information, Athletic Participation and Financial Aid and Related Disclosures
  - Student Right to Know/Equity in Athletics
  - Satisfactory Academic Progress and Attendance Policies
  - Contractual Relationships
  - Consortial Relationships
6. Required Information for Students and the Public
7. Advertising and Recruitment Materials and Other Public Information
8. Review of Student Outcome Data



### FIND IT ONLINE

[hlcommission.org/federal-compliance](http://hlcommission.org/federal-compliance)

9. Publication of Student Outcome Data
10. Standing With State and Other Accrediting Agencies
11. Public Notification of Opportunity to Comment (Third-Party Comment)
12. Competency-Based Programs Including Direct Assessment Programs/Faculty-Student Engagement

## THIRD-PARTY COMMENT

As part of its Federal Compliance Requirements, HLC seeks public comment about institutions from third-party constituencies, such as students, alumni and community members. Institutions are responsible for publicizing the HLC evaluation and publishing invitations and information regarding third-party comment. HLC forwards all comments to the institution being reviewed and to the peer review team to include in their review of the institution.

For more information, visit [hlcommission.org/comment](https://hlcommission.org/comment).

## FEDERAL COMPLIANCE PROCESS

The Federal Compliance Review follows a three-step process:

1. Institutions must submit the Federal Compliance Filing by Institutions form, the Worksheet on the Assignment of Credit Hours and Clock Hours, and other supporting documentation before their on-site visit by a team of HLC peer reviewers. These materials should be uploaded to the Assurance System as a single PDF file prior to the institution's lock date.

### Note

HLC will make the Federal Compliance documents available in the Assurance System six months before the institution's lock date. HLC recommends that institutions begin compiling the necessary documentation at that point. The institution should publish its third-party comment notice shortly after receiving access to the Federal Compliance documents.

2. After the institution submits its Federal Compliance materials, a Federal Compliance reviewer evaluates the materials in advance of the visit and refers any issues to the on-ground team for further exploration and confirmation.
3. While conducting the visit, the peer review team verifies that the Federal Compliance information they have received is accurate and complete. They should raise any questions they have with institutional representatives. The team may also request that the institution provide additional supporting documentation during the visit. The team documents that they have conducted a thorough review of the institution's compliance with federal requirements using the [Federal Compliance Worksheet for Evaluation Teams](#) and the [Team Worksheet for Evaluating an Institution's Assignment of Credit Hours and Clock Hours](#). The team chair submits these worksheets to HLC as part of the final team report. If the team has concerns about the institution's compliance with federal requirements, they may recommend follow-up monitoring. This recommendation would go to an HLC decision-making body for review and final action.

# DECISION MAKING

*Decision-making bodies comprised of institutional representatives and public members take actions on HLC-affiliated institutions. HLC's decision-making process ensures due process through multiple opportunities for institutions to respond to findings or recommendations, as well as transparency with the timely publication of all final actions.*

## DECISION-MAKING BODIES

Unless otherwise specified, the decision-making bodies are representative of HLC's member institutions, with attention to institutional type, control, size and geographical distribution. All decision-making bodies abide by HLC's conflict of interest policies. HLC's three decision-making bodies are:

### INSTITUTIONAL ACTIONS COUNCIL

The IAC is composed of approximately 90 members representing HLC member institutions and the public. Members are appointed by the Board of Trustees (see the IAC roster on page 53). The IAC has the authority to act on substantive change cases, recommendations following interim monitoring, mid-cycle pathway reviews, and cases of reaffirmation of accreditation, including pathway placement. Some cases heard by the IAC require Board action. In these instances, the IAC submits a recommendation to the Board for consideration. The Board may either adopt the recommendation of the IAC as its action or may take another action provided by HLC policy.

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Board is made up of at least 15 and no more than 21 members representing institutions and the public. Trustees are elected by HLC member institutions to serve four-year terms (see the Board roster on page on 47).

Cases that require final action by the Board include granting or denying an institution candidacy or initial accreditation; issuing or withdrawing a sanction; withdrawing status from an accredited institution;

issuing or removing a Show-Cause Order; initiating a reconsideration process; approving or denying a Change of Control, Structure or Organization; and moving an institution from accredited to candidate status.

### APPEALS BODY

The Appeals Body is selected by the Board of Trustees to be available to serve on Appeals Panels. Although many actions by the Board are considered final actions, in some cases an institution may appeal an adverse action of the Board. In these instances, an Appeals Panel hears the case and has the authority to affirm, amend or reverse the action of the Board. The Appeals Panel may also send the action back to the Board with specific instructions on how to proceed in further consideration. Action decided by the Panel is a final action and must be recognized and implemented by HLC.

## DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

The decision-making process begins once an evaluation concludes. A peer review report that includes a recommendation is submitted to an HLC decision-making body.

Each year the IAC reviews more than 1,000 cases in two settings. The first setting is called a meeting, which is held via webinar with a committee of IAC members. Cases that do not require Board action are heard in meetings. Representatives from the institutions are not present at these meetings. The decisions of IAC meeting committees are final unless the Board of Trustees is required by policy to take final action.

An institution may request, or HLC policy may require, that certain cases go to the setting of an IAC hearing rather than a meeting. Representatives from both the institution and peer review team, along with a committee



### FIND IT ONLINE

[hlcommission.org/decision-making](https://hlcommission.org/decision-making)

of IAC members, are physically present at these hearings. The IAC hearing committee will make a recommendation to the Board of Trustees for final action.

A committee of IAC members is selected for each meeting and hearing to be responsible for reading the entire record related to each case. Approximately every six weeks, IAC committees review cases in a meeting format. Hearings are always timed to occur in advance of Board meetings.

An action taken by the IAC is considered a final action unless the case requires review by the Board of Trustees. If the case requires action by the Board, the IAC includes a recommendation with the report sent to the Board of Trustees for final action.

The Board meets in person three times a year to take action on institutional cases, as well as to conduct other HLC business. The Board may also take institutional actions at other times during the year, via teleconference or mail ballots, as necessary.

An institution may appeal an adverse action of the Board of Trustees, prior to the action becoming final, by filing a written request to appeal following HLC's appeals procedures. Adverse actions are defined as those that (1) withdraw or deny accreditation, except in denial of accreditation where the Board denies an early application for accreditation and continues candidate for accreditation status or extends it to a fifth year, (2) withdraw or deny candidacy, or (3) move the institution from accredited to candidate status.

#### **Please Note**

The decision-making processes for individual cases are dependent upon HLC policy. Please review HLC policies to determine how the process might change based on institutional circumstances.

## **INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE**

Institutions are offered an opportunity to respond after each evaluation and at each stage of the decision-making process. Each decision-making body considers the institutional response as part of the full record of the case, along with the recommendation of the peer review team.

Approximately two weeks after a final action by the IAC or Board of Trustees, an Action Letter is sent to the institution. The Action Letter relays the final action to the institution.

## **TRANSPARENCY IN HLC ACTIONS**

HLC seeks to clearly and openly communicate the actions of its decision-making bodies to its member institutions and the public. HLC publishes a full list of actions taken by the IAC and Board on its website within 30 days of action. HLC also provides an online Directory of Institutions that includes the following information for current and former affiliated institutions:

- A.** A 15-year history of reviews conducted by HLC, and the actions that resulted.
- B.** The Action Letter from the last comprehensive evaluation. This practice began in 2013.
- C.** A Public Disclosure Notice, if applicable, explaining particular actions regarding sanctions; initial accreditation or candidacy; denial of change of control, structure or organization; or other issues.





# PEER CORPS

*HLC relies upon the work of peer reviewers for its accrediting activities. These volunteers generously share their knowledge and experience to assure and advance institutional quality. The Peer Corps currently consists of approximately 1,600 faculty, administrators and staff who currently have or recently have had an affiliation with institutions within HLC's 19-state region.*

## ROLE OF PEER REVIEWERS

Peer reviewers play various roles in all stages of the accreditation process. Members of the Peer Corps are responsible for assuring that institutions within HLC's region are meeting the Criteria for Accreditation.

Peer reviewers are active in both the candidacy and reaffirmation processes for institutions. They participate in visits for candidacy, determine whether institutions in candidacy are making progress toward meeting the Criteria for Accreditation (through Biennial Visits), and participate in visits for Initial Accreditation. Peer reviewers conduct two comprehensive evaluations for institutions on the Standard Pathway, a comprehensive evaluation, two Systems Appraisals and annual Action Project Reviews for institutions on the AQIP Pathway, and an Assurance Review and comprehensive evaluation for institutions on the Open Pathway.

Peer reviewers also conduct focused visits and Change Visits and serve on Change Panels. Peer reviewers may be asked to visit additional locations or campuses, or conduct paper reviews of information provided by the institution.

## REMINDERS FOR CURRENT PEER REVIEWERS

### PEER REVIEWER PROFILES

All peer reviewers are required to maintain an up-to-date profile in HLC's online Peer Reviewer Data Update System (PRDUS). The profile includes contact information, education history, work experience and other

expertise. It is used by HLC staff members to set review teams and communicate with peer reviewers. Review and update your profile at [prdus.hlcommission.org](https://prdus.hlcommission.org).

### Please Note

HLC shares training registration information via email. To ensure you receive these notifications, whitelist HLC's main email addresses (see page 30) and keep your contact information up-to-date in the Peer Reviewer Data Update System.

## ONLINE TEAM RESOURCES

HLC provides peer review guidelines and report templates on its website at [hlcommission.org/team-resources](https://hlcommission.org/team-resources). Information is organized by the type of review. Peer reviewers should always check this page before beginning a review to ensure they have the most current form or report template.

## PEER REVIEWER EVALUATIONS

In an effort to provide feedback to peer reviewers about their volunteer service, HLC collects information on reviewer performance after comprehensive evaluations. After final action is taken on a comprehensive evaluation, each member of the review team receives an email with links to evaluate their fellow team members. The evaluation is intended to provide reviewers with feedback about their performance on the key skills and attributes necessary for excellent peer review; it is meant to be constructive, not punitive. These evaluations also help HLC determine how to develop and refine its Peer Corps training and annual conference programs.

## WEBINARS FOR TEAM CHAIRS

HLC provides one-hour, live webinars monthly for team chairs to connect with HLC in preparation for leading an evaluation team. The program includes a presentation by an HLC staff liaison on updates to policies and procedures, as well as tips from experienced peer reviewers



### FIND IT ONLINE

[hlcommission.org/peer-review](https://hlcommission.org/peer-review)

on preparing for a visit and avoiding common pitfalls. Each session ends with a question-and-answer period in which team chairs can ask the presenters brief questions. Team chairs with upcoming visits will receive invitations by email to register for these webinars.

Dates of scheduled webinars are listed at [hlcommission.org/calendar](http://hlcommission.org/calendar).

Contact [peerreview@hlcommission.org](mailto:peerreview@hlcommission.org) for more information.

## APPLYING TO THE PEER CORPS

HLC seeks experienced, detailed-oriented academics and administrators to serve in its Peer Corps. Serving as a peer reviewer offers multiple personal and professional benefits. Current peer reviewers report that the Corps provides valuable professional development, giving them the opportunity to connect with and learn from colleagues throughout HLC's region. For those who are involved in preparing for accreditation reviews at their institution, joining the Peer Corps can help them gain additional expertise and provide insight into HLC's policies and procedures.

### MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

1. At least five years of experience in higher education.
2. Master's or other appropriate terminal degree; doctorate preferred.
3. Currently employed by or recently retired (within two years) from an institution accredited by and in good standing with HLC.

### CURRENT AREAS OF NEED IN THE CORPS

Peer review teams are most effective when the reviewers reflect the characteristics of the institutions they evaluate. In order to ensure its ability to form teams that represent the full range of its member institutions, HLC is currently seeking Peer Corps applicants of the following types:

1. Faculty members, especially:

With academic training in biological or physical science, medicine, engineering, fine and performing arts, and physical and occupational therapy.

In faculty governance roles.

2. Faculty members and administrators from small or private not-for-profit institutions, research universities, seminaries, medical schools, and highly selective institutions.
3. Student affairs leaders.
4. Admissions and enrollment management leaders.
5. College and university presidents.
6. Chief financial officers or budget directors.
7. Academics and administrators from the following racial and ethnic groups:

American Indian or Alaska Native

Asian and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

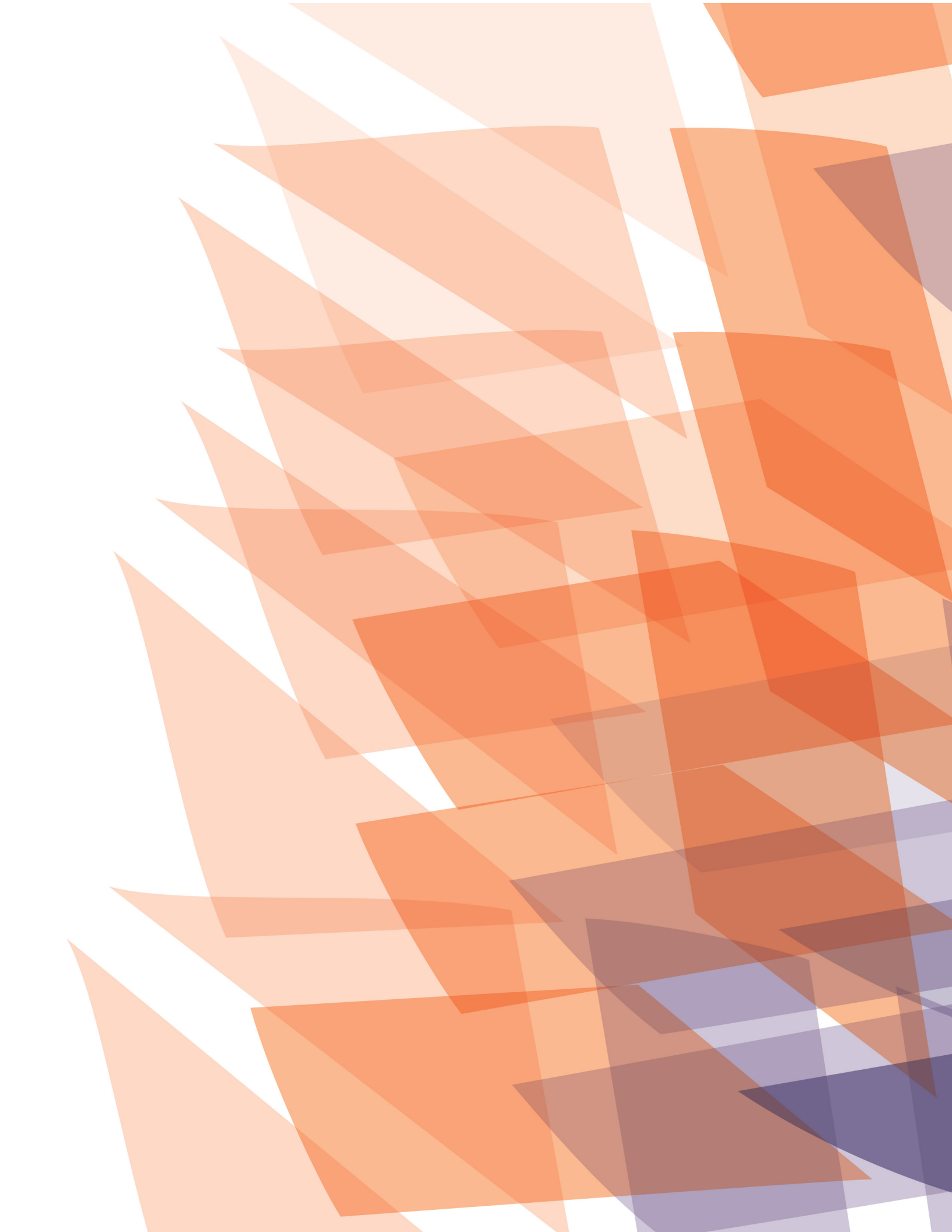
Black or African-American

Hispanic or Latino

### APPLICATION PROCESS

HLC accepts Peer Corps applications from mid-January through mid-April each year. Applicants are asked to complete an online application and submit a letter describing their relevant experience, a curriculum vitae or resume, and the names and contact information for two professional references. Additional details and the application are available at [hlcommission.org/peer](http://hlcommission.org/peer).

Contact [peerreview@hlcommission.org](mailto:peerreview@hlcommission.org) for more information.



# RESOURCES

## HLC GUIDELINES

### SHARED SERVICES ARRANGEMENTS

The document *Shared Services Arrangements: Guidelines for Institutions and Peer Reviewers* provides guidance to institutions and peer reviewers in evaluating shared services arrangements involving institutions accredited by HLC. These guidelines explain the Criteria for Accreditation that will be primarily considered when shared services arrangements are evaluated.

### DETERMINING QUALIFIED FACULTY

The document *Determining Qualified Faculty HLC's Criteria for Accreditation and Assumed Practices* provides guidance to institutions and peer reviewers in evaluating the qualifications of faculty, including full-time, part-time, adjunct, temporary and/or non-tenure-track faculty. The guidelines highlight the Criteria for Accreditation and Assumed Practices that speak to the importance of institutions accredited by HLC employing qualified faculty for the varied and essential roles faculty members perform.

### DUAL CREDIT GUIDELINES

The document *Dual Credit Guidelines for Institutions and Peer Reviewers* offers institutions and peer reviewers formal guidance on the evaluation of dual credit activity at member institutions. HLC defines dual credit courses as “courses taught to high school students for which the students receive both high school credit and college credit.”

Dual credit programs are reviewed during an institution’s comprehensive evaluation, but also may be reviewed at other times if concerns about the programs arise.

### TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS SEEKING TO OFFER THE BACCALAUREATE DEGREE

Before launching baccalaureate programs, two-year institutions must seek HLC approval through a substantive change request. As more two-year institutions seek to offer baccalaureate degrees, HLC has developed guidelines, published in the document *Two-Year Institutions Seeking to Offer the Baccalaureate Degree: Considerations of Readiness*, to assist these institutions in an internal review of readiness. The guidelines also serve as a reference to peer reviewers who may be asked to evaluate the change requests.

### SCHOOL OF RECORD GUIDELINES

Institutions acting as a School of Record must be able to ensure academic integrity and transparency in the transcription of coursework taken abroad by students. They also must ensure appropriately trained personnel are evaluating such courses or programs and that the institution has established processes for evaluation that are applied in a consistent fashion. The document *School of Record Guidelines* highlights the Criteria and Assumed Practices relevant for these institutions.



FIND IT ONLINE

[hlcommission.org/criteria](http://hlcommission.org/criteria)

# HLC'S ACADEMIES

*HLC's Academies are multi-year, mentor-facilitated programs aimed at assisting HLC-accredited institutions to define, develop and implement comprehensive strategies for institutional improvement.*

*Designed and led by experienced practitioners, the Academies provide a framework and guidance for developing customized projects focused on leading areas of concern in higher education. The programs are adaptive to the needs of the wide range of institutional types served by HLC and support improvement within the context of an institution's mission, vision and goals.*

## **NEW** STUDENT SUCCESS ACADEMY

The Student Success Academy is designed for institutions seeking to establish sustainable structures that support students' achievement of their higher education goals. The Academy offers a structured program that aims to help institutions design an integrated approach to student learning and student success—one that is sensitive to each institution's resources and priorities and to the realities of its student populations. Participating institutions will learn how to engage multiple stakeholders in supporting student success and embed student success into the values and practices of the institution in order to help underserved students achieve their potential.

This new Academy is one of several student success initiatives being implemented as part of HLC's strategic plan. Through these initiatives, HLC is executing a multi-faceted approach to address students, parents and policymakers continuing to seek clear indicators of student success, and to support institutions in providing students with the tools they need to succeed.

## **ASSESSMENT ACADEMY**

The Assessment Academy is tailored for institutions interested in developing an ongoing commitment to assessing and improving student learning. The Academy offers each institution personalized guidance in developing, documenting and implementing a systematic assessment plan. Institutions participating in the Assessment Academy are presented with new ideas and techniques for influencing institutional culture, increasing capacity to assess student learning and using assessment data to improve student learning.

## APPLYING TO THE ACADEMIES

The Academies are open to all institutions accredited by HLC. For more information about the Academies, including application criteria and timelines, visit [hlcommission.org/academies](https://hlcommission.org/academies).



**FIND IT ONLINE**

[hlcommission.org/academies](https://hlcommission.org/academies)

# HLC EVENTS

## ANNUAL CONFERENCE

HLC's annual conference is one of the largest events of its kind in higher education, with approximately 4,000 administrators and faculty members attending each year. The five days of programming cover a broad range of topics, including HLC policies and guidelines, institutional experiences with accreditation processes and best practices, assessment of student learning, quality improvement, institutional effectiveness, professional development and more.

### 2019 ANNUAL CONFERENCE: ROADMAPS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

The 2019 HLC Annual Conference will focus on how institutions of higher learning can work with students to create roadmaps for student success. The conference will provide forums for discussion of innovative programming and support services that meet students where they are and help them achieve success. In addition, presenters and attendees will explore how accreditors can establish realistic definitions and measurements of success, reflecting students' goals for their education and institutions' unique missions while still ensuring accountability and educational quality. The Call for Proposals for the 2019 conference opens in spring 2018.

## WORKSHOPS

HLC's workshops offer intensive, hands-on learning opportunities for individual professionals and institutional teams. Under the guidance of expert practitioners, participants learn tested strategies for assessing student learning and supporting student success, while networking and sharing practices with peers from across the HLC region. All workshop participants leave with plans for action to start improving processes and practices that support student success.

## WORKSHOP OFFERINGS INCLUDE

- Assessing General Education (teams)
- Emerging Leaders in Assessment (individuals)
- Strategic Assessment (teams)
- Supporting Student Success (individuals)

The workshops are open to all HLC-accredited and candidate institutions. HLC continues to create new professional development events with input from members. Visit [hlcommission.org/workshops](http://hlcommission.org/workshops) for more information.

## STAY CONNECTED

Follow HLC on Twitter and LinkedIn for the latest news and conversation on HLC events.



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[hlcommission.org/programs](http://hlcommission.org/programs)

### TWITTER

[@hlcommission](https://twitter.com/hlcommission)

### LINKEDIN

[linkedin.com/company/hlcommission](https://linkedin.com/company/hlcommission)

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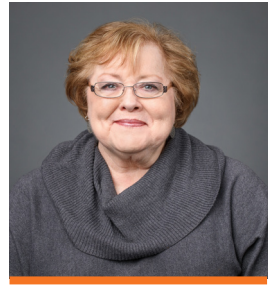
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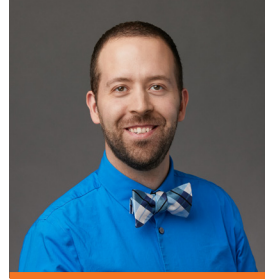
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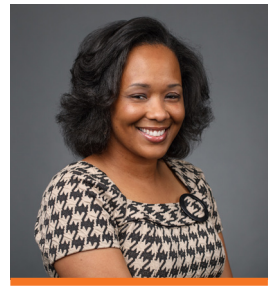
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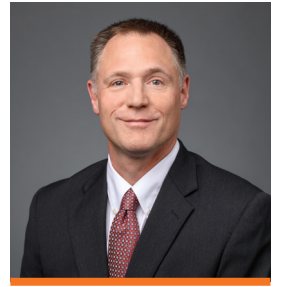
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**Malayappan Shridhar**

Former Associate Provost and Professor, University of Michigan-Dearborn, MI

**Judith P. Siminoe**

Special Adviser to the President, St. Cloud State University, MN

**Jim Simpson**

Professor, Maricopa Community Colleges-Scottsdale Community College, Arizona

**Dorothy M. Simpson-Taylor**

Director, Diversity Resources, University of Iowa, IA

**Jeffrey S. Slovak**

Deputy Vice President for Finance and Administration, Governors State University, IL

**James O. Smith**

Dean and Professor, School of Business, Public and Social Services, and Information Technology, Ivy Tech Community College-Bloomington, IN

**John Phillips Speary**

Dean of Academic Support and Effectiveness, Butler County Community College, KS

**Carol J. Spencer**

Realtor, Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage, AZ

**Donald R. Sprowl**

Associate Provost, Indiana Wesleyan University, IN

**David A. Starrett**

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Columbia College, MO

**Donna S. Statzell**

Director of Institutional Effectiveness, Research and Accreditation, Hennepin Technical College, MN

**Kristin K. Stehouwer**

Executive Vice President, Chief Academic Officer and Chief Operating Officer, Northwood University, MI

**Amy Ilona Stein**

History and Humanities Professor, Yavapai College, AZ

**Randall Jay Stiles**

Associate Vice President for Analytics and Institutional Research, Grinnell College, IA

**John Stone**

Senior Associate Dean, Academic Affairs, University of Wisconsin-Extension, WI

**Michael Strong**

Retired, OK

**Rosemarie Suhayda**

Associate Provost for Institutional Research, Assessment and Accreditation, Rush University, IL

**Kathryn H. Swanson**

Professor of English and Director of Writing, Augsburg University, MN

**Jeanne K. Swarthout**

President, Northland Pioneer College, AZ

**Elizabeth V. Swenson**

Professor of Psychology, John Carroll University, OH

**Mo-Yin S. Tam**

Emeritus Professor of Economics, University of Illinois at Chicago, IL

**Roberta C. Teahen**

Associate Provost for Accreditation, Assessment, Compliance, and Evaluation, Ferris State University, MI

**Rebecca J. Timmons**

Director of Assessment and Accountability, University of Arkansas-Fort Smith, AR

**Raymond Tindira**

OH

**Elizabeth R. Towell**

Associate Dean, College of Business, Northern Illinois University, IL

**Cynthia Benn Tweedell**

Assistant Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness, Ohio Christian University, OH

**Sandra K. Veltri**

Front Range Community College (Retired), CO

**Devarajan Venugopalan**

Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, WI

**John A. Vetsch**

Vice President for Revenue Cycle, Regional Health, SD

**David W. Wantz**

Vice President for Government Relations, University of Indianapolis, IN

**David Wendler**

Vice President for Academics, Emeritus, Martin Luther College, MN

**Michael W. Westerfield**

Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, William Woods University, MO

**Michael Williford**

Associate Professor, Counseling and Higher Education, Ohio University, OH

**Benjamin Franklin**

Young Vice President Emeritus, Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana, IN

**Deborah Zelechowski**

National Dean, DeVry University, IL

**Angelique Zerillo**

Principal Consultant, Sinter Design, IL



# INSTITUTIONAL EXAMPLES

*The institutions listed below have agreed to share their recent experiences going through HLC evaluation processes. These are examples of how individual institutions have approached these processes, and are not intended to be models of how to conduct the accreditation process. HLC thanks the institutional representatives for their willingness to be listed in this resource. Representatives from these institutions will also be in attendance at the Accreditation Share Fair at HLC's 2018 Annual Conference on April 8 to share their experiences in person.*

## STANDARD PATHWAY

### COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION

#### Little Priest Tribal College (Nebraska)

Control: Private, Not-for-Profit  
Highest Degree: Associate's  
FT Undergrad: 69; PT Undergrad: 36  
FT Grad: 0; PT Grad: 0

Contact: Jody Wingert, Faculty  
Email: jwingert@littlepriest.edu

#### Newman University (Kansas)

Control: Private, Not-for-Profit  
Highest Degree: Master's  
FT Undergrad: 968; PT Undergrad: 127  
FT Grad: 143; PT Grad: 492

Contact: David Shubert, Dean of Arts and Sciences  
Email: shubertd@newmanu.edu  
Phone: 316.942.4291

#### Phoenix Seminary (Arizona)

Control: Private, Not-for-Profit  
Highest Degree: Doctoral  
FT Undergrad: 0; PT Undergrad: 0  
FT Grad: 52; PT Grad: 140

Contact: Roma Royer, Assistant Dean of Academic Services and Assessment  
Email: rroyer@ps.edu  
Phone: 602.429.4947

#### United Theological Seminary (Ohio)

Control: Private, Not-for-Profit  
Highest Degree: Doctoral  
FT Undergrad: 0; PT Undergrad: 0  
FT Grad: 298; PT Grad: 119

Contact: Kent Millard, President  
Email: kmillard@united.edu

## AQIP PATHWAY

### COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION

#### Nebraska Methodist College of Nursing and Allied Health

Control: Private, Not-for-Profit  
Highest Degree: Master's  
FT Undergrad: 485; PT Undergrad: 363  
FT Grad: 176; PT Grad: 47

Contact: Lindsay Snipes, Chief Compliance Officer  
Email: lindsay.snipes@methodistcollege.edu

### SYSTEMS PORTFOLIO

#### Northwood University (Michigan)

Control: Private, Not-for-Profit  
Highest Degree: Master's  
FT Undergrad: 2,713; PT Undergrad: 1,303  
FT Grad: 90; PT Grad: 405

Contact: Kristin Stehouwer, Executive Vice President, Chief Operating Officer and Chief Academic Officer  
Email: stehouwer@northwood.edu  
Phone: 989.837.4224

## OPEN PATHWAY

### COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION

#### Arapahoe Community College (Colorado)

Control: Public

Highest Degree: Associate's

FT Undergrad: 1,642; PT Undergrad: 5,120

FT Grad: 0; PT Grad: 0

Contact: Terry Barmann, Executive Director of Institutional Effectiveness

Email: [terry.barmann@arapahoe.edu](mailto:terry.barmann@arapahoe.edu)

Phone: 303.797.5738

#### Chadron State College (Nebraska)

Control: Public

Highest Degree: Master's

FT Undergrad: 1,709; PT Undergrad: 330

FT Grad: 116; PT Grad: 454

Contact: Joy Omelanuk, Assessment and Accreditation Coordinator

Email: [jomelanuk@csc.edu](mailto:jomelanuk@csc.edu)

Phone: 308.432.6059

#### Creighton University (Nebraska)

Control: Private, Not-for-Profit

Highest Degree: Doctoral

FT Undergrad: 3,970; PT Undergrad: 179

FT Grad: 2,796; PT Grad: 1,394

Contact: Mary Ann Danielson, Associate Vice Provost and Interim Executive Director, Teaching and Learning Center

Email: [maddam@creighton.edu](mailto:maddam@creighton.edu)

#### Eastern New Mexico University

Control: Public

Highest Degree: Master's

FT Undergrad: 2,677; PT Undergrad: 1,145

FT Grad: 297; PT Grad: 952

Contact: Suzanne Balch-Lindsay, Assistant Vice President of Academic Affairs (Academic Services)

Email: [Suzanne.Balch@enmu.edu](mailto:Suzanne.Balch@enmu.edu)

Phone: 575.562.2314

Online Report:

<http://www.enmu.edu/academics/accreditation>

#### University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Control: Public

Highest Degree: Doctoral

FT Undergrad: 19,376; PT Undergrad: 1,190

FT Grad: 2,681; PT Grad: 2,383

Contact: Laurie Bellows, Interim Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs

Email: [lbellows1@unl.edu](mailto:lbellows1@unl.edu)

Phone: 402.472.3755

Online Report:

<https://academicaffairs.unl.edu/accreditation/reaffirm-2016>

#### University of Wisconsin-Platteville

Control: Public

Highest Degree: Master's

FT Undergrad: 6,965; PT Undergrad: 896

FT Grad: 67; PT Grad: 851

Contact: Dominic Barraclough, Director of the School of Education

Email: [BarraclD@uwplatt.edu](mailto:BarraclD@uwplatt.edu)

Phone: 608.342.1131

Online Report:

<https://www.uwplatt.edu/hlc>

### QUALITY INITIATIVE REPORT

#### Indiana University Bloomington

Control: Public

Highest Degree: Doctoral

FT Undergrad: 32,005; PT Undergrad: 7,179

FT Grad: 6,393; PT Grad: 4,118

Contact: Judith A. Ouimet, Senior Assistant Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education

Email: [ouimet@indiana.edu](mailto:ouimet@indiana.edu)

#### West Liberty University (West Virginia)

Control: Public

Highest Degree: Master's

FT Undergrad: 1,820; PT Undergrad: 289

FT Grad: 111; PT Grad: 97

Contact: Sara Sweeney, Director, Office of Graduate Studies

Email: [sara.sweeney@westliberty.edu](mailto:sara.sweeney@westliberty.edu)

Phone: 304.336.8545

## **YEAR 4 ASSURANCE REVIEW**

### **Adler University (Illinois)**

Control: Private, Not-for-Profit  
Highest Degree: Doctoral  
FT Undergrad: 0; PT Undergrad: 0  
FT Grad: 765; PT Grad: 334

Contact: Jo Beth Cup, Vice President for Administration  
Email: jcup@adler.edu  
Phone: 312.662.4101

### **Barton County Community College (Kansas)**

Control: Public  
Highest Degree: Associate's  
FT Undergrad: 1,522; PT Undergrad: 2,830  
FT Grad: 0; PT Grad: 0

Contact: Myrna Perkins, Chief Accreditation Officer and Director of Financial Aid  
Email: perkinsm@bartonccc.edu  
Phone: 620.792.9201

### **Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis**

Control: Public  
Highest Degree: Doctoral  
FT Undergrad: 17,389; PT Undergrad: 4,359  
FT Grad: 4,659; PT Grad: 3,397

Contact: Susan Kahn, Director of Planning and Improvement Initiatives  
Email: skahn@iupui.edu  
Phone: 317.274.4111

### **Southeast Community College Area (Nebraska)**

Control: Public  
Highest Degree: Associate's  
FT Undergrad: 3,942; PT Undergrad: 5,320  
FT Grad: 0; PT Grad: 0

Contact: Shawna Herwick, Coordinator of Planning and Accreditation  
Email: sherwick@southeast.edu  
Phone: 402.323.3637  
Online Report:  
<https://www.southeast.edu/assurancereview/>

### **University of Mary (North Dakota)**

Control: Private, Not-for-Profit  
Highest Degree: Doctoral  
FT Undergrad: 1,734; PT Undergrad: 484  
FT Grad: 666; PT Grad: 376

Contact: Alyssa Martin, Assistant to the Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Email: amartin@umary.edu  
Phone: 701.355.8021



# GLOSSARY OF HLC TERMINOLOGY

## ABOUT ACCREDITATION

### accreditation agency

A nongovernmental body established to administer accrediting procedures.

### accreditation, institutional

Accreditation that evaluates an entire educational institution and accredits it as a whole.

### accreditation, national

A type of institutional accreditation primarily for religious colleges and universities, private trade and technical schools, private business colleges, and colleges focusing on health-related fields, as well as institutions offering programs primarily through distance delivery and home study.

### accreditation, regional

A type of institutional accreditation provided by accrediting agencies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

### accreditation, specialized

(also called program accreditation)

Accreditation of units, schools or programs within a larger educational institution or for the sole program or area of concentration of an independent, specialized institution.

### accredited status

Status that indicates an institution meets HLC's Criteria for Accreditation.

### maintain accreditation

Actively participate, as an institution, in HLC's accreditation processes to ensure the institution meets the Criteria for Accreditation.

### Notice

A sanction signifying an institution is pursuing a course of action that could result in its being unable to meet one or more of the Criteria for Accreditation.

### Obligations of Affiliation

The responsibilities that institutions affiliated with HLC are required to fulfill in order to maintain their affiliation.

### Probation

A sanction signifying that an institution no longer meets one or more of the Criteria for Accreditation.

### Public Disclosure Notice

A document HLC may post to explain to the public a particular situation at an affiliated institution.

### Reaffirmation of Accreditation

An action by HLC's Board of Trustees confirming an institution meets all of the requirements necessary to keep its accredited status with HLC.

### Show-Cause Order

An order by HLC's Board of Trustees requiring an institution to show cause as to why its accredited status should not be removed.

### Statement of Accreditation Status (SAS)

A public summary of the relationship between the institution and HLC that identifies the nature of the institution, the conditions of affiliation, and the degree levels included in accreditation.

### stipulations

Limits placed on an institution's development of new activities or programs.

## ABOUT HLC

### Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO)

An individual identified by the chief executive officer of the institution to be second in the line of communication (behind the CEO) with HLC regarding policies, practices and other accreditation matters.

### Assumed Practices

A set of practices shared by institutions of higher education that is unlikely to vary by institutional mission or context. Institutions must meet the Assumed Practices to obtain accreditation with HLC.

### Board of Trustees

The governing body of HLC, made up of 15 to 21 representatives from HLC member institutions and the public.

### Core Components

Subcategories of each Criterion for Accreditation that are reviewed in order to determine whether an institution meets each Criterion.

## Criteria for Accreditation

The framework for determining an institution's accreditation.

## Higher Learning Commission (HLC)

One of six regional accreditors in the United States, HLC accredits degree-granting institutions in the North Central region, which includes 19 states.

## Institutional Status and Requirements (ISR) Report

A resource available to an institution's CEO or Accreditation Liaison Officer that includes the complete institutional history with HLC, information on the status of current and upcoming accreditation events, and information on the institution's designated pathway and related events.

## Institutional Update

An online report completed annually by affiliated institutions regarding institutional health.

## staff liaison

One of HLC's Vice Presidents for Accreditation Relations, who serves as a resource for affiliated institutions.

## ELIGIBILITY AND CANDIDACY

### candidacy

Preaccreditation status offering affiliation, not membership, with HLC.

### Candidate for Accreditation

An institution with the preaccredited candidacy status that has met HLC's Eligibility Requirements and shows evidence that it is making progress toward meeting all the Criteria for Accreditation.

### Candidacy Program

The steps an institution must follow to gain candidacy with HLC.

### Eligibility Filing

Documentation submitted by an institution considering affiliation with HLC that demonstrates that it meets the Eligibility Requirements.

### Eligibility Process

The process by which HLC determines whether a non-affiliated institution is ready to begin the Candidacy Program.

### Eligibility Requirements

A set of requirements an institution must meet before it is granted candidacy.

## Initial Accreditation

An accreditation status for institutions in their first years of accreditation. Institutions in candidacy must undergo a comprehensive evaluation to ensure they meet the Assumed Practices and the Criteria for Accreditation in full to move to Initial Accreditation.

## ACCREDITATION PROCESS

### advisory visit

In response to rapidly changing dynamics at an institution, HLC may send a team of peer reviewers to visit the institution. HLC determines the scope of the team's inquiry and informs the institution.

### Assurance Argument

A narrative in which the institution explains how it meets HLC's Criteria for Accreditation, which is supported by linked documents in the Evidence File.

### Assurance Filing

Created and submitted by the institution, the filing includes the Assurance Argument with embedded links to documents in the Evidence File.

### Assurance Review

The peer review evaluation of the Assurance Filing.

### Assurance System

An online system used by institutions to provide an Assurance Argument and evidentiary materials and used by peer reviewers to complete the Assurance Review.

### comprehensive evaluation

The process used to determine whether an institution meets or continues to meet the Criteria for Accreditation. The comprehensive evaluation includes an Assurance Review or Comprehensive Quality Review, a Federal Compliance Review, an on-site visit, a student survey and a multi-campus visit, if applicable.

### dual credit courses

Courses taught to high school students for which the students receive both high school credit and college credit.

### Evaluation Summary Sheet

A document created prior to each evaluation that includes contact information for the institution and peer review team members and other information pertinent to the evaluation.

### Evidence File

Documents used in the Assurance Filing that support the institution's Assurance Argument.



## **Federal Compliance Requirements**

Requirements that HLC is obliged to enforce as part of its recognition by the U.S. Department of Education. This includes ensuring its members are meeting their Title IV program responsibilities and complying with other expectations.

### **financial indicators**

Financial data provided by the institution through the Institutional Update that allow HLC to determine if the institution is operating with integrity in its financial functions.

### **focused visit**

A team visit that occurs between comprehensive evaluations to examine specific aspects of an institution as a form of special monitoring.

### **interim report**

A report filed by an institution between comprehensive evaluations to provide updates to HLC on progress in addressing a serious issue at the institution, the resolution of which is relevant to the institution's future compliance with, or improvement regarding, the Criteria for Accreditation.

### **multi-campus visit**

A visit to a selection of an institution's branch campuses that occurs as part of the comprehensive evaluation.

### **multi-location visit**

A visit to a selection of off-campus additional locations of an institution with three or more additional locations, occurring once every five years.

### **non-financial indicators**

Data provided by institutions through the Institutional Update that help HLC determine if the institution may be at risk of not meeting components of the Criteria for Accreditation.

### **Student Opinion Survey**

An online survey conducted by HLC as part of comprehensive evaluations. The opinions and data gathered assist peer reviewers in developing questions for their meetings during the on-site visit.

## **AQIP PATHWAY**

### **Action Project**

A yearly quality improvement project conducted by an institution on the AQIP Pathway.

### **Action Project Update**

A required report submitted by an institution on the AQIP Pathway describing the progress of one of its Action Projects.

### **AQIP Pathway**

A pathway for maintaining accreditation with HLC based on the principles of continuous quality improvement. (AQIP stands for Academic Quality Improvement Program.)

### **AQIP Pathway Categories**

The framework linked to the Criteria for Accreditation that institutions on the AQIP Pathway use to examine their internal processes and explore opportunities for improvement.

### **Comprehensive Quality Review (CQR)**

As part of the comprehensive evaluation for institutions on the AQIP Pathway, the Comprehensive Quality Review shows how the institution meets the Criteria for Accreditation and includes a review of the institution's most recent Systems Portfolio, Systems Appraisal and Quality Highlights Report.

### **principles for continuous quality improvement**

The ideas on which the AQIP Pathway is premised.

### **Strategy Forum**

An event for institutions on the AQIP Pathway to facilitate new strategies and tactics for institutional improvements.

### **Systems Appraisal**

A peer review of the Systems Portfolio.

### **Systems Appraisal Feedback Report**

A peer review team's report evaluating the Systems Portfolio of an institution on the AQIP Pathway.

### **Systems Portfolio**

A document demonstrating that an institution on the AQIP Pathway meets the Criteria for Accreditation by describing how it fulfills the related AQIP Pathway Categories.

## **OPEN PATHWAY**

### **Open Pathway**

A pathway for maintaining accreditation with HLC that features a 10-year reaffirmation cycle where quality assurance and quality improvement are addressed separately.

## Quality Initiative

A major quality improvement effort conducted by institutions between Years 5 and 9 of the Open Pathway that addresses a current concern or aspiration specific to the institution.

## Quality Initiative Proposal

A proposal submitted by an institution in the Open Pathway explaining the major improvement effort the institution will undertake as its Quality Initiative.

## Quality Initiative Report

A report submitted by an institution in the Open Pathway upon completing its Quality Initiative that reflects on accomplishments, documents achievements and strategies, and defines new priorities and challenges.

## STANDARD PATHWAY

### Standard Pathway

A pathway for maintaining accreditation with HLC that features a 10-year reaffirmation cycle where quality assurance and quality improvement are integrated for comprehensive evaluations.

*See also Programs and Events.*

## INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

### additional location

A place, geographically separate from any main or branch campus, where instruction takes place and students can do one or more of the following:

Complete 50 percent or more of the courses leading to a degree program.

Complete 50 percent or more of the courses leading to a Title IV eligible certificate.

Complete a degree program that they began at another institution even if the degree completion program provides less than 50 percent of the courses leading to a degree program.

There is no base or threshold number of students or distance from the campus necessary for a facility to qualify as an additional location under this definition.

An additional location typically does not have a full range of administrative and student services staffed by the facility's personnel. Such services may be provided from the main campus or another campus.

A facility may provide access to instruction requiring students to be present at a physical location that receives interactive TV, video or online teaching. It is considered an additional location when 50 percent or more of a distance delivery program is available through one or more of these modalities at that facility.

An additional location has active status when students are enrolled. Its status is inactive when students are not enrolled. The status can change between active and inactive without approval from HLC. However, a location may only be classified as inactive with no student enrollment for a maximum of two consecutive years. At that point, HLC will require the institution to close the location.

### additional location confirmation visit

A visit to an institution's new additional location to confirm it is operating as described in the institution's original change request.

### campus/branch campus

A location of an institution that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus. HLC considers a location of an institution to be independent of the main campus if the location has all four of the following attributes:

It is permanent in nature.

It offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate or other recognized educational credential.

It has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization.

It has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

### campus evaluation visit

A visit to a new campus or branch campus after it has been approved by HLC and within six months of matriculation to assure the quality of the campus and its programs in meeting the needs of the institution's constituencies and to assure the capacity to sustain that quality.

### change of control

A transaction that affects, or may affect, corporate control, structure or governance at an accredited or candidate institution.

### Change Panel

A panel of three or more peer reviewers that evaluates a substantive change application submitted by an institution.

## **Change Visit**

An on-site visit by a peer review team in response to one or more substantive change applications submitted by an institution.

## **consortial arrangement**

An arrangement in which an HLC-accredited institution develops an agreement with an institution or group of institutions—that is, the consortial party(ies)—through which the consortial party(ies) agree to provide some portion of one or more educational programs (i.e., degrees or certificates offered for academic credit) offered by the HLC-accredited institution.

## **Consortial Arrangement Screening Form**

An online form used by institutions to initiate the process of adding or updating consortial arrangements.

## **contractual arrangement**

An arrangement in which the institution outsources some portion of its educational programs—that is, degrees or certificates offered for academic credit (including instruction, oversight of the curriculum, assurance of the consistency in the level and quality of instruction and in expectations of student performance and/or the establishment of the academic qualifications for instructional personnel)—to:

1. An unaccredited institution.
2. An institution that is not accredited by an accreditor recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.
3. A corporation or other entity.

## **Contractual Arrangement Screening Form**

An online form used by institutions to initiate the process of adding or updating contractual arrangements.

## **correspondence education**

Education provided through one or more courses by an institution under which the institution provides instructional materials by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor.

Interaction between the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student. Correspondence courses are typically self-paced. Correspondence education is not distance education.

## **desk review**

An evaluation conducted by an HLC official of a change requested by the institution.

## **distance-delivered courses**

Courses in which at least 75 percent of the instruction and interaction occurs via electronic communication, correspondence or equivalent mechanisms, with the faculty and students physically separated from each other.

## **distance-delivered programs**

Certificate or degree programs in which 50 percent or more of the required courses may be taken as distance-delivered courses.

## **distance education**

Education that uses one or more of the technologies listed below to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously. The technologies may include:

1. The internet.
2. One-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite or wireless communications devices.
3. Audio conferencing.
4. Video cassettes, DVDs and CD-ROMs, if the cassettes, DVDs or CD-ROMs are used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed above.

## **Location and Campus Update System**

An online system used by institutions to update existing locations and branch campuses. Institutions in the Notification Program may also use it to add additional locations.

## **Notification Program for Additional Locations**

A program for qualified institutions to notify HLC prior to initiating new additional locations.

## **PEER REVIEW**

### **exit session**

A meeting between the peer review team and the CEO of the institution at the conclusion of a visit.

### **Peer Corps**

The group of faculty, administrators and public members from within HLC's 19-state region who evaluate whether institutions are meeting the Criteria for Accreditation and participate in HLC decision-making bodies.

### **peer review team**

A group of peer reviewers conducting an evaluation on behalf of HLC.

### **peer reviewer**

A member of HLC's Peer Corps who may also serve as a member of HLC decision-making bodies.

### **Peer Reviewer Data Update System (PRDUS)**

The online system used by the Peer Corps that provides peer reviewers an avenue to update contact information, view scheduled visits and update availability.

### **team chair**

The leader of a peer review team, who handles contacting the institution and HLC on behalf of the team.

### **team report**

A report submitted by the peer review team to HLC documenting its findings and recommendation following an evaluation.

## **DECISION MAKING**

### **Action Letter**

Official correspondence from HLC to an institution detailing an action taken by one of HLC's decision-making bodies regarding that institution.

### **adverse action**

An action by HLC's Board of Trustees that withdraws or denies accreditation (except in denial of early initial accreditation where the institution continues candidate status), withdraws or denies candidacy, or moves the institution from accredited to candidate status.

### **Appeals Body**

A group of 10 Institutional Actions Council members appointed by the Board of Trustees.

### **Appeals Panel**

A group of five individuals selected from the Appeals Body by HLC's president that hears an institution's appeal to an adverse action by the Board of Trustees.

### **Institutional Actions Council (IAC)**

HLC's decision-making body made up of experienced peer reviewers and representatives of the public.

### **institutional response**

An institution's written response to a peer review team or Institutional Actions Council recommendation.

### **official action**

An official HLC decision made by the HLC staff, the Institutional Actions Council or HLC's Board of Trustees.

## **PROGRAMS AND EVENTS**

### **Academies**

Multi-year, mentor-facilitated programs that help HLC-accredited institutions define, develop and implement comprehensive strategies for institutional improvement.

### **annual conference**

A multi-day event featuring numerous presentations focused on accreditation and higher learning topics.

### **Assurance Argument Improvement Plan Feedback**

In the academic year preceding the comprehensive evaluation, institutions on the Standard Pathway receive an invitation from HLC to submit an improvement plan for feedback. The institution's staff liaison provides comments intended to clarify expectations regarding the issues to be addressed within the Assurance Argument.

### **Standard Pathway Q&A Webinars**

Webinars providing the opportunity to ask questions about any topic related to the Standard Pathway, including the Assurance System, embedded improvement, monitoring, and so forth.

### **Standard Pathway Seminars**

Seminars on addressing improvement in the Assurance Argument that provide institutions on the Standard Pathway with assistance in formulating improvement plans and feedback on plans that have been drafted.

### **Workshops**

Events ranging from one to three days that provide intensive, hands-on learning opportunities for individual professionals and teams of colleagues from HLC-accredited or candidate institutions.

## **ACADEMIES**

### **Academy cohort**

Institutions taking part in an Academy are grouped together in cohorts that complete the Academy experience together.

### **Academy mentors**

A group of trained individuals with expertise in either Academy topic, who facilitate team thinking throughout the Academy experience.

### **Academy Project**

A multi-faceted project focused on initiating, implementing and evaluating change related to assessment or student success. Academy teams can undertake one or more projects while participating, but it is advisable for teams to focus on one project at a time.

### **Academy Roundtable**

A multi-day event at which Academy teams conduct focused, guided work on their strategic Academy Projects and goals.

### **Academy team**

Faculty, staff and administrators from an institution who conceptualize, design and implement the institution's Academy Project.

### **Academy team lead**

A member of the Academy team who serves as the main point of contact for HLC staff, Primary Mentor and Scholar.

### **Assessment Academy**

A four-year program of in-person and virtual events tailored for institutions interested in developing an ongoing commitment to assessing and improving student learning.

### **Collaboration Network**

The online process-management portal used by institutions to document progress on their Academy Project, receive feedback from their assigned Primary Mentor and Scholar, and view the Academy Projects of other institutions.

### **Consolidated Response**

The combined feedback from an Academy team's Primary Mentor and a Scholar to the team's Project Update in the Collaboration Network.

### **Data Discovery**

A mentor-led event in the Persistence and Completion Academy at which the institution studies its current data sets and the structures currently in place to assure campus-wide engagement in data analysis and planning.

### **Event Facilitator**

A Primary Mentor selected to facilitate conversations and activities at various Academy events.

### **Impact Report**

The Academy team's culminating report, posted at the end of the Academy term, summarizing the trends that occurred throughout the project and detailing the outcomes.

### **Inventory**

#### **(Student Success Academy)**

A process of collecting and evaluating institutional data related to student populations, student success initiatives, institutional policies and procedures, or staff and faculty engagement in student success.

### **Letter of Agreement**

A document signed by the institution's president and HLC's president outlining the expectations of each party throughout the Academy experience.

### **Mentor Consultation**

An Academy event, typically conducted virtually, in which the Primary Mentor reviews the Academy team's progress and offers recommendations for the team's project development and sustainability.

### **Mentor Response**

Response provided by the Primary Mentor regarding the progress of the Academy team's project as communicated in the team's Project Update in the Collaboration Network.

### **Midpoint Roundtable**

#### **(Assessment Academy)**

A multi-day event where Academy teams reflect on and evaluate their progress, refine their Academy Projects, and receive in-person mentoring.

### **Orientation Workshop or Webinar**

An event presented by HLC to prepare the institutional representatives heading the Academy effort to assemble and lead an effective Academy team.

### **Primary Mentor**

An experienced practitioner in assessing student learning and/or student success, assigned to guide particular Academy teams for the duration of their participation in the Academy. The role of the Primary Mentor is to facilitate team thinking and a project-based approach to addressing assessment or student success. The Academy team's Primary Mentor is responsible for completing the Primary Response to each Project Update.

### **Project Updates**

Posts to the Collaboration Network by Academy teams documenting the learning outcomes, accomplishments and results of their continuing work on the Academy Project.

**Results Forum**

(Assessment Academy)

A multi-day event at the end of the Academy cycle when teams evaluate the impact of their Academy Project, showcase accomplishments, share best practices, and design strategies to sustain their progress.

**Scholar**

A subject-matter expert on the topic of assessment of student learning and/or student success contracted by HLC to offer additional guidance to Academy teams on their Project Updates.

**Senior Scholar**

A subject-matter expert contracted by HLC to consult on the design of the curriculum and activities for all Academy components and to offer additional comments on Project Updates.

**Stewardship Forum**

(Student Success Academy)

A multi-day event at the end of the Academy cycle where teams share their accomplishments and findings, compare practices and benchmarks, and define strategies to sustain their student success efforts.

**Student Success Academy**

A three-year program of in-person and virtual events designed for institutions seeking to establish sustainable structures that support students' achievement of their higher education goals.



# ONLINE HLC RESOURCES

## HLC POLICIES

All policies

[hlcommission.org/policies](http://hlcommission.org/policies)

Proposed policies

[hlcommission.org/proposed-policies](http://hlcommission.org/proposed-policies)

Adopted policy amendments

[hlcommission.org/adopted-policies](http://hlcommission.org/adopted-policies)

Assumed Practices

[hlcommission.org/assumed-practices](http://hlcommission.org/assumed-practices)

Criteria for Accreditation

[hlcommission.org/criteria](http://hlcommission.org/criteria)

Obligations of Affiliation

[hlcommission.org/obligations](http://hlcommission.org/obligations)

## CONTACT HLC

Department and staff directory

[hlcommission.org/staff-directory](http://hlcommission.org/staff-directory)

Document submission

[hlcommission.org/document\\_upload](http://hlcommission.org/document_upload)

Institutional Status and Requirements Report request form

[hlcommission.org/isr-request](http://hlcommission.org/isr-request)

## ACCREDITATION PROCEDURES

Accreditation Liaison Officer Role

[hlcommission.org/alo](http://hlcommission.org/alo)

AQIP Pathway

[hlcommission.org/aqip](http://hlcommission.org/aqip)

Comprehensive Evaluation

[hlcommission.org/comprehensive](http://hlcommission.org/comprehensive)

Dues and Fees Schedule

[hlcommission.org/dues](http://hlcommission.org/dues)

Federal Compliance

[hlcommission.org/federal-compliance](http://hlcommission.org/federal-compliance)

Institutional Change

[hlcommission.org/change](http://hlcommission.org/change)

Off-Campus Activities

[hlcommission.org/locations](http://hlcommission.org/locations)

Open Pathway

[hlcommission.org/open](http://hlcommission.org/open)

Standard Pathway

[hlcommission.org/standard](http://hlcommission.org/standard)

## ONLINE SYSTEMS

AQIP Pathway Action Project Network

[collaborate.hlcommission.org/aqip](http://collaborate.hlcommission.org/aqip)

Assurance System

[assurance.hlcommission.org](http://assurance.hlcommission.org)

Training and user support resources

[hlcommission.org/assurance-system](http://hlcommission.org/assurance-system)

Institutional Update

[inst-update.hlcommission.org](http://inst-update.hlcommission.org)

Location and Campus Update

[lcu.hlcommission.org](http://lcu.hlcommission.org)

Online Bill Payment

[epay.hlcommission.org](http://epay.hlcommission.org)

## INSTITUTIONAL EXAMPLES

Action Project Directory Archive (AQIP Pathway)

[apdarchive.hlcommission.org](http://apdarchive.hlcommission.org)

Action Project Network (AQIP Pathway; login required)

[collaborate.hlcommission.org/aqip](http://collaborate.hlcommission.org/aqip)

Assurance System Samples

[hlcommission.org/assurance-samples](http://hlcommission.org/assurance-samples)

Federal Compliance Credit Hour Worksheets

[hlcommission.org/federal-compliance](http://hlcommission.org/federal-compliance)

Quality Initiative Proposals (Open Pathway)

[qi.hlcommission.org](http://qi.hlcommission.org)

## PEER REVIEW

Peer Reviewer Application

[hlcommission.org/peer](https://hlcommission.org/peer)

Report Templates and Guidelines

[hlcommission.org/team-resources](https://hlcommission.org/team-resources)

## ONLINE SYSTEMS

HLC Portal

[hlcportal.org](https://hlcportal.org)

Peer Reviewer Data Update System (PRDUS)

[prdus.hlcommission.org](https://prdus.hlcommission.org)

## DECISION MAKING

Recent Institutional Actions

[hlcommission.org/actions](https://hlcommission.org/actions)

Decision-Making Bodies and Processes

[hlcommission.org/decision-making](https://hlcommission.org/decision-making)

## HLC PROGRAMS, EVENTS AND NEWS

Academies

[hlcommission.org/academies](https://hlcommission.org/academies)

### COLLABORATION NETWORKS

Assessment Academy

[collaborate.hlcommission.org/academyasl](https://collaborate.hlcommission.org/academyasl)

Persistence and Completion Academy

[collaborate.hlcommission.org/academyspc](https://collaborate.hlcommission.org/academyspc)

Annual Conference

[hlcommission.org/conference](https://hlcommission.org/conference)

Calendar of Events

[hlcommission.org/calendar](https://hlcommission.org/calendar)

The Leaflet

[hlcommission.org/leaflet](https://hlcommission.org/leaflet)

Standard Pathway Seminars

[hlcommission.org/standard-resources](https://hlcommission.org/standard-resources)

Workshops

[hlcommission.org/workshops](https://hlcommission.org/workshops)



