SEEKING ACCREDITATION

Information for Institutions Interested in Seeking Initial Accreditation

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Overview of the Process

BASIC INFORMATION

An institution seeking accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission must complete all of the steps in the process within the time frames prescribed, must adhere to HLC guidelines related to each step, including guidelines related to document submission, and must receive a positive decision by HLC before moving to the next step.

In general, an institution should anticipate that the process will take at least five years, and often more, to complete.

As further detailed below, an institution may not publicly indicate that it is seeking status with HLC until just prior to being granted Candidacy. **An institution does not hold any status with HLC until it is granted Candidacy.** No public statement about seeking status may be made until just prior to the comprehensive evaluation visit for Candidacy is scheduled.

Fees apply at a number of steps throughout the process. A complete list of these fees can be found in the current HLC Dues and Fees Schedule. Where applicable, fees must accompany submissions or are due at the start of a step in the process. An institution will not be permitted to proceed in the process until any required fees are received.

If at any point in the process the institution misses a required deadline, voluntarily withdraws from the process, or fails to achieve the next step in the process, the institution must start the process from the beginning of the Eligibility Process (submitting a Letter of Inquiry with Preliminary Evidence). When an institution restarts the process, it must generally wait one year before submitting a new Letter of Inquiry with Preliminary Evidence.

HLC will maintain all documents submitted by institutions in accordance with applicable HLC policies.

At various steps in the process, the institution will be asked to provide a response to recommendations, as provided in HLC policy. Additionally, certain determinations within the process are subject to review or appeals, as provided in HLC policy.

The content in this document is supplemental to HLC policy. Institutions should familiarize themselves with applicable HLC policies as they proceed through the process (see page 13). Institutions should also familiarize themselves with the HLC Glossary. Many terms in this document are defined in HLC policy or the Glossary.

QUESTIONS?

Questions about the process outlined in this document may be directed to Lil Nakutis, Accreditation Processes Manager (lnakutis@hlcommission.org), or Marla Morgen, Associate Vice President for Legal and Governmental Affairs (mmorgen@hlcommission.org).

In addition, institutions are highly encouraged to attend the Eligibility Workshop at HLC's annual conference before beginning the Eligibility Process.

ELIGIBILITY PROCESS

STEP	REQUIRED MAXIMUM TIME FRAME
1. Letter of Inquiry with Preliminary Evidence The institution submits the **Letter of Inquiry** with the required **Preliminary Evidence**. HLC screens the materials for completeness.	Missing materials are due within 30 days of request.
2. Preliminary Evidence Review and Response HLC conducts a **Preliminary Evidence review** and sends a **Preliminary Evidence Response**. If the review indicates that the Preliminary Evidence is sufficient, the institution may proceed. If the review indicates that the Preliminary Evidence is not sufficient, the institution may submit additional or updated evidence.	Additional materials are due within 30 days of request.
3. Pre-application Interview HLC conducts a **pre-application interview** with the institution.	A date for the pre-application interview must be established within 30 days after the date of the Preliminary Evidence Response. The interview must occur at least 60 days and no more than four months after the date of the Preliminary Evidence Response.
4. Post-interview Letter HLC sends a **Post-interview Letter** to the institution indicating that the institution is or is not ready to proceed. Additional information may also be requested.	
5. Letter of Intent to Submit Eligibility Filing If approved to proceed, the institution submits its **Letter of Intent to Submit the Eligibility Filing**.	Within two years of the date of the Post-interview Letter.
6. Institutional Submission of the Eligibility Filing Institution submits a completed **Eligibility Filing** and other required materials. HLC staff screens materials for completeness. May request additional materials or may return the Eligibility Filing.	Within one year of the date of the letter of intent. Missing materials are due within 30 days of request.
7. Eligibility Review Panel of two HLC peer reviewers evaluates the Eligibility Filing. Panel may request additional information from institution. Panel makes a determination about compliance and readiness to pursue Candidacy.	Review typically takes 3–5 months. Additional information is due within one year of request. Review will not proceed during that time period.
8. Letter on Eligibility HLC notifies institution of the outcome of the eligibility review. If eligible to pursue Candidacy, the institution may proceed. If not eligible to pursue Candidacy, the institution must generally wait one year before restarting the process from the beginning of the Eligibility Process.	

1. LETTER OF INQUIRY WITH PRELIMINARY EVIDENCE

The institution submits a letter to the HLC President. The letter appends Preliminary Evidence that the institution may meet the Eligibility Requirements.

A complete listing of required Preliminary Evidence and details on submission requirements for Preliminary Evidence can be found on page 10.

HLC screens the materials to ensure completeness. If not complete, HLC will request that the institution submit the missing materials within 30 days of request. If the institution cannot provide the missing materials in this time frame, the institution does not proceed with the Eligibility Process. In this instance, the Letter of Inquiry fee will be refunded.

2. PRELIMINARY EVIDENCE REVIEW AND RESPONSE

If the materials submitted with the Letter of Inquiry are complete, HLC conducts a Preliminary Evidence review.

If the review indicates that the Preliminary Evidence is sufficient, HLC sends a Preliminary Evidence Response letter to the institution to request dates to begin scheduling the Pre-application Interview.

If the review indicates that the evidence is not sufficient, HLC sends a Preliminary Evidence Response letter to the institution identifying the insufficiencies. The institution may submit additional or updated evidence within 30 days of request and request a second Preliminary Evidence review without having to pay an additional fee.

3. PRE-APPLICATION INTERVIEW

The Pre-application Interview date must be established within 30 days of the Preliminary Evidence Response letter (including paying the required fee). The Pre-application Interview must take place at least 60 days and no more than four months from the date of the Preliminary Evidence Response.

During the Pre-application Interview, HLC and the institution will discuss the Preliminary Evidence and the institution's proposed plan and timeline for pursuing status. The institution has the opportunity to ask questions about the process and its requirements.

4. POST-INTERVIEW LETTER

HLC sends the institution a Post-interview Letter indicating the timing for the next steps in the process or indicating the institution is not ready to proceed further with seeking status with HLC.

The Post-interview Letter may also include a request for additional Preliminary Evidence. In this case, the letter will indicate whether this additional Preliminary Evidence must be submitted prior to or with the Letter of Intent to Submit Eligibility Filing.

If HLC determines that the institution is not ready to proceed with the process, the institution must generally wait one year before restarting the process from the beginning of the Eligibility Process.

5. LETTER OF INTENT TO SUBMIT ELIGIBILITY FILING

The institution submits a Letter of Intent to Submit Eligibility Filing.

The institution may submit its letter of intent up to two years from the date of the Post-interview Letter. If applicable, any additional Preliminary Evidence must accompany this letter.

6. INSTITUTIONAL SUBMISSION OF ELIGIBILITY FILING

The institution submits its Eligibility Filing (see Appendix A on page 14). In the filing, the institution provides evidence that it meets all of the Eligibility Requirements.

The institution must submit the Eligibility Filing within one year from the date of the Letter of Intent to Submit Eligibility Filing.

Details on submission requirements for the Eligibility Filing can be found in the Required Materials and Submission Procedures on page 11.

HLC staff checks to ensure that the Eligibility Filing is complete. If the filing is complete, it will be forwarded to a panel for review. If it is not complete, HLC may provide the institution an opportunity to submit additional items necessary to complete the Eligibility Filing. The institution must submit the additional items within 30 days of request.

HLC may also return the Eligibility Filing to the institution with a letter informing the institution

of the issues that preclude further review. In this instance, the Eligibility Filing fee will be refunded.

7. ELIGIBILITY REVIEW

The panel review process usually takes three to five months. It is conducted by two HLC peer reviewers who have been appointed by the HLC Board to serve as Eligibility Reviewers. The purpose of the panel review is to determine whether the institution has the capacity and readiness to pursue status with HLC, specifically to host a comprehensive evaluation visit for Candidacy. The panel review determines whether the institution has presented sufficient evidence such that it appears likely to have met the Eligibility Requirements. A final determination about whether the institution has met the Eligibility Requirements will be made following the comprehensive evaluation visit for Candidacy. However, the panel review is a helpful tool for HLC and the institution to obtain a preliminary analysis without a comprehensive evaluation.

The panel may request additional information from the institution. The institution has up to one year to submit that additional information. The panel does not move forward with its review during this time. An additional fee may be required with the submission of additional information.

At the conclusion of the panel review, including any additional review following the submission of additional information, the panel will determine:

- That the institution has provided sufficient information to proceed with the process.
- The institution has not provided sufficient information to proceed with the process.

The panel will provide the reasons for its determination.

A determination by the panel that the institution has provided sufficient information in its Eligibility Filing to proceed with the process does not mean that future reviewers will reach a determination that the institution meets the Eligibility Requirements. Each evaluation team will conduct a new review of the applicable information and make an independent judgment. Similarly, the evidence presented in the filing is only a portion of the information required for an evaluation team to determine whether the institution will be awarded Candidacy.

8. LETTER ON ELIGIBILITY

HLC sends the institution a Letter on Eligibility informing it of the outcome of the panel review.

If the panel has determined that the institution has provided sufficient information to proceed with the process, HLC will request a Letter of Intent to Pursue Candidacy from the institution.

If the panel determines that the institution has not provided sufficient information to proceed with the process, the institution must generally wait one year before restarting the process from the beginning of the Eligibility Process.

APPLICATION FOR STATUS (CANDIDACY AND INITIAL ACCREDITATION)

STEP	REQUIRED MAXIMUM TIME FRAME
1. Letter of Intent to Pursue Candidacy Institution submits a **Letter of Intent to Pursue Candidacy**.	Within 90 days of the date of the **Letter on Eligibility** (possible 30-day extension).
2. Comprehensive Evaluation for Candidacy The institution submits comprehensive evaluation materials and hosts an on-site visit by the peer review team. HLC assigns the institution a staff liaison prior to the comprehensive evaluation for Candidacy.	Must take place with sufficient time to allow for action by the Board of Trustees within two years of the date of the **Letter of Intent to Pursue Candidacy** (typically takes place about one year after submission of the letter of intent).
3. Award of Candidacy The team recommendation on Candidacy is reviewed at an Institutional Actions Council (IAC) hearing and then subsequently acted on by the Board of Trustees. If Candidacy is granted, the institution is granted a term of **Candidacy**, typically four years. If Candidacy is not granted, the institution must generally wait one year before restarting the process from the beginning of the Eligibility Process.	Board of Trustees action must take place no later than two years after the date of the **Letter of Intent to Pursue Candidacy**.
4. Biennial Evaluation The institution participates in a **biennial evaluation**. If the institution is making reasonable progress toward meeting the Criteria for Accreditation and otherwise meets established requirements, the institution maintains its candidate status. If Candidacy is withdrawn, the institution must generally wait one year before restarting the process from the beginning of the Eligibility Process.	Generally occurs two years after the initial award of Candidacy.
5. Comprehensive Evaluation for Initial Accreditation The institution submits comprehensive evaluation materials and hosts an on-site visit by the peer review team.	Must take place with sufficient time to allow for action by the Board of Trustees within the established period of Candidacy, which is typically four years (typically takes place about one year prior to the end of the established period of Candidacy). This step could occur earlier, including replacing the biennial evaluation, if **Early Initial Accreditation** is requested.
6. Award of Initial Accreditation The team recommendation on Initial Accreditation is reviewed at an Institutional Actions Council (IAC) hearing and then subsequently reviewed by the Board of Trustees. If Initial Accreditation is granted, the institution is an accredited institution. If Initial Accreditation is not granted, the institution must generally wait one year before restarting the process from the beginning of the Eligibility Process. Alternatively, the Board of Trustees may continue or extend the period of Candidacy.	Board of Trustees action must take place within four years of award of Candidacy. Under no circumstances will a period of Candidacy be longer than five years, including an extension.

1. LETTER OF INTENT TO PURSUE CANDIDACY

The institution submits a Letter of Intent to Pursue Candidacy.

The institution may submit its Letter of Intent to Pursue Candidacy up to 90 days from the date of HLC's Letter on Eligibility. Upon request of the institution, HLC may, in its discretion, grant an institution up to an additional 30 days to submit the Letter of Intent to Pursue Candidacy.

2. COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION FOR CANDIDACY

The institution will be assigned an HLC staff liaison after it has submitted its Letter of Intent to Pursue Candidacy and as it schedules and begins to a prepare for a comprehensive evaluation visit for Candidacy.

The comprehensive evaluation visit for Candidacy must take place with sufficient time to allow for action by the Board of Trustees within two years of the date of the Letter of Intent to Pursue Candidacy. Typically, the comprehensive evaluation for Candidacy takes place about one year from the date of the letter of intent.

In a comprehensive evaluation for candidacy, an institution must demonstrate that it has the capacity to meet the Criteria for Accreditation fully within the period of Candidacy. An institution must also demonstrate evidence indicating that it meets the Eligibility Requirements, Assumed Practices and Federal Compliance Requirements.

Details on submission requirements for the comprehensive evaluation for Candidacy can be found in the Required Materials and Submission Procedures on page 12.

Once the comprehensive evaluation for Candidacy is scheduled, the institution may make public that it is seeking status with HLC. The institution must use HLC's prescribed language in making this announcement:

> (Name of institution) currently holds no status with the Higher Learning Commission. (Name of institution) has initiated the process of seeking candidate status with the Higher Learning Commission. HLC will conduct a comprehensive evaluation on (date) to determine whether (name of institution) should be awarded Candidacy. The team's recommendation is subject to additional levels of HLC review and decision-making. Therefore, no further information will be provided until HLC's Board of Trustees makes a final decision on the award of Candidacy. The award of Candidacy does not assure the eventual award of accreditation.

IMPORTANT: During the time period from the eligibility review to HLC's action on the comprehensive evaluation for Candidacy, the institution must not undertake any significant changes that would alter the information as described in the Eligibility Filing. Significant changes could include changes in mission, ownership or governance, as well as new programs, delivery methods, contractual or consortial relationships, and additional locations or branch campuses. Significant change may result in cancellation of any scheduled visit and require resubmission of the Eligibility Filing and review by a new panel.

3. AWARD OF CANDIDACY

Candidacy is achieved through submission of comprehensive evaluation materials, an on-site visit by a peer review team, a hearing by the Institutional Actions Council and final action by the Board of Trustees. Each of these steps of the process is conducted in accordance with HLC policy.

The Board of Trustees will grant or deny Candidacy.

If Candidacy is granted, the Board will specify the period of Candidacy. The period of Candidacy is typically four years, with a minimum period of at least two years. In exceptional circumstances, the Board may waive the required period of candidacy.

When granting Candidacy, the Board may also specify particular areas on which the institution should focus prior to the biennial evaluation.

If candidacy is denied, the institution must generally wait one year before restarting the process from the beginning of the Eligibility Process.

If the institution achieves Candidacy, it may publicly disclose its status with HLC using HLC's prescribed language:

> (Name of institution) is a candidate with the Higher Learning Commission.

4. BIENNIAL EVALUATION

An institution hosts a required biennial evaluation visit approximately two years after Candidacy is granted.

In the biennial evaluation, the institution must demonstrate that it is making reasonable progress toward meeting the Criteria for Accreditation by the end of the period of Candidacy. An institution must also demonstrate evidence indicating that it continues to meet the Eligibility Requirements and Assumed Practices. If the Board of Trustees identified particular areas of focus when granting Candidacy, the biennial evaluation will include a focused review of these areas.

Details on submission requirements for the biennial evaluation can be found in the Required Materials and Submission Procedures on page 13.

Typically, the review team does not make a recommendation following a biennial evaluation. Rather, the review team provides a report offering advice on continued progress toward meeting the Criteria for Accreditation in preparation for the evaluation for initial accreditation. In this instance, the Institutional Actions Council (IAC) reviews the report and continues Candidacy.

If, however, the team or the IAC finds that the institution is not making reasonable progress toward meeting the Criteria for Accreditation or does not meet one or more of the Eligibility Requirements or Assumed Practices, the IAC may recommend withdrawal of Candidacy. In this instance, the process will proceed through the procedures established in HLC policy for withdrawal of candidate status.

5. COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION FOR INITIAL ACCREDITATION

At the end of the period of Candidacy, an institution will be evaluated for Initial Accreditation. The comprehensive evaluation for Initial Accreditation must take place with sufficient time to allow for action by the Board of Trustees within the established period of Candidacy, which is typically four years. Typically, the comprehensive evaluation for Initial Accreditation takes place about one year prior to the end of the established period of Candidacy, typically three years after the award of Candidacy, unless an institution is seeking Early Initial Accreditation.

In a comprehensive evaluation for Initial Accreditation, an institution must demonstrate that it meets the Criteria for Accreditation. An institution must also demonstrate evidence indicating that it meets the Eligibility Requirements, Assumed Practices and Federal Compliance Requirements.

Details on submission requirements for the comprehensive evaluation for Initial Accreditation can be found in the Required Materials and Submission Procedures on page 12.

Early Initial Accreditation Process

An institution may request Early Initial Accreditation. The request must be submitted to HLC in writing at a least one year prior to any scheduled biennial evaluation. HLC will review the request and make a determination whether the biennial evaluation may be replaced with a comprehensive evaluation for Initial Accreditation. In making this determination, HLC will consider multiple factors, such as any issues identified by the team that conducted the comprehensive evaluation for Candidacy and the institution's relationship with HLC during the period of Candidacy. The institution is limited to one request for Early Initial Accreditation during the term of Candidacy.

A comprehensive evaluation for Initial Accreditation has the same requirements and follows the same procedures as a comprehensive evaluation for Initial Accreditation conducted later in the Candidacy Program. In most cases, the comprehensive evaluation for Initial Accreditation would replace the biennial evaluation.

6. AWARD OF INITIAL ACCREDITATION

Initial Accreditation is achieved through submission of comprehensive evaluation materials, an on-site visit by a peer review team, a hearing by the IAC and final action by the Board of Trustees. Each of these steps of the process is conducted in accordance with HLC policy.

In the case of a comprehensive evaluation at the end of the institution's period of Candidacy: The Board of Trustees will grant or deny Initial Accreditation. The Board of Trustees may also extend the period of Candidacy. In this instance, the institution will repeat the comprehensive evaluation for Initial Accreditation as specified by the Board of Trustees.

In the case of a comprehensive evaluation as part of a request for Early Initial Accreditation: The Board of Trustees will grant or deny Initial Accreditation. If the Board of Trustees denies Initial Accreditation, the Board of Trustees may either withdraw Candidacy or continue the period of Candidacy as would have been anticipated if the institution had not requested Early Initial Accreditation. For example, the Board of Trustees may continue Candidacy, and not grant Early Initial Accreditation, if any of the Core Components are not met or are met with concerns. If the Board of Trustees continues Candidacy, the institution will repeat the comprehensive evaluation for Initial Accreditation as specified by the Board of Trustees.

Under no circumstances shall an institution remain a candidate institution for longer than five years.

If the Board of Trustees denies Initial Accreditation and does not continue or extend the period of Candidacy, the institution must generally wait one year before restarting the process from the beginning of the Eligibility Process.

Required Materials & Submission Procedures

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

- Except for the Assurance Argument and certain specified pieces of evidence submitted for the comprehensive evaluations for Candidacy and Initial Accreditation, HLC requires that all institutional materials be submitted electronically as bookmarked PDF documents. Ensure that electronic documents are bookmarked, indexed and searchable with internal document links that allow for ease of movement across chapters, sections and subsections. Do not scan printed documents to create a PDF document, as this will result in a document that is large in file size and not text searchable. Electronic documents should be prepared by an individual with expertise in using appropriate PDF software, such as Adobe Acrobat.
- Include pagination and internal document organizational strategies that make it easy for the reader to navigate within the electronic document.
- Unless instructed otherwise, avoid links to websites or other materials outside of the required filing. Thus, links to external materials should offer only supplemental information. **Reviewers are not required to pursue external links.**
- Only use graphics and pictures if they provide specific evidence. Optimize graphics and pictures to reduce the size of the document.
- Ensure that software settings are set to create clear text and graphics, yet not make the file size too large.
- When submitting documents, please carefully consider whether documents containing personally identifiable information (PII) must be included. If the documents must be included for evaluative purposes, please redact the PII where possible. If redaction of the PII will interfere with the evaluative value of the document, please clearly identify the document as containing PII (for example, through a cover page or prominent notation on the document). PII is any information about an individual that allows the individual to be specifically identified. This includes, but is not limited to: name, address, telephone number, birthday, email, Social Security number, bank information, etc. A document does not include PII if personal information is de-identified (for example, student financial receivables without student names or bank routing information) or is provided in the aggregate (for example, data on faculty qualifications).
- Submit **only** the requested documents. If documents are applicable to more than one item in a filing, submit them once and cross-reference appropriately.
- It is the institution's responsibility to ensure that HLC has those documents necessary to provide a complete and accurate understanding of the institution's compliance with HLC's requirements. If the institution has relevant information that has not been specifically requested, it should contact HLC staff for instructions about the appropriateness of submitting the information.

- Documents will be submitted via a file sharing link or through the Assurance System. **Do not send any documents by email to HLC.**

GENERAL NOTES ON THE ASSURANCE SYSTEM

All materials for the comprehensive evaluation for Candidacy, the biennial evaluation, and the comprehensive evaluation for Initial Accreditation are submitted through HLC's Assurance System. All materials must be submitted to the Assurance System before the institution's lock date, which is four weeks in advance of the visit (materials can be submitted earlier). After the lock date, the institution will no longer be able to edit its Assurance Filing.

Peer reviewers will access all materials from the Assurance System for the on-site evaluation. The institution should not provide hard copies of materials to the team, as teams are expected to work from electronic documents in preparation for and throughout the visit.

If the evaluation team requests materials after the lock date, the team chair will enable the Addendum Tab in the Assurance System to permit the institution to submit such materials.

Additional information about the Assurance System can be found in the Assurance System Manual. A webinar titled "Assurance Tips for Institutions Seeking Accreditation" is also available to clarify the process for institutions that are seeking accreditation as they are preparing materials in the Assurance System.

PRELIMINARY EVIDENCE

With its Letter of Inquiry, the institution submits the following Preliminary Evidence. The institution is required to submit all of the following documentation and nothing more than the following documentation.

1. Basic institutional data:
   a. A list of all locations, including main and branch campuses and additional locations.
   b. All degree and certificate programs offered.
   c. All programs offered by distance or correspondence education.
   d. Enrollments in all degree and certificate programs shown by degree or certificate, location and mode of delivery.
2. Documentation regarding the incorporation of the institution in the HLC region in accordance with HLC policy. The institution must make clear whether it is seeking system accreditation for a multi-corporate structure involving multiple institutions or seeking accreditation for a single corporate structure involving only one institution. HLC will make the final decision on whether the requested scope of accreditation is appropriate.
3. Documentation demonstrating substantial presence in accordance with HLC policy.
4. Documentation attesting to legal status to operate as an institution offering higher learning in the HLC region in accordance with HLC policy and, if applicable, evidence of state authorization in good standing to offer higher learning in any other state in which it is required by state law or regulation to be authorized. (The institution must disclose any state action to suspend, limit or terminate the corporate status or higher education authorization of the institution or any related entity within the previous five years.)
5. Articles of incorporation or charter and bylaws (or operating agreement) of the institution, any parent organization or related entities.
6. A clear and complete description of the relationship between the institution and any corporate parent or other related entity.
7. A list of governing board members (or managers for LLCs) for all boards in the corporate structure, the profiles of the board members, and disclosure information regarding any ownership interest in the college or related entities, familial relationship with other board members or senior administration at the institution or any related entity, or contractual relationships with the institution or any related entity.
8. Letter from the governing board confirming its intention to seek accreditation with HLC and a copy of the minutes from the Board meeting in which the Board approved seeking accreditation.
9. Mission statement and any similar statements of vision/values.

10. Print or electronic catalogue, including other sources through which information about the institution, its personnel, and its academic programs is provided.
11. Complete description of the institution's general education program including its philosophy and objectives for general education.
12. Audits by a certified public accountant or state audit agency for the last fiscal year. Any consolidated audit must have a separate schedule for the entity seeking accreditation. (At the Pre-application Interview, the institution may also provide a letter from an accountant or bank attesting to the assets of the institution and its financial history.)
13. Comparative budgets for the past fiscal year.
14. Business plan, including projected growth in programs and enrollment, for the next three years.
15. Job description and resume of the Chief Executive Officer.
16. Outline of the faculty governance structure.
17. Roster of faculty and administrative personnel, with qualifications of individuals, their status (full or part-time, adjunct or independent consultant), department assignment and a list of the courses they typically teach.
18. Inventory of learning resources and student support services.
19. List of current accreditation relationships and their status, and information regarding any other official interactions with other accreditation organizations in the past five years
20. List of all lawsuits, prosecutions, state investigations, administrative actions, or judgments within the last five years involving claims related to (a) the academic quality of the institution, (b) the institution's recruiting or admissions, or (c) the institution's financial aid practices.
21. Plan for achieving accreditation: milestones and dates (maximum 1,000 words).

All Preliminary Evidence must be submitted as a single PDF labeled with the file name: (name of institution) Evidence.pdf.

The Letter of Inquiry and Preliminary Evidence must be submitted to HLC at hlcommission.org/upload. Select "Eligibility" from the list of submission options to ensure that the materials are sent to the correct staff member.

ELIGIBILITY FILING

The Eligibility Filing consists of three PDF documents.

As further detailed in the Eligibility Filing description in Appendix A (see page 14), PDF 1 must contain:

- A description of the institution.
- Information on any updates to the Preliminary Evidence submitted by the institution.
- A certification signed by the Chief Executive Officer and the Chair of the Board indicating that all information in the Eligibility Filing is truthful and complete and that the institution will begin to abide by the Obligations of Affiliation as soon as it receives the Letter on Eligibility.

PDFs 2 and 3 must contain specific narrative and documentary information regarding the institution's ability to meet the Eligibility Requirements.

Each PDF should be labeled with the file names as follows:

- PDF 1: (name of institution)description.pdf
- PDF 2: (name of institution)narrative.pdf
- PDF 3: (name of institution)documentation.pdf

The suggested page limit for the entire Eligibility Filing (all three PDFs) is 150 pages. For documents that are available electronically, provide the URLs in the applicable PDF.

The Eligibility Filing must be submitted to HLC at hlcommission.org/upload. Select "Eligibility" from the list of submission options to ensure that the materials are sent to the correct staff member.

COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATIONS FOR CANDIDACY AND INITIAL ACCREDITATION

The materials submitted for the comprehensive evaluation for Candidacy and comprehensive evaluation for Initial Accreditation are as follows. Any differences in submission requirements between the comprehensive evaluation for Candidacy and the comprehensive evaluation for Initial Accreditation are noted.

1. **Assurance Filing (including Introduction, Assurance Argument and associated Evidence File):** A detailed explanation of how the institution has the capacity to meet the Criteria for Accreditation fully within the period of Candidacy (comprehensive evaluation for Candidacy) or fulfills the Criteria for Accreditation (comprehensive evaluation for Initial Accreditation). The content of the Assurance Argument should be evaluative and substantiated with clear, specific evidence (versus general references to documents that may contain evidence). Special attention should be paid to particular areas that were highlighted for further development during previous reviews.
   - An overview of institutional history and context is entered in the Introduction Tab of the Assurance System.
   - The word limit for the Assurance Argument is 40,000 words.
   - Other than forms, documents in the Assurance System related to the Assurance Argument are provided through the Evidence File. **Materials in the Evidence File must be linked to at least one section of the institutional narrative.** The peer review team cannot view documents in the Evidence File that aren't linked to the narrative.
2. **Supplemental Materials:** Specific supplemental materials:
   a. All current faculty and staff handbook(s)
   b. All current student handbook(s)
   c. Audited financial statements for the two most recent fiscal periods
   d. All current institutional catalog(s) or course bulletin(s)
   - Electronic versions or hyperlinks are acceptable for these supplemental materials.
   - Name each document clearly, as further described in the Assurance System Manual.
   - Include the supplemental materials in the Evidence File. Provide a link to each item in the Assurance Argument narrative.
3. **Updated Eligibility Filing:** An update to the existing Eligibility Filing that was submitted and reviewed (includes updating the Substantial Presence Worksheet if needed).
   - Any new text should appear in underlined font (new text), while deleted text should appear in strike-through font (~~deleted text~~). The only new narrative that should be added to the previous Eligibility Filing is information explaining how the institution continues to meet the Eligibility Requirements despite the noted changes.
   - Upload the updated Eligibility Filing as a single PDF document in the Forms Tab of the Assurance System. (Peer reviewers will be able to access the Eligibility Filing through the Forms Tab. There is no need to provide a link to this document in the narrative of the Assurance Argument.)
4. **Assumed Practices:** A detailed explanation of how the institution meets the Assumed Practices.
   - Create a document titled "Evidence of Compliance With the Assumed Practices." The suggested page limit is 150 pages.
   - Upload the Evidence of Compliance With the Assumed Practices document and any supporting documentation as single PDF file to the Forms Tab of the Assurance System. (Peer reviewers will be able to access the Evidence of Compliance through the Forms Tab. There is no need to provide a link to this document in the narrative of the Assurance Argument.)
5. **Federal Compliance Requirements:** A detailed explanation of how the institution meets the Federal Compliance Requirements.
   - Download the Federal Compliance Filing Form from the Assurance System.

- Follow the instructions in the Assurance System to upload the completed Filing Form and related appendices. (There is no need to provide a link to this document in the narrative of the Assurance Argument.)

6. **Data Form for Candidacy Visit:** A form completed by the institution providing basic institutional data.
   - Download the Data Form for Candidacy Visit from the Forms Tab of the Assurance System.
   - Complete and upload the form in the Forms Tab of the Assurance System. If including other materials to respond to the data requested by the form, combine all documents (including the form) into a single PDF file before uploading it to the Forms Tab. (Peer reviewers will be able to access the form through the Forms Tab. There is no need to provide a link to this document in the narrative of the Assurance Argument.)
   - This form only needs to be completed for the comprehensive evaluation for Candidacy. Thereafter, a candidate institution will submit institutional data annually through the Institutional Update.
7. **Certification Form:** A form signed by the Chief Executive Officer and the Chair of the Board certifying that all the information submitted is truthful and complete and that the institution will continue to abide by the Obligations of Affiliation.
   - Download the Certification Form from the Forms Tab of the Assurance System.
   - Complete and upload the certification in the Forms Tab of the Assurance System.

BIENNIAL EVALUATION

For the biennial evaluation, the institution must update the information provided for the comprehensive evaluation for Candidacy. This will require submission of new forms and documents through the Assurance System (items #1-4 and #7 above). The institution should update its Assurance Argument to explain any changes at the institution since the award of Candidacy and provide an update on progress made on each of the issues and areas needing improvement identified by the Candidacy evaluation team. Please note: At the biennial evaluation, the institution does not need to provide materials regarding the Federal Compliance Requirements (item #5 above) and does not need to update the data form (item #6 above).

Related Policies and Documents

POLICIES

Eligibility Requirements (CRRT.A.10.010)

Criteria for Accreditation (CRRT.B.10.010)

Assumed Practices (CRRT.B.10.020)

Federal Compliance Requirements

Jurisdiction (INST.B.10.010)

Eligibility (INST.B.20.010)

Candidacy (INST.B.20.020)

Accreditation (INST.B.20.030)

Obligations of Affiliation (INST.B.30.020)

Dues and Fees (INST.B.30.030)

Denial or Withdrawal of Status (INST.E.60.010)

Reapplication Following a Denial or Withdrawal of Status (INST.E.80.010)

Appeals (INST.E.90.010)

DOCUMENTS

Substantial Presence Worksheet

Data Form for Candidacy Visit

Certification Form

Federal Compliance Overview and Filing Form

Dues and Fees Schedule

Appendix A: Eligibility Filing Contents

The Eligibility Filing introduces the institution and addresses each Eligibility Requirement. The Eligibility Filing consists of three PDF documents.

PDF 1

- Description of the institution
- Information on any updates to the Preliminary Evidence submitted by the institution
- Certification

PDF 2

- Evaluative narrative addressing the Eligibility Requirements

PDF 3

- Documentation supporting the evaluative narrative addressing the Eligibility Requirements

Details on submission requirements for the Eligibility Filing can be found on page 11. Note that for documents that are available electronically, the URL should be provided in the applicable PDF.

The content in this document is supplemental to HLC policy. Institutions should familiarize themselves with applicable HLC policies as they complete the Eligibility Filing. Institutions should also familiarize themselves with the HLC Glossary. Many terms in this document are defined in HLC policy or the Glossary.

CONTENTS OF PDF 1

DESCRIPTION OF THE INSTITUTION

Provide a complete description of the entity that is seeking accreditation with HLC. Include information on the following:

1. Corporate structure
2. Governance
3. Credit and non-credit programs
4. Campuses and additional locations
5. Correspondence education
6. Distance education
7. Contractual arrangements
8. Consortial arrangements
9. Any accreditation history with HLC or other accrediting agencies
10. Any parent or related entities, even if those entities are not part of the entity seeking accreditation with HLC

UPDATES TO PRELIMINARY EVIDENCE

Provide a detailed explanation about any information or documentation that has changed significantly from the submission of the Preliminary Evidence to the submission of the Eligibility Filing.

CERTIFICATION

Provide a certification signed by the Chief Executive Officer and the Chair of the Board indicating that all the information in the Eligibility Filing is truthful and complete, and that the institution will begin to abide by the Obligations of Affiliation as soon as it receives the Letter on Eligibility from HLC.

CONTENTS OF PDFs 2 AND 3

The full text of the Eligibility Requirements is available on HLC's website at hlcommission.org/eligibility-requirements.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT 1. JURISDICTION OF THE COMMISSION

Evaluative Narrative (PDF 2)

1. Identify the institution's state of incorporation and other states in which the institution is registered to do business but is not incorporated. If the institution is seeking system accreditation for multiple corporate institutions, identify the state of incorporation for each of those corporations and identify the states in which these other corporations are registered to do business but are not incorporated.
2. Describe any corporate parent, controlling organizations, subsidiaries or other related entities and identify the state of incorporation for all such entities.
3. Complete the Substantial Presence Worksheet to provide information about where the institution conducts its activities.

Required Documentation (PDF 3)

1. Articles of Incorporation and Certificate of Registration from the state of incorporation.
2. Evidence of registration to do business in other states where the institution is registered but not incorporated.
3. Articles of Incorporation and Certificate of Registration for all parent corporations, controlling organizations, subsidiaries, or other related entities.
4. Documentation supporting that the institution meets HLC's jurisdictional requirements, including the substantial presence requirement. Such documentation may include bank statements, tax records, leases or mortgages, bills, letterhead or other documents that formally establish where certain activities of the institution are taking place.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT 2. LEGAL STATUS

Evaluative Narrative (PDF 2)

1. List all locations in which the institution conducts educational activities, including distance education and other related activities, and provide a brief description of those activities.
2. Explain the process the institution has used to assure that each location, program, or activity is operating in accordance with applicable requirements regarding corporations and higher education activities in that state.
3. For each state in which the institution has sufficient presence to trigger state review, identify the agency or statutory provision that grants the institution legal authority to award degrees, offer programs, or operate as an institution of higher education in each location or by distance education.
4. Identify and explain any previous, pending or final state actions to limit, suspend or terminate legal status, degree awards, or program or other authority from the past five years.
5. Identify the corporate status of the institution as private not-for-profit, public, tribally controlled, or privately owned or publicly traded for-profit.

Required Documentation (PDF 3)

1. Documents from each applicable governmental agency indicating that the institution is authorized to operate and to offer programs and grant its credit-bearing certificates, diplomas and degrees at each location. Include documentation of authorization for distance education in the state where the institution has its main campus or, for institutions that have no on-ground campus or other locations, its principal business office, as well as from other states where the institution is required by state law or regulations to be authorized.
2. If any state has limited, suspended or terminated the institution's legal status, degree-granting authority, programs or other authority within the past five years, or if such action is or has been pending against the institution within the past five years, a copy of any state analyses outlining state findings or actions relevant to the action or pending action, and a recent (no older than 90 days before the submission of the Eligibility Filing) letter from the appropriate state entity providing information regarding the institution's current status with that entity.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT 3. GOVERNING BOARD

Evaluative Narrative (PDF 2)

1. Explain the governance structure of the board.
2. Identify the sections of the bylaws and any other legal documents that provide the board authority and provide sufficient autonomy to:
   - Exercise the duty of loyalty and the duty of care.
   - Establish and review basic policies, including those that address conflict of interest among the board and administration.
   - Ensure the financial integrity of the institution by approving the operating budget and the external financial audit.
   - Hire, evaluate and dismiss the chief executive officer.
   - Meet regularly.
   - Assure access to information necessary for the board to make sound judgments.

Required Documentation (PDF 3)

1. Articles of incorporation, charter, bylaws and any other legal documents that explain the governance structure of the board or enumerate the board's powers and responsibilities.
2. List of the institution's board members and their terms of office. The list should include brief biographical information for each board member. The list should identify any board member whose involvement with the institution includes employment, ownership, familial or contractual relationships, or who is also involved in the board of a parent corporation or other related entities.
3. Organizational chart showing the board's relationship to the administrative structures of the institution and, if applicable, the board's relationship to the board(s) of any parent corporation or other related entities.
4. If applicable, (a) and (b) for any parent or other related entities.
5. Documentation demonstrating that the board fulfills its enumerated responsibilities (e.g., minutes of board meetings and policy statements), including at least minutes for the last three meetings of the institution's board.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT 4. STABILITY

Evaluative Narrative (PDF 2)

1. Provide information on the institution's corporate form and ownership during the past two years. Identify whether the institution has undertaken any transactions that would qualify as a change of control, structure or organization. Identify any anticipated changes of this nature.
2. Provide information on the institution's operations during the past two years. Identify any growth or expansion in enrollment, academic programs, locations and modalities of delivery. Identify any anticipated changes in these areas.
3. Provide any changes in mission during the past two years. Identify any anticipated changes in mission.
4. Provide an overview of the institution's financial situation, including its income and expenses, short-term and long-term debt, and cash flow during the past two years. Describe the institution's anticipated financial health in the near future.

Required Documentation (PDF 3)

1. If applicable, legal documents regarding any transactions identified.
2. If applicable, list of all owners, investors and officers in the previous two years and their ownership interest.
3. List of degree programs, campuses and additional locations. Identify the date of initiation for each, and for campuses and additional locations, identify the address of each.
4. Audited financial statements for the previous two academic years.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT 5. MISSION STATEMENT

Evaluative Narrative (PDF 2)

1. Identify the statements of mission. Statements of mission include any mission statements, vision statements, values statements, goals statements and statements of institutional priorities.
2. Identify the dates on which the statements of mission were approved by the board and the means by which they were approved
3. Explain how the statements of mission address:
   - The nature of the higher learning provided by the institution.
   - The purposes of that learning.
   - The students for whom that learning is intended.
   - The constituencies (including geographic area) to be served by the institution.
   - The institution's place within the broader higher learning community.
   - The institution's commitment to preparing students for their professional and civic lives.

Required Documentation (PDF 3)

1. Statements of mission.
2. Minutes of the governing board's meeting(s) in which the statements of mission were formally adopted.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT 6. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Evaluative Narrative (PDF 2)

1. Explain the institution's academic programs, including information on length, credit hours, content, degree requirements, contact hours and assignments.
2. Provide the stated, required learning outcomes for each program. Explain how the learning outcomes are appropriate and sufficiently rigorous for that program. Explain how the learning outcomes ensure that graduates are prepared for their professional and civic lives. Explain how the institution assesses whether students are meeting those learning outcomes.
3. Explain how the institution's academic programs are in fields that are appropriate for higher education, including how they relate to fields of study currently offered in U.S. higher education, whether such fields are generally studied at other institutions of higher education accredited by agencies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, and whether such fields are accepted or recognized by employers, state governments, licensing entities, etc. Include information about how the institution focuses its attention on its degree programs even though it also may offer credit-bearing certificate or diploma programs. Special purpose institutions or those with programs in very new fields must make clear how their programs relate to existing programs currently offered at institutions of higher education and general acceptance by higher education and by society of the new field or discipline.
4. Show how the institution's undergraduate programs integrate effective general education appropriate in length and content as well as appropriate to the institution's mission. Explain the purpose, philosophy, and established framework for the general education, as well as its content and required learning outcomes. If the institution offers only graduate programs, explain how the institution ensures that its students have completed appropriate general education as undergraduates.
5. Explain the institution's policies and processes, if any, for acceptance of transfer credit and recognition of prior learning; include the percentage of credits students may apply through these processes to any degree or credit-bearing certificate awarded by the institution.
6. If the institution outsources some or all of any of its academic programs to another entity, provide information about that entity, including whether the entity is accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education for Title IV purposes; the entity's responsibilities relative to the academic programming (e.g., delivering courses, selecting faculty, recruiting, etc.); and how the institution assures the quality of the services or content provided by the other entity.

Required Documentation (PDF 3)

1. Catalog or other official documents that outline the institution's academic program requirements, course descriptions, and learning outcomes for each academic program.
2. Documents outlining the institution's program to assess student learning (e.g., advisory committee minutes, program documents, summary of assessment results, etc.).
3. Documents that demonstrate that the institution's educational programs are in fields that are found among the degree offerings of other accredited institutions of higher education and are widely accepted by employers, state governments, etc.
4. Documents that demonstrate how the institution integrates general education into undergraduate degree programs and/or ensures that its students have completed appropriate general education as undergraduates.
5. Policies on transfer and recognition of prior learning.
6. Contracts and other documents regarding the outsourcing of some or all of any academic program offered by the institution to another entity.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT 7. INFORMATION TO THE PUBLIC

Evaluative Narrative (PDF 2)

1. Provide an overview of the ways in which the institution makes the required information available to current and prospective students.
2. Describe the institution's procedures to ensure that required information is made available to current and prospective students in a current and complete manner.
3. Describe the institution's current affiliations with national, regional and specialized accrediting bodies and state agencies and any other similar affiliations. Include information on the status of those recognitions or relationships during the past five years.

Required Documentation (PDF 3)

1. Catalog, student handbook and other relevant materials distributed to prospective and current students to communicate the required information.
2. Policies and procedures regarding the institution's process for making the required information available in a current and complete manner.
3. Documents identifying the institution's current affiliations with national, regional, and specialized accrediting bodies and state agencies in the past five years. Include documents that define any special relationships or restrictions with state or federal financial aid programs.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT 8. FINANCIAL CAPACITY

Evaluative Narrative (PDF 2)

1. Describe the institution's audit practices and audit history.
2. Describe how the institution ensures the use of sound accounting and management practices.
3. Explain the budgeting process at the institution and evaluate the institution's recent history (three years) of budgeting. Compare budgeted income and expenses against actual income and expenses.
4. Identify the institution's expenditures directly related to the support of the educational programs.
5. If applicable, document and explain the resolution of any operating losses in the last three years.
6. Identify the board's policies on fiscal oversight, including the use of reserves and endowment, and practices for reviewing and approving the budget and audit.

Required Documentation (PDF 3)

1. Two most recent financial audits for the institution. If the institution is part of a larger corporate entity with a consolidated audit, provide the "Supplemental Information" for the institution from the audit of the larger corporate entity. The "Supplemental Information" must be sufficiently particularized to evaluate the institution's income, expenses and allocation of financial support for its major expenditures.
2. Policies regarding fiscal management, including the use of sound accounting and management practices.
3. Three years of comparative budgets: the last fiscal year, the current fiscal year, and projections for the next fiscal year. Include relevant notes about basic assumptions underlying the budgets.
4. Cash-flow analyses for the past two years.
5. The institution's primary reserve ratio. The primary reserve ratio is calculated as (expendable net assets/total expenses).
6. Board policies on fiscal oversight, including the use of reserves and endowment and practices for reviewing and approving the budget and audit.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT 9. ADMINISTRATION

Evaluative narrative (PDF 2)

1. Identify the sections of the bylaws and other legal documents that outline:
   - The duties and responsibilities of the chief executive officer.
   - The source of the chief executive officer's authority to implement board policies and administer the daily activities of the institution.
   - The accountability of the chief executive officer for effective administration of the institution.
2. Explain the institution's administrative structure. Outline the processes by which the

administration works with the board and faculty governance structures to make decisions for the institution.

Required Documentation (PDF 3)

1. Job description for the chief executive officer and for senior administrators, including at least the chief academic officer (provost) and chief financial officer.
2. Name and title of the chief executive officer and other senior administrators , including at least the chief academic officer (provost)and chief financial officer, and brief biographical information for each one.
3. Minutes of the board meeting at which the chief executive officer was appointed and the effective date of the appointment.
4. Organizational chart that depicts the institution's administrative structure.
5. Administrative policies of the institution.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT 10. FACULTY AND OTHER ACADEMIC PERSONNEL

Evaluative Narrative (PDF 2)

1. Identify the faculty and academic personnel at the institution by position, including their roles and responsibilities.
2. Explain how the faculty is of sufficient size and capability to create and support learning environments, whether on campus or off, for appropriately rigorous higher learning. If the institution does not have a core of full-time faculty, provide an explanation as to how an alternate arrangement achieves this requirement.
3. Explain the institution's faculty governance structure, including any faculty governance bodies.
4. Describe the structures and processes through which faculty and academic personnel exercise appropriate oversight over all of the institution's educational offerings, regardless of the modality or location of delivery. Explain how faculty discharge their academic responsibilities, including setting and reviewing curriculum, teaching, developing assessment strategies and programs, conducting academic program review, and reviewing assessment results.
5. Describe the process for hiring and reviewing faculty and academic personnel, including the process for establishing faculty and other academic job descriptions and required qualifications, and for reviewing performance (including tenure and promotion). Identify by position the individuals involved in those processes.

Required Documentation (PDF 3)

1. Job descriptions for faculty and academic positions.
2. List of all full-time, part-time and adjunct academic personnel and the credentials or experience that qualify each for their responsibilities (include departmental assignment, courses taught, and level of instruction). Identify all earned degrees, fields of study, and the institutions that issued them. Documentation of experiential credentials must include evidence of publicly recognized professional competence.
3. Documentation regarding the faculty-student ratio by program or department.
4. Documents that outline faculty governance structures, including documents that explain the role of academic personnel in academic oversight.
5. Sample of minutes of meetings of the faculty structures through which oversight is exercised.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT 11. LEARNING RESOURCES

Note: The term "libraries" in this requirement is broadly defined to include information networks and computer databases as well as print media.

Evaluative Narrative (PDF 2)

1. Describe the learning resources the institution makes available to its students and how those learning resources support the curriculum and mission of the institution.
2. Describe the learning resources specific to individual degree programs.
3. Describe how the institution assures access to learning resources for students participating in distance education.
4. If a contractual partner provides learning resources, explain how the institution assures the quality of those learning resources.

Required Documentation (PDF 3)

1. Inventory of learning resources for students, including program-specific learning resources.
2. Documents that explain for students, regardless of their location, the learning resources available to them (e.g., student handbooks, catalog, orientation materials).
3. Contracts or agreements for outsourced or shared learning resources.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT 12. STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Evaluative Narrative (PDF 2)

1. Describe the student support services the institution makes available to its students and how these resources support the curriculum and mission of the institution.
2. Describe the student support services specific to individual degree programs.
3. Describe how the institution assures access to student support services for students participating in distance education.
4. If a contractual partner provides student support services, explain how the institution assures the quality of those student support services.

Required Documentation (PDF 3)

1. Inventory of student support services, including program-specific student support services.
2. Documents that explain for students, regardless of their location, the student support services available to them (e.g., student handbooks, catalog, orientation materials).
3. Contracts or agreements for outsourced or shared student support services.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT 13. PLANNING

Evaluative Narrative (PDF 2)

1. Explain the institution's structures, processes, and schedules for short-term and long-term planning. Include information about strategic planning as well as planning related to business and academic operations.
2. Explain how the institution's planning and goal-setting link to the institution's mission.
3. Evaluate the institution's record of planning and accomplishment of goals identified in planning.
4. Explain how the institution utilizes data derived from assessment of student learning and related processes to inform planning.

Required Documentation (PDF 3)

1. Planning documents.
2. Documentation outlining the planning process, including the link between planning and mission, and between planning and assessment.
3. Documentation regarding the monitoring of planning, such as the tracking of goal accomplishment.
4. Documentation indicating that planning is an ongoing activity (e.g., minutes of planning meetings, formally adopted plans).

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT 14. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Evaluative narrative (PDF 2)

1. Provide an overview of the institution's policies and procedures. This should include, at a minimum: admissions policies; academic policies; student financial policies; student conduct policies; employment policies; faculty policies (research, promotion and tenure); policies on discrimination and harassment; grievance/complaint policies, etc. Include information about how these policies differ for specific programs or groups of students or employees.
2. Explain the processes by which the institution creates, implements and reviews policies. Identify by position those individuals who are involved in each aspect of the process.

Required Documentation (PDF 3)

1. Catalog, student handbook, employee handbook and other relevant materials highlighting the required policies.
2. Documents regarding policy creation, implementation and review.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT 15. CURRENT ACTIVITY

Evaluative Narrative (PDF 2)

1. For the last three years, provide the number of students in each degree program and credit-bearing certificate program, including matriculation date and anticipated graduation date for each student as applicable.
2. If the institution has graduated students, provide the number of students that have graduated in each academic program for the last three years.
3. If some programs currently do not enroll students, provide timelines for expected enrollment.

Required Documentation (PDF 3)

1. A copy of the degree (diploma) the institution will award (or currently awards) its graduates.
2. If the institution has awarded degrees, samples of actual student transcripts documenting the award of actual degrees to students.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT 16. INTEGRITY OF BUSINESS AND ACADEMIC OPERATIONS

Evaluative Narrative (PDF 2)

1. Outline the institution's processes for ensuring that it remains in compliance with all legal and regulatory requirements.
2. Information about any criminal investigations in the last 10 years conducted by a state agency, the US Department of Education or other bodies regarding the institution or its current and former employees with respect to their relationship to the institution. Include information about the circumstances and outcome of the investigation.
3. Information about any lawsuits in the last 10 years related to the institution's academic programs, financial aid, recruiting or admissions, business operations, or other actions. Include the docket information for the lawsuit. Include information about the circumstances and outcome of the lawsuit (including any settlements or judgments, with amount).

Required Documentation (PDF 3)

1. Policies and procedures that ensure the institution complies with all legal and regulatory requirements.
2. Documentation indicating the original allegations and outcome or current status of all investigations and lawsuits.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT 17. CONSISTENCY OF DESCRIPTION AMONG AGENCIES

Evaluative Narrative (PDF 2)

1. Explain the descriptions of institutional structure and operations the institution has provided to other accrediting agencies, to state agencies that have authorized the institution, and to the U.S. Department of Education, if the institution is receiving Title IV or has filed an application for eligibility.

Required Documentation (PDF 3)

1. Scope of accreditation status provided by any other accreditor that has granted the institution accreditation or any pre-accreditation status and scope of authorization provided by state agencies.
2. Descriptive information provided by the institution in its electronic application to the U.S. Department of Education.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT 18. ACCREDITATION RECORD

Evaluative Narrative (PDF 2)

1. Describe the institution's current and previous accreditation relationships within the past five years, including applications for status with another institutional accreditor and relationships involving specialized accrediting agencies for educational programs. Indicate whether any agency has revoked or withdrawn accreditation or placed the institution on sanction or show-cause within the past five years. Also indicate whether the institution has withdrawn or resigned from status with another accrediting agency or withdrawn an application for status within the past five years and the circumstances of that withdrawal. Describe the accrediting actions or proposed accrediting action of each agency and the reasons for the action as identified by the agency.

Required Documentation (PDF 3)

1. Action letters and letters of resignation related to the institution's current and previous accreditation relationships within the past five years, as described above.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT 19. GOOD FAITH AND PLANNING TO ACHIEVE ACCREDITATION

Evaluative Narrative (PDF 2)

1. Explain the institution's planning process to ensure that it meets HLC's Criteria for Accreditation in the candidacy period.
2. If applicable, identify the institution's status with an appropriate recognized specialized or professional accreditor or explain institutional efforts to achieve such status while the institution is a candidate with HLC. A single-purpose institution must demonstrate that it is accredited by, or actively seeking accreditation with, the specialized accrediting agency most closely related to the institution's single-purpose programs and that the agency is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or CHEA.
3. If the institution offers programs that require specialized accreditation or recognition in order for its students to be certified or sit for licensing examinations, describe how this is explained to current and prospective students, including how the institution explains to students the distinction between regional and specialized or program accreditation and the relationships between licensure and the various types of accreditation. If the institution lacks specialized or professional accreditation necessary for licensure in specific states, explain how students are informed about the requirements in those states.

Required Documentation (PDF 3)

1. Copy of the board minutes authorizing the institution to seek accreditation with HLC.
2. Plan for achieving accreditation with HLC.
3. If applicable, documentation of the institution's status with, or application for status with, the specialized accreditor or accreditors most closely associated with the discipline of the programs offered by institution.
4. Disclosures to students explaining consequences of specific programs lacking specialized or professional accreditation.