



EFFECTIVE DATE OF ACCREDITATION ACTIONS

Policy Change Adopted on Second Reading

The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Board of Trustees (“the Board”) adopted this policy on second reading at its meeting on February 25–26, 2021.

Background

Previous HLC policy providing that, as a general rule, all accreditation actions are effective as of the date action is taken did not explicitly acknowledge the fact that there are exceptions or explain the relationship of this policy to adverse actions. The adopted change clarifies this matter for institutions, students and peer reviewers. Specifically with respect to adverse actions, the revision clarifies that HLC’s Board routinely takes into account the effect of adverse actions on students’ ability to complete their studies and earn their degrees from a member institution before determining an effective date. Rather than “Accreditation,” the policy was also renamed “Effective Date of Accreditation Actions.”

In addition, the change relocates and consolidates language from this policy pertaining to seeking accreditation to INST.B.20.020, Candidacy and Initial Accreditation. See the [adopted changes](#) to that policy that the Board approved at its February meeting.

HLC circulated these policy changes to the membership and other interested parties after the Board’s November meeting. No comments were received.

Implementation

This policy is effective immediately.

Adopted Policy

Wording that was deleted or revised is shown as strikethrough (~~old wording~~); new language, whether through addition or revision, is shown in bold (**new wording**). Wording that was moved to INST.B.20.020, Candidacy and Initial Accreditation (see [adopted revisions](#) to that policy), is shown with a double

strikethrough (~~moved wording~~). These revisions have been made on HLC's website at hlcommission.org/policies.

Policy Title: **Effective Date of Accreditation Actions**

Number: INST.B.20.030

Grant of Initial Accreditation

~~The Board of Trustees reviews an institution's application for initial accreditation and all related materials after the institution has undergone evaluation by a team of peer reviewers and an Institutional Actions Council hearing, as defined in Commission policy. Only institutions that have completed candidacy, or been exempted from candidacy by the Board of Trustees following Commission policies on Candidacy, shall be eligible for initial accreditation. The Board of Trustees may grant or deny initial accreditation based on its determination of whether the institution meets the Eligibility Requirements, Criteria for Accreditation, Core Components, and Federal Compliance Requirements. If the Board of Trustees grants initial accreditation, it may grant such accreditation subject to interim monitoring, restrictions on institutional growth or substantive change, or other contingency.~~

Early Initial Accreditation

~~An institution may apply for early initial accreditation after two or three years of candidacy following Commission policies on candidacy. The Board of Trustees shall have the discretion to continue candidacy, instead of granting early initial accreditation, in circumstances including, but not limited to, the following: if the Board determines that one or more of the Core Components are not met or met with concerns; if a recommendation for early initial accreditation is conditioned on the scheduling of interim monitoring; or in other circumstances where the Board concludes that a continuation of candidacy, or extension of candidacy to a fifth year, is warranted. Any extension of candidacy to a fifth year shall be granted following Commission policies on extension of candidacy. Such actions to continue candidacy, thereby denying early initial accreditation, or to extend candidacy to a fifth year shall not be considered denial of status and are not subject to appeal.~~

Accreditation Cycle

~~Institutions must have accreditation reaffirmed not later than four years following initial accreditation, and not later than ten years following a reaffirmation action. The time for the next reaffirmation is made a part of the accreditation decision, but may be changed if the institution experiences or plans changes. The Commission may extend the period of accreditation not more than one year beyond the decennial cycle or~~

~~one year beyond the initial accreditation cycle for institutions that present good and sufficient reason for such extension.~~

Effective Date of Accreditation

The effective date of ~~initial accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation or other Commission any accreditation~~ action will be the date the action was taken **unless otherwise stated in these policies or other HLC requirements.**

~~The Commission's~~ HLC's Board may grant initial accreditation, with the contingency noted in this subsection, to an institution that applies for accreditation and is determined by ~~the Commission~~ HLC to have met the Criteria for Accreditation but has not yet graduated a class of students in at least one of its degree programs, as required by the Eligibility Requirements. Institutions shall have completed the two-year required minimum candidacy period or received a waiver from ~~the Commission's~~ HLC's Board of Trustees. Such action shall be contingent on the institution's graduation of its first graduating class in at least one of its degree programs within no more than thirty (30) days of the Board's action. In such cases, the effective date of accreditation will be the date of this graduating class.

If HLC's Board takes an adverse action as defined under these policies, the Board shall establish the effective date of such action to be no earlier than the date on which any appeal by the institution is determined to be unsuccessful or, in the event the institution does not appeal, immediately after a conferral of degrees subsequent to the academic term during which the Board takes the adverse action. In establishing the effective date, the Board may also take into account a reasonable period for teach-out as allowed by federal regulations. The Board will take into account any potentially negative impact on current student enrollment prior to determining the effective date of any adverse action.

~~Assumed Practices in the Evaluative Framework for Initial and Reaffirmation of Accreditation~~

~~An institution seeking initial accreditation or removal of Probation or Show Cause, must explicitly address these requirements when addressing the Criteria. The institution must demonstrate conformity with these Practices as evidence of demonstrating compliance with the Criteria. Institutions undergoing reaffirmation of accreditation will not explicitly address the Assumed Practices except as identified in section INST.A.10.030. Any exemptions from these Assumed Practices must be granted by the Board and only in exceptional circumstances.~~

Policy Number Key

Section INST: Institutional Processes

Chapter B: Requirements for Achieving and Maintaining Affiliation

Part 20: Defining the Affiliated Entity

Last Revised: February 2021

First Adopted: August 1987

Revision History: renumbered November 2010, revised February 2012, June 2015, November 2015, November 2019, February 2021

Notes: Policies combined November 2012 - 1.1(a)1, 1.1(a)2, 1.1(a)3, 1.4, 2013 – 1.1(a)1.2, 1.1(a)1.3, 1.1(a)1.4.

Related Policies: INST.E.90.010 Appeals; FDCR.B.10.010 Commission Approval of Institutional Teach-Out Arrangements