



RELATIONS WITH OTHER RECOGNIZED ACCREDITORS

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

The adopted revision removes outdated language about cooperative review of institutions operating in multiple regions and consolidates and clarifies policies regarding other interactions with other recognized accreditors, including notification of accreditation actions, information sharing and concurrent visits.

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**). These revisions have been made on HLC’s website at hlcommission.org/policies.

~~Policy Title: Cooperative Review of Institutions Operating Across Regions~~

~~Number: COMM.C.10.010~~

~~To preserve the values and practices of peer review and regional accreditation, the Commission’s evaluation of affiliated institutions that deliver education at a physical site(s) in another region(s) within the U.S. or its territories will be undertaken with the participation of the host regional accrediting commission(s). This will~~

include the joint (home/host) evaluation of the off-campus sites in a host region against the accreditation standards of that region.

Procedures for the evaluation of colleges and universities operating interregionally will honor these basic principles:

1. The mission of the institution will be respected throughout the evaluation process.
2. The design and implementation of the strategy fashioned to evaluate its host region's instructional sites will be developed collaboratively by the participating regional commissions together with the affected institution.
3. The home region's evaluation processes will serve as the basis for the joint evaluations and the home region will take the leadership role in initiating and overseeing the process.
4. The home region will be solely responsible for final accrediting actions, but will respond to issues brought to its attention by the host commission as identified through its involvement in the institutional review.
5. Host commission participation in an interregional accrediting process shall not constitute accreditation of the institution by that commission.
6. When an institution moves instructional activities into another region the commission in the home region will consult with the host region and institution in determining whether the new activities are subject to review under the interregional accrediting process.
7. The host region retains the discretion to determine its involvement in the evaluation of institutions operating interregionally.

(In keeping with the agreement reached by the regional accrediting associations, the procedures for evaluating institutions operating at transregional sites will be revisited every three years.)

Process for Evaluating Institutions Operating Interregionally. As part of its review processes for each institution operating off-campus locations outside of the region, the Commission will determine which locations are to be visited. The Commission will then notify other regional accrediting commissions if a site review is scheduled in their region(s) as part of a substantive change or comprehensive review. For those locations to be visited in another region, the Commission will inform the host regional agency(ies) of such visit(s) and give the opportunity to include a representative on the visiting team to the sites within the host region. Such representatives will participate as members of the site team and will apply the Commission's

standards and processes. Findings from the separate site visits will be incorporated into the institutional report as determined by the Commission.

~~Recognition of Institutions Operating Interregionally. Accreditation or candidacy granted by the Commission applies to all educational activities of the institution. Unless a unit is designated as separately accreditable (see the Policy on Separately Accreditable Institutions), the Commission is responsible for reviewing educational activities offered by institutions it accredits, including those offered in other regions (host regions).~~

~~If the state of incorporation and central operations of an institution are located in a region of another U.S. regional accreditor, then the accreditation decisions of that regional accreditor (the home region) that are related to the educational activities of that institution will be recognized and accepted by the Commission, including those decisions related to the educational activities of the institution in the North Central region.~~

~~Policy Number Key~~

~~Section COMM: Commission Obligations~~

~~Chapter C: Relationships with External Agencies~~

~~Part 10: General~~

~~Last Revised: November 2012~~

~~First Adopted: January 1983, February 1986, June 2000~~

~~Revision History: February 1996, February 1998, June 2001, February 2008, June 2008, February 2009, June 2012~~

~~Notes: Policies combined in November 2012 — 3.13, 3.13(a), 3.13(b)~~

~~Related Policies~~

Policy Title: Relations With Other Recognized Accrediting Agencies

Number: COMM.C.10.020

Notification of Actions and Other Institutional Information. HLC will notify other recognized accreditors of accreditation actions taken by HLC's Board of Trustees in accordance with the requirements set forth in the Notice of Accreditation Actions, Public Notices, and Public Statements policy.

Other Information Provided to Recognized Accrediting Agencies. If another recognized accreditor seeks written or other information about a current or previous member institution, or about an institution that has previously sought status with HLC, HLC may, in its discretion, forward that information to the

other accreditor after receiving a written request. HLC may, but is not required to, consult with or otherwise inform the member institution regarding the request.

Consideration for the Accreditation Decisions of and Information Provided by Other Recognized Accrediting Agencies. ~~The Commission~~ HLC will base its accreditation decisions on its own requirements, policies and procedures ~~the grant or reaffirmation of accreditation on its own Criteria for Accreditation and processes and will evaluate the entire institution, but in granting or reaffirming status to an institution it will take into consideration actions, particularly but not exclusively adverse actions, sanctions, and show cause orders, taken or issued by any recognized institutional, specialized or professional accrediting agency previously or currently associated with an institution.~~

~~Consideration for the Accreditation Decisions of Other Agencies.~~ However, ~~in determining whether an institution meets the Commission's Eligibility Requirements, Criteria for Accreditation and Commission HLC Requirements, the Commission will~~ HLC may consider the reports, action letters and ~~other~~ information of other recognized ~~institutional, specialized and professional~~ accrediting agencies previously or currently associated with the institution, with specific attention to any adverse, probationary or show-cause actions. ~~The Commission will expect~~ HLC also requires that institutions will disclose such information ~~in the Eligibility Process and place it in its Assurance File when seeking candidate or accredited status or when undergoing regular review by the Commission through any pathway to HLC as required by the Obligations of Membership.~~ ~~The Commission~~ HLC may request information directly from ~~the a~~ recognized accrediting agency and ~~place it in the Assurance File~~ **include such information** for review by an evaluation team ~~for consideration in the~~ **considering an** accrediting action.

In considering a substantive change ~~the Commission~~ HLC may request information from an institution regarding its ~~specialized or professional~~ **other** accreditations or may request it directly from the accrediting agency and take it into account in the accrediting action.

If another ~~recognized~~ accrediting agency **recognized by the U.S. Department of Education** has denied or withdrawn ~~affiliation accreditation~~ or pre-accreditation or placed ~~sanctions on~~ the institution ~~on sanction, the Commission~~ HLC, through its decision-making processes and subject to ~~the limitations in the Eligibility Requirements~~ its requirements, will carefully weigh these matters in reaching its own decision to grant or **reaffirm** accredited or candidate ~~for accreditation~~ status. If it chooses to grant ~~affiliation or reaffirm accredited or candidate status~~ to such an institution, it will provide the U.S. Secretary of Education a written explanation within thirty (30) days of taking action of why the issues that led to the action by the other

~~recognized accrediting agency did not preclude the Commission HLC from reaching a its decision to grant accreditation or candidacy or did not otherwise justify a different action.~~

~~Information Provided to Other Recognized Accrediting Agencies. If the Commission takes action to place an institution on notice or probation or withdraw or deny accreditation or candidate for accreditation status, or if the Commission places an institution on show cause, the Commission will notify all recognized accreditors at the same time that it notifies the institution and the U.S. Department of Education but not later than thirty days after the action, and will include a Public Disclosure Notice that provides reasons for the Commission's decision. If the action was denial or withdrawal of accredited or candidate for accreditation status that Public Disclosure will within sixty (60) days after the action becomes final include comments from the affected institution or information to indicate that the institution was provided an opportunity to comment but did not do so. The Commission will notify state higher education agencies of an action to reaffirm or grant accreditation or initial candidacy or approve a substantive change or the results of monitoring within thirty days of the action; it will notify the state higher education agency of a voluntary resignation by an institution of its accredited or candidate status within thirty days of receiving notification from the institution of the resignation.~~

~~If another recognized accreditor seeks written or other information about an institution that has accredited or candidate status with the Commission, or that has previously sought such status with the Commission, the Commission will forward that information to the other accreditor after receiving a written request.~~

~~**Coordinated Concurrent** Visits with Other Recognized Accrediting Agencies. The Commission If initiated by a member institution, HLC may conduct a ~~coordinated~~ visit concurrently with a specialized or professional ~~another recognized~~ accrediting agency recognized by the USDE or CHEA. Coordinated visits typically will be limited to no more than three participating agencies. While the teams of the participating agencies may coordinate ~~some or many~~ of their activities on campus, **including information gathering, representatives of other recognized accreditors shall not participate in HLC team deliberations, and any decision making and the production of the a team report will be done separately by each agency. A letter of agreement for each coordinated visit, signed by the Presidents of the participating agencies or their designees, will lay out the level of coordination and interaction allowed among agency representatives involved in the visit.**~~

Policy Number Key

Section COMM: HLC Obligations

Chapter C: Relationships with External Agencies

Part 10: General

Last Revised: February 2021

First Adopted: January 1983, February 1986, June 2000

Revision History: February 1996, February 1998, June 2001, February 2008, June 2008, February 2009, June 2012, April 2013, February 2021

Notes: Former policy number – 9.1

Related Policies: