

Institutional Actions Council Hearing Process

Instructions for Institutions and Evaluation Team Representatives

Overview

The Institutional Actions Council (IAC) Hearing allows for a second careful review of an evaluation team's work to ensure that the team's recommendation is well-supported and in keeping with HLC policy and practice. It provides an opportunity for discussion between the IAC Hearing Committee members and representatives of the institution and team about the evaluation and the team's recommendation.

In accordance with HLC policy, an IAC Hearing is conducted for any institution:

- That is being considered for candidacy or initial accreditation.
- That has received a recommendation from the peer review team to impose the sanctions of Notice or Probation, impose a Show-Cause Order, remove Probation, or withdraw status.

In all of these cases, the Hearing Committee can sustain or change the team's recommendation. The committee makes a recommendation to the Board of Trustees, which takes final action.

Part 1. Preparing for the IAC Hearing

HLC will send the following to each member of the Committee:

1. All materials sent to the evaluation team.
2. The peer reviewers' evaluation report.
3. The institutional response to the evaluation report and other pertinent materials for committee review.

Institutional Representatives

The institution should:

1. **Identify any conflicts of interest with members of the IAC Hearing Committee.** The five peer reviewers and one public member who make up the Hearing Committee are members of the IAC. The committee is constituted according to HLC policy, and each committee member completes a Confirmation of Objectivity declaration. In doing so, the committee member affirms that they will act with objectivity and without conflict of interest with respect to the institution. The hearing schedule contains a list of committee members. The institution should notify the HLC office immediately if it appears that any member may have a conflict of interest.

2. **Determine the most appropriate institutional representatives to attend the hearing and notify HLC.** It is in the institution's best interest to review carefully the issues that led to the need for a hearing and make a determination about which individuals will best be able to respond to questions that Hearing Committee members are likely to have. The institution is encouraged to contact the HLC staff liaison to discuss IAC Hearing participation if it is unclear who from the institution would best represent the likely topics to be covered.

The institution must submit the names and titles of the institutional representatives attending the hearing to HLC one week before the meeting. Institutions should send no more than four representatives. It is not typical for the institution's legal counsel to attend the hearing. However, if legal counsel will be present, this person must be identified in the list provided to HLC. Legal counsel may quietly confer with the institution during the session, but may not interact with the Hearing Committee members.

3. **Prepare a brief presentation.** The spokesperson for the institution should be prepared to give a brief oral presentation, usually no longer than five minutes, to the Hearing Committee. Typically, the CEO gives this presentation. The spokesperson should also be prepared to give some concluding remarks or to make final points. Note that the committee rooms will not support audiovisual presentations.

Evaluation Team Representative

The evaluation team representative should:

1. **Be familiar with the issues.** The team representative should receive the institutional response and any supporting materials at least seven days prior to the hearing. The team representative should notify HLC if these documents have not been received.
2. **Identify any special issues.** The team representative should call the staff liaison with any questions about the issues the Hearing Committee must consider. If it seems appropriate for the team as a whole to consult on some matters, members should hold that consultation before the day of the hearing, and the team representative should be prepared to share the substance of that consultation as appropriate during the hearing. The team representative should call the staff liaison

well before the meeting if it appears that another member of the team should be present to respond to some issues.

3. **Prepare a brief presentation.** The team representative should be prepared to speak briefly, usually no longer than five minutes, on behalf of the team. The team representative may choose to summarize the team report or to address topics raised by the institutional response. The team representative should also be prepared to give some concluding remarks or to make final points. Note that the committee rooms will not support audiovisual presentations.

Part 2. Participation in the IAC Hearing

1. **Registration.** The institution and team representatives should report to the IAC Hearing reception room, identified in the schedule, at least 15 minutes before the scheduled session. The committee will notify the reception room staff when it is time for the institution and team presentations.
2. **Presentations.** Following introductions, the session typically begins with the institutional spokesperson and the team representative giving their brief presentations.
3. **Question-and-answer segment.** Once the Hearing Committee begins its questioning, the institutional spokesperson may ask other institutional representatives, other than legal counsel, to respond. Questions will also be directed to the evaluation team representative. At the end of the question-and-answer segment, the institution and team representatives will be given the opportunity to provide final comments.

Please note that no additional documentation may be submitted during the hearing or immediately following the hearing. An institution will have the opportunity to submit any additional documentation with its institutional response to the hearing report (see Part 3. Following the IAC Hearing).

4. **Deliberation and decision.** At the conclusion of the question-and-answer segment, the institution and team representatives' roles are complete, and the representatives depart. The committee deliberates and makes a decision.

Part 3. Following the IAC Hearing

HLC will send the institution and the evaluation team an official letter reporting the outcome of the IAC Hearing within two weeks of the hearing. The letter will identify the next steps in the process. HLC also will send the institution the hearing report. The institution is asked to submit a response to the committee's recommendation, which will be included

in the materials sent to the Board of Trustees for their review and final action. Information on HLC decision-making processes can be found on HLC's website at hlcommission.org/decision-making.



Questions?

Please contact HLC at accreditation@hlcommission.org