

ACCREDITATION 101

Higher Learning Commission
(HLC)

What is Accreditation?

- Evaluates an entire educational institution in terms of its mission and the agency's standards or criteria.
- Accredits the institution as a whole.
- Assesses formal educational activities, and evaluates
 - governance and administration
 - financial stability
 - admissions and student services
 - institutional resources
 - student learning
 - institutional effectiveness
 - relationships with internal and external constituencies

Why Be Accredited?

- Assures quality to the public
- Allows student transfer of credits between institutions by assuring quality
- Provides access to federal financial aid
- Certifies a graduate's credentials to employers

Our Accrediting Association: HLC

- Six regional associations
- The HLC accredits more than 1,000 colleges and universities in 19 states



The Higher Learning Commission

A Commission of the
North Central Association
of Colleges and Schools

NCA

Criteria for Accreditation

- Criterion One: Mission and Integrity
- Criterion Two: Preparing for the Future
- Criterion Three: Student Learning and Effective Teaching
- Criterion Four: Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge
- Criterion Five: Engagement and Service

Harper's Accreditation Status

- Last accreditation was in November 2007
- Utilized PEAQ Self-Study Process
- Received a 10-year accreditation
(maximum allowed)
- Harper has always done the PEAQ traditional method

Good News

Based on Harper's excellent standing with the Commission, we were approved to choose from one the three institutional accreditation options being made available:

- PEAQ
- AQIP
- Open Pathway

Program to Evaluate and Advance Quality (PEAQ)

Comprehensive evaluation process to determine continued accredited status:

- Harper engages in a Self-Study process for approximately 2 years and prepares a report of its findings in accordance with Commission expectations.
- HLC sends an evaluation team of Consultant Evaluators to conduct a comprehensive visit; and will write a report containing the team's recommendations.
- Self-Study report is reviewed by a Reader's Panel/Committee.
- A HLC decision-making body takes action on the Reader's Panel recommendation.

Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP)

Structured around quality improvement principles and processes and involves structured goal-setting, networking, and accountability activities.

- Steps to reaffirm an institution's accredited status:
 - During a 7-year period engages in all AQIP processes, including Strategy Forums, Annual Updates, Systems Portfolio Appraisals, and a Quality Checkup Visit, culminating in reaffirmation of accreditation.
 - AQIP Review Panel examines the collective history of the institution's interaction with AQIP and the Commission (i.e., reports of the various processes and activities, organizational indicators, current Systems Portfolio) to determine whether this evidence demonstrates compliance with the Commission's Criteria for Accreditation. The Panel may seek and obtain additional information before making its recommendation.
 - A decision-making body takes action on the Panel's recommendation regarding both reaffirmation of accreditation and continuing AQIP participation.

Open Pathway

Combination Approach:

- Introduces Quality Improvement into the PEAQ experience allowing colleges to choose Quality Initiatives to suit their current circumstances.
- Reduces the reporting burden on institutions by utilizing as much information and data as possible from existing institutional processes and collecting them in electronic form as they naturally occur over time.
- Increases rigor by checking institutional data annually (Institutional Update) and conducting Assurance Reviews twice in the ten-year cycle.
- Integrate HLC processes and HLC data requests into the reaffirmation of accreditation cycle.

Next Steps

Soon, the HLC will let us know when they need our decision on which accreditation process we will follow.

- Campus Input
- Recommendation to the President
- Recommendation to the Board