

MULTI-LOCATION VISITS

Information for Institutions and Peer Reviewers

Background

Institutions with three or more off-campus additional locations are required to undergo a Multi-Location Visit every five years. The visit is conducted by an HLC peer reviewer and involves a representative sample of the institution's additional locations. The purpose of the Multi-Location Visit is to confirm the continuing effective oversight by the institution of its additional locations ([HLC Policy INST.F.20.060: Monitoring of Institutional Change](#)). In some cases, institutions undergoing rapid expansion will host Multi-Location Visits more frequently than the five-year intervals.

HLC defines “additional locations” as places where 50 percent or more of a degree is offered; additional locations also include degree-completion sites where the last two years of a bachelor’s degree are offered. HLC previously used the term “site” to refer to additional locations.

HLC policy regarding Multi-Location Visits stems from U.S. Department of Education regulations on the recognition of accrediting agencies. Recognized accrediting agencies are required to visit at reasonable intervals a representative sample of additional locations of institutions that operate at least three such locations (34CFR §602.22).

Additional Location Sampling Process

A Multi-Location Visit to an institution will include a representative sample of the institution’s additional locations that is selected by HLC staff. Any location that offers 50 percent or more of a degree program may be selected. A minimum of two locations will be evaluated

as part of the Multi-Location Visit. This enables HLC to determine whether the institution’s oversight is consistent across locations. The sample will be chosen based on the total number of additional locations an institution has, the geographic range of its additional locations, and the range of academic programs offered at different locations. HLC staff will also consider relevant characteristics of the institution’s approach to instruction at additional locations, as described in the institution’s Institutional Update submissions, applications for additional locations or access to the Notification Program for Additional Locations, and other sources.

Sampling Factors

Factor 1: Total Number of Additional Locations

The following chart indicates the size of the sample based on the number of additional locations an institution has in operation. The total number of locations visited may be higher depending on other factors considered in selecting the sample.

Active Additional Locations	Locations to be Visited
3-5 Locations	2 Locations
6-10 Locations	2-3 Locations
11-20 Locations	3-6 Locations
21-40 Locations	6-10 Locations
41-70 Locations	10-12 Locations
71-100 Locations	No fewer than 12 locations; sample may be larger based on distribution of locations.
More than 100 Locations	No less than 15% of active locations; sample will likely be larger due to other factors considered.

Factor 2: Geographic Distribution of Locations

HLC staff will map the additional locations that an institution operates and ascertain how best to develop a representative sample on the basis of geography. An institution with a national footprint of additional locations should anticipate that the Multi-Location Visit will cover representative regions of the country and different states in each region. For institutions with additional locations in the same state, the sample may be based on the distance of the location from the main campus or the distribution of locations in urban or rural areas.

Factor 3: Distribution of Academic Programs at Additional Locations

An additional location will typically offer a more limited range of academic programs than the institution offers at its main or branch campuses. When developing the sample, HLC staff will review the academic programs offered at additional locations and, when applicable, will select locations with different academic programs for the visit. For example, an institution that concentrates business programs at some locations and nursing programs at other locations can expect that the sample list will include a visit to at least one business-focused location and at least one nursing-focused location.

Factor 4: Approach to Off-Campus Instruction

Some institutions, particularly those that operate many additional locations, plan off-campus instruction around certain models, such as a cohort delivery model. HLC staff will take such information into account in selecting the sample list. HLC staff may also consider student complaints, the Institutional Update, or other information about institutional locations in identifying the final samples.

Peer Reviewer Eligibility

HLC peer reviewers who have experience working with institutions that have a significant network of off-campus additional locations are eligible to conduct Multi-Location Visits. Peer reviewers also must participate in at least three comprehensive or focused on-site evaluation visits for HLC before they are eligible to conduct a Multi-Location Visit.

Once selected to conduct Multi-Location Visits, peer reviewers will complete additional training on these types of reviews.

Mechanics of the Visit

Before the Visit

Institutional Notification

HLC will notify an institution that it is due for a Multi-Location Visit in the fall of the academic year in which the visit will take place. The notification will include:

- A list of the representative sample of locations that will be evaluated.
- A request that the institution designate a Multi-Location Visit Coordinator, who will serve as the primary contact throughout the process and will make logistical arrangements as requested by the peer reviewer. Typically that person will be the coordinator of off-campus education, an administrator for one or more of the additional locations, or the Academic Dean.

Confirmation of Additional Locations

The Multi-Location Visit Coordinator will be responsible for ensuring that all additional locations selected in the sample will be active with students enrolled at the time of the visit. If any of the additional locations will not be active, the coordinator should work with HLC to update the institution's additional location records. Once the records have been updated, HLC will reapply the sampling protocol and identify any new additional locations to be visited. Please note: Institutions may not modify the additional locations selected for the visit without prior HLC approval.

Scheduling the Visit

HLC will assign one peer reviewer to visit the additional locations selected for review, except in rare instances when HLC determines that additional peer reviewers are needed. HLC will provide the peer reviewer's contact information to the institution's Multi-Location Visit Coordinator. The peer reviewer will contact the coordinator and arrange a mutually convenient date to visit additional locations within a timeframe identified by HLC. The institution should select dates and times when the additional locations are operational and students and faculty members are available. In some cases, that time may be an evening or weekend. The peer reviewer is responsible for making travel and hotel arrangements.

Institutional Report

The institution must complete the [Multi-Location Visit Institutional Report](#) and submit it to HLC and the peer reviewer at least 30 days prior to the visit. The report should

address in some detail the planning process for developing and implementing new additional locations, curriculum and instructional design processes, instructional staffing and support, student support services, and evaluation and assessment. The institution may include brief evidentiary materials if they are necessary to support information included in the report.

HLC will send the peer reviewer the Institutional Status and Requirements Report for the institution, as well as materials from past evaluations that identified challenges at the institution. The peer reviewer should review all the materials in preparation for the visit.

During the Visit

The visit to each additional location is typically four to five hours in length, depending on the complexity of the location and the availability of students and faculty members. The Multi-Location Visit typically begins with a conference call with the main campus administrators responsible for coordinating the educational programs at the main campus with similar activities at the additional location. The peer reviewer will also interview the location administrator as well as academic leaders, if there are such individuals, and will want to speak with some faculty and students. The peer reviewer will meet or confer by phone with:

- The dean, director or administrator with overall responsibility for the management of the additional location
- The individual(s) at the home campus who are responsible for quality control at the additional location and for ensuring consistency between the location's academic contents and that of the home campus
- The dean, director or other person responsible for academic quality at the additional location
- The dean, director or other person responsible for student services at the additional location
- The individual(s) responsible for library services and other academic support resources
- A few faculty members, as time permits
- A small group of students, as time permits

The peer reviewer will also review the physical facilities and access to academic and support services. The peer reviewer will tour classrooms, labs and library facilities, as well as computer or Internet access points.

Notification Program for Additional Locations: Special Considerations

Some institutions in HLC's membership have been granted access to the Notification Program for Additional Locations. An institution with access to the Notification Program must demonstrate that it continues to meet the standards for the program, and the Multi-Location peer reviewer will determine whether the Notification designation continues to be appropriate.

Institutions may retain access to the Notification Program if the following conditions are met:

- The institution has been accredited by HLC, prior to seeking access to the program, for at least 10 consecutive years with no record of any action during that period for sanction or show-cause.
- HLC has not required monitoring of issues related to the quality of the institution's instruction or to the oversight of existing additional locations or campuses in the past 10 years.
- The institution has demonstrated success in overseeing at least three locations.
- The institution has no other HLC or other legal restrictions on additional locations and/or programs offered off campus.
- The institution has appropriate systems to ensure quality control of locations that include clearly identified academic controls; regular evaluation by the institution of its locations; a pattern of adequate faculty, facilities, resources and academic/support systems; financial stability; and long-range planning for future expansion.

More information about the [Notification Program](#) is available on HLC's website.

After the Visit

Peer Reviewer Evaluation

The peer reviewer must complete the [Multi-Location Visit Peer Review Report](#) and submit it to HLC within 30 days after the last additional location is visited. The peer reviewer should consider the pattern of evidence presented during the Multi-Location Visit. In particular, the peer reviewer should determine whether each location demonstrated that it has sufficient fiscal and administrative capacity to provide quality academic programming. Was there adequate leadership on site? Could on-site administrators

or personnel access necessary resources? Was there any evidence that problems identified by faculty or students are not addressed in a timely fashion? Were evaluation and assessment procedures robust, and did they inform planning processes?

If there is not sufficient evidence at the additional location that the institution has appropriate oversight of the additional location, then the peer reviewer should contact the institution's HLC staff liaison to discuss the issues and determine whether a recommendation for the closure of the additional location is appropriate. If there are some issues at the additional location but they are not significant, then monitoring might be appropriate. If the institution is in the Notification Program, the peer reviewer should also evaluate the institution against the Notification for Additional Locations Approval Form, included in the report template, to determine whether continued access to that program is appropriate. If there are concerns about oversight of off-campus instruction or the fiscal or administrative capacity at additional locations, it might be appropriate to deny continued access to the program and return the institution to regular review.

In writing and submitting the report, the peer reviewer should:

- Respond to each question on the report template completely, providing specific facts or examples to explain and support the conclusions.
- Indicate on the report template whether additional monitoring is recommended and the nature and timing of that monitoring; explain the rationale for

the recommendation; and suggest further follow-up if the initial monitoring indicates continuing problems. Note that for an institution in the Notification Program, no follow-up monitoring should be required (if monitoring is indicated, then the recommendation should be to terminate access to the Notification Program).

Institutional Response

HLC will send the institution a copy of the written evaluation approximately 30 days after the last additional location is visited. If interim monitoring is recommended, the institution may submit a response to the written evaluation within 14 days.

Decision-Making

The Institutional Actions Council will make the final decision on any additional interim monitoring of additional locations. If no additional monitoring is recommended, the IAC will accept the final report without an official action.

Records

The written evaluation report will become a part of HLC's permanent file and will be shared with the next comprehensive evaluation team and other evaluation teams as deemed appropriate.

Institutional Fees

Fees for the Multi-Location Visit are outlined in HLC's Dues and Fees Schedule at hlcommission.org/dues. 