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1. Introduction

The Collaboration Network (further referred to as the Network) is the Academy's online process management tool in which Academy Teams post on the progress and development of their work. All institutions participating in the Academy gain access to the Network at the beginning of their first year in the program. Thereafter, each team will post a Project Update in the Network every six months for the duration of their participation in the Academy. Each update receives a response from an assigned Primary Mentor and Senior Scholar, offering the team feedback and guidance on advancing their Academy work.

In addition to serving as a forum for documenting progress, the Network serves as an information-sharing platform. Academy Team members may read and comment on the work of Academy Teams, past and present, using the Network to facilitate a shared learning experience.

The information in this guide explains how users can access and utilize the many functions of the Network to maximize the Academy experience.

2. Glossary of Terms

The terms used in the Network are listed and defined below.

Academy Project: A multi-faceted project focused on initiating, implementing, and evaluating change related to assessment or persistence and completion. Academy Teams can undertake one or more project while participating, but it is advisable for Academy Teams to focus on one project at a time (see Project Updates and Responses section).

Consolidated Response: The combined feedback from an Academy Team's Primary Mentor and Senior Scholar to an Academy Team's Project Update in the Network (see “Opening Consolidated Responses” in the Project Updates and Responses section).

Dashboard Page: The official Network landing page for all network user types.

Follow: Network feature allowing a user to receive notifications as updates for other Academy Projects are posted (see “Following Projects” in the Additional Features section).

Impact Report: The culminating report posted at the end of the four-year Academy term by an institution, documenting the full life span of an institution’s project.

Impact Report Consolidated Response: Final combined feedback from Primary Mentor and Senior Scholar on project implementation. Special focus is placed on the sustainability of the project post-Academy.

Institutional Profile: The Network listing for each Academy Team, searchable and viewable by all Network users (see Institutional Profile section).

Network Admin: The user role associated with Quality Services Staff from HLC that are responsible for overseeing the functionality of the Network.
Context: The initial set of questions designed to capture the preliminary ideas and strategies devised by the Academy Team; responses set the stage for subsequent Project Updates (see “Completing the Context Questions” in the Project Updates and Responses section).

Team Leader: The official leader of the Academy Team that serves as the main point of contact for Quality Services staff, Primary Mentor, and Senior Scholar (see the Team Leader Responsibilities section).

Team Member: A member of an Academy Team that actively participates in the work being done by their institution while in the Academy, including possibly being designated by a Team Leader to fulfill some of the reporting responsibilities for the team.

Phase: The stage of the Project Update signaling what actions are required. Each active update progresses from Context Pending (team to post Context questions) to Project Pending (team to post project update) to Response Pending (Primary Mentor to post Primary Response) to Consolidated Response Pending (Senior Scholar to post Consolidated Response). Projects not actively participating in any particular cycle are placed in the Hold phase.

Primary Mentor: Experienced practitioner in assessing student learning and/or persistence and completion assigned to guide particular Academy Teams for the duration of their participation in the Academy. The role of the Primary Mentor is to facilitate team thinking and a project-based approach to addressing assessment or persistence and completion. The Academy Team’s Primary Mentor is responsible for completing the Primary Response to each Project Update, and in the Persistence & Completion Academy, the Primary Mentor is also responsible for conducting the Data Discovery.

Primary Mentor Response: Response provided by the Primary Mentor regarding the progress of an assigned Academy Team as communicated in the team’s Project Update. The Primary Mentor Response is combined with the Senior Scholar’s response and made viewable to institutions in what is known as the Consolidated Response.

Project Update: An update posted biannually by an Academy Team to the Network that documents a team’s accomplishments, challenges thus far, and future plans (see “Posting Project Updates” in the Project Updates & Responses section).

Scholar: Subject matter expert on the topic of assessment of student learning and persistence and completion contracted by HLC to offer additional comments on project development.

Status: The state of an Academy Project based on the timeline for completing biannual Project Updates (see “Status Icons” in the Icon Key section).

Tag: Network feature allowing Academy Teams to self-identify categories and themes within their work.

Version: An update made to an Academy Project by an institution. Every new Project Update is considered a new version of the project.
3. **Icon Key**

Below are the various icons that a user may see when using the Network:

- **Support Icon** – to access general help function of the Network
  ![Help Icon]
  Link to the Network Help Request Form

- **Team Management Icon** - for the Team Leader to set editing permissions for team members
  ![Settings Icon]
  Team Member Settings

- **Status Icons** – indicating the current status of an open project
  - ![Check Icon]
    Project on track
  - ![Arrow Down Icon]
    Project requires attention
  - ![X Icon]
    Project behind schedule
  - ![Pause Icon]
    Project does not require action

4. **Network Access**

The designated Team Leader will be the first member of the institution’s team to gain access to the Network. Login credentials will be emailed directly from the HLC Collaboration Network email account to the Team Leader ahead of the Academy Roundtable. Additional Team Members gain access when the Team Leader creates individual member user accounts for their team (see **Team Leader Responsibilities** section).

**User Name**: The user name is always the email address associated with an individual profile. To recover the user name, a user can click “Forgot your username” on the login page. The user name will then be sent to the email address associated with the account.

**Password**: The password can be reset by clicking “Forgot your password” at the bottom of the login page and by following the prompts.
Once logged in, the user lands on the Dashboard page. Important messages about upcoming posting deadlines or changes to the Network may be posted in the Dashboard Messages box. This page also links to the browsing and search tools and the Academy Project(s) to which the profile is attached.

5. Institutional Profiles

Each Academy institution has an Institutional Profile in the Network. A profile lists the institution’s name, Academy participation start and end dates, and the designated Team Leader, as well as the contact information of the institution’s assigned Primary Mentor and Senior Scholar. Users may access their own institution’s profile link by clicking on “My Institutional Profiles” in the left navigation bar on the Dashboard page.

Institutional Profile also displays tabs that link to the institution’s Academy Project(s) and a full list of an institution’s Academy Team members that have user accounts (the Team tab will be empty until the Team Leader adds team members; see “Adding Team Members” in the Team Leader Responsibilities section).

Users can also view the profiles and projects of other institutions by browsing or searching the Network (see “Browsing / Searching the Network” in the Additional Features section).

Note: The Team Leader can also access his/her own password on the Institutional Profile Page (see the Network Access section above for instructions on how to change the password).
6. Team Leader Responsibilities

The Team Leader is responsible for initiating and helping sustain the team's work in the Network. Team Leaders have special rights and responsibilities, including being the main point of contact for the team, maintaining the institution’s profile and managing the affiliated user accounts in the Network.

6.1. Maintaining Contact

The Team Leader is essentially the team's representative inside and outside of the Network. As such, it is expected that a Team Leader reads and responds to emails and phone calls from Quality Services staff, the Primary Mentor and the Scholar assigned to their institution. It is also expected that the Team Leader post the biannual Project Updates or designate another team member to be responsible for postings in the Network (see the Project Updates & Responses section).

6.2. Adding Team Members

The Team Leader is responsible for completing the Institutional Profile by creating user accounts and setting editing permissions for the other members of the Academy Team. It is a best practice to create user accounts for all team members in order to engage the entire team in the Academy experience as well as give them the opportunity to learn from other institutions.

User accounts can be created for each team member directly from an Institutional Profile in the Network. Academy Team Leaders can:

Step #1 Open the “Team” tab

Step #2 Click the “Add Team Member” button
Step #3 Fill in each team member’s contact information one by one

Step #4 Click “Save” after each team member’s contact information has been entered

Changes to the Team?
The Team Leader also has the ability to edit and delete team members as the team evolves using the same Team tab on the Institutional Profile page.

To change the Team Leader, notify Quality Service staff at academy@hlcommission.org

6.3. Setting Team Member Permissions

Once user accounts are created, the Team Leader can also set edit permissions for each team member to help manage what aspects of the updating process the team members may contribute to. Academy Team members can have as much or as little reporting responsibility in the Network as the team deems fit. The default team member setting is read-only; Team Leaders must configure the settings for each team member if they wish to give one or more team members editing and submission permissions.

From the Team tab on the Institutional Profile, a Team Leader can set permissions:

Step #1 Click on the orange gear icon next to each team member’s contact information; a window will open with the editing options
Step #2  Check “Yes” to grant a specific privilege to the user or check “No” to deny a specific privilege to the user

Step #3  Click “Save” to set permissions for the selected user

Example of Member Permissions: The Team Leader may allow a team member to edit answers on a Project Update, but the leader can reserve the right to submit the update for mentor response (the Team Leader reviews the team's submission and then submits on behalf of the team).

7. Project Updates & Responses

Throughout the four-year program, Academy Teams are prompted to answer a series of questions about the progress that has been made, challenges faced, lessons learned and plans for advancing the project. Answers are submitted and reviewed by a Primary Mentor and Scholar assigned to the Academy Team for feedback and guidance.

7.1. Completing the Context Questions

The initial posting in the Network is known as the Context. In preparation for the Academy Roundtable, the Academy Team will introduce their institution and outline preliminary ideas about the focus and scope of their Academy work. This posting sets the stage for the work to be done at the Roundtable and the Project Update questions that immediately follow the Roundtable.

Note: The Context does not receive a written response from the assigned Primary Mentor and Scholar. Facilitators that will be responsible for aiding team discussions and planning at the Academy Roundtable will review the Context responses submitted by the institutions for background information on the teams.
To post the Context, an Academy Team Leader or a designated Academy Team member will:

Step #1  Select the Academy Project from the Project List at the bottom of the Dashboard page

Step #2  Click on the “Context” tab

Step #3  Open each text box by clicking “Edit” (each question must be answered and saved individually)

Step #4  Fill in the information and click “Save” to the right of each question

Step #5  Click “Continue” at the bottom of the page after all questions are answered
Once the Context is submitted, the Project tab will load with questions for the first version of the Project Update, which will not need to be completed until after the Roundtable.

Note: The Context cannot be revised once submitted, but Academy Teams should not worry. The purpose of the Context is solely to capture the team’s initial ideas. Academy Projects are expected to evolve and change over the four-year term, which will be reflected in the various versions of the project as provided through the Project Updates.

7.2. Posting Project Updates

Questions posed on Project Updates are designed to address the progress an institution has made over the previous six months. The update questions also ask for information on
how the team will move the project forward, particularly focusing on plans for work during the subsequent six months.

To post an update, an Academy Team Leader or a designated Academy Team member will:

**Step #1**
Select the Academy Project from the Project List at the bottom of the Dashboard page

![Dashboard Screenshot]

**Step #2**
Select the current version using the “Version” Tab

**Step #3**
Open each text box by clicking “Edit” (each question must be answered and saved individually)

**Step #4**
Fill in the information and click “Save” to the right of each question

**Step #5**
If applicable, add hyperlinks (see directions below)

**Step #6**
Add or edit project tags (see directions below)

**Step #7**
Click “Submit for Response” at the bottom of the page after all questions are answered

*Note:* Once an update is submitted for a response, the update cannot be edited by the Academy Team.
Hyperlinks

Hyperlinks to webpages or documents housed on other servers may be added to a Project Update in order to supplement the answers provided. Documents cannot be directly stored on the Collaboration Network. Instead, each answer can link to an unlimited number of supporting external hyperlinks, although
they should not be used in lieu of actual content for the answers posed on an update.

Note: Once saved, a link cannot be edited. To change a link, delete it and create a new one.

To add a hyperlink from the project’s “Version” Tab, an Academy Team Leader or a designated Academy Team member can:

Step #1 Click the “Add Link” button underneath the answer that the supplemental information is related to

Step #2 In the pop-up window that appears, supply a title for the link (what other users will see)

Step #3 Add the URL address – the prefix http:// is provided by default

Step #4 Click “Save”

b. Project Tags

Tags are used to group and categorize projects. Projects in the Network can also be filtered and browsed based on these tags. Each project can have up to three tags assigned to it at a given time.
To assign tags to a project from the Project’s “Version” Tab, an Academy Team Leader or a designated Academy Team member can:

**Step #1** Scroll to the bottom of the current version of the project

**Step #2** Click the “Tags” button

**Step #3** In the pop-up window, select up to three tags from the drop-down options.

**Step #4** Click “Save”

7.3. Opening Consolidated Responses

Following each Project Update provided, Academy Teams receive feedback from their assigned Primary Mentor and Scholar in the form of a Consolidated Response. The institution gains access to the Consolidated Response as soon as the Scholar publishes it; the Academy Team will receive a “Consolidated Response Available” system notification via email.
To open the Consolidated Response, an Academy Team Leader or a designated Academy Team member will:

Step #1  Click the Academy Project in the Project List at the bottom of the Dashboard page

Step #2  Open the “Responses” tab to find a list of published Consolidated Responses

Step #3  Select the most current response in the list for viewing
8. Additional Features

The Network offers several searching and sharing features to institutions as a means of facilitating collective learning across and among teams and cohorts.

8.1. Browsing / Searching Projects

Project Update postings and Consolidated Responses for all active and completed projects are available for viewing by any Network user.

To view the projects of other teams in the Network, any user may:

Step #1 Locate the left navigation menu on the Dashboard page

Step #2 Select either:

- “Browse the Network” – to filter all projects by general criteria
- “Search Project Details” – to search the text content within all projects or within specific projects

Step #3 Input search criteria and click the “Filter” or “Search” button

Step #4 Click on a “Project Title” from the results to view

Note: Search criteria can be saved during a single session by clicking the checkbox to temporarily save search criteria. To clear a saved search, click the reset button or log out of the Network.
If a user chooses “Browse the Network” these are the fields that will be seen:

![Image of Browse the Network fields]

If a user chooses “Search Project Details” these are the fields that will be seen:

![Image of Search Project fields]

8.2. Accessing HLC’s Directory of Institutions

Users may access HLC’s Directory of Institutions from any Institutional Profile. Clicking the small red button next to the institution’s name will take a user directly to HLC’s Directory in a separate browser window, where more information can be found about each accredited institution.
8.3. Searching Contacts

All individual user accounts are searchable. To search for contacts, any user may:

Step #1 Locate the left navigation menu on the Dashboard page
Step #2 Select “Search Contacts”
Step #3 Input search criteria and click the “Search” button

Users can then click on the name of the contact or the purple mail icon to email them directly or click on the yellow plus sign icon to add the contact to their Network address book.

Below are all the searchable fields:
8.4. Commenting on Projects

To engage with other Academy teams about their project, users may post public comments on their own project as well as the projects of other institutions, regardless of whether they are in the same cohort.

To post a comment, any user may:

Step #1 Open the project intended to comment on after browsing or searching the Network based on selected criteria

Step #2 Click the “Comments” tab
  • If the Comments box is not visible, click the Comments button

Step #3 Input comments and click “Post Comment”

Note: Any user can add comments, but only the Network Admin or the user associated with a comment can delete it.

8.5. Following Projects

The Follow feature allows users to receive notifications about updates for other institution’s Academy Projects being posted. Users may use this feature to monitor and
learn from similar Academy Projects being undertaken by current and past Academy Teams.

To begin following a project, any user may:

Step #1 Open the project of interest after browsing or searching the Network based on selected criteria

Step #2 Scroll to the bottom of the project page

Step #3 Click the “Follow” button and confirm intent to follow

Note: Once a user begins to follow a project, the “Follow” button will change to “Stop Following.” Click “Stop Following” to cancel receipt of system notifications about updates to a particular project.

9. Tips and Troubleshooting

The Network functions best when using Firefox or Chrome. Users should check to confirm that JavaScript and Cookies are enabled on their browser before accessing the Network. Support for the Network can be found by clicking on the gold question mark icon in the top right hand corner of any screen. Problems with the Network should be brought to the attention of the Quality Services staff by email at academy@hlcommission.org.

10. Frequently Asked Questions

_How do I reset my password?_

To reset your password, open the login page and click the “Forgot your password” link. You will then be prompted to submit the email address associated with your account. You will then receive an email with a password-reset code and link. Copy the code and click the link. Provide the email address and the code in the fields provided. Input the desired new password, verify the password, and submit.

_Who can see my team’s profile and project?_

Your team’s profile, Project Updates, and Consolidated Responses are accessible to all Network users. The Network is designed as a space for teams to share project experiences, challenges, and successes. Information is not shared with the general public without permission nor is it publicly posted or accessible outside of the Network.

_How do I change the Team Leader?_

Contact Academy Managers for any changes with the Team Leader profile at academy@hlcommission.org.
Do I have to answer ALL the questions on the Context or a Project Update?
Yes, all questions require an answer. If you feel that a question does not apply to you, you may input “N/A” or “Not applicable” in the box provided.

Do I have to answer the questions all at one time?
No, you can answer the questions individually over a period of time. As long as you save each individual answer, the system will preserve them between sessions. Once you have answered all the questions, you must submit them as a group to receive feedback.

I forgot to add something to my answer and then I submitted my update for response – can I go back and fix that?
No. Be absolutely sure that your answers are complete before submitting your project for review. There is no way to undo or edit past versions of a project.

How do I know when a consolidated response has been completed?
When the consolidated response is published by the Scholar an email notification is sent to the Academy Team Leader and team members.

I am the designated Academy Team member responsible for posting in the Network. Our Consolidated Response is viewable, but I can’t edit the answers to the questions in the new (next) version of our project. Why not?
Once a version has received a response, a new version is created. Some of the questions for the new cycle will appear. However, the new cycle will not open for roughly another 4-5 months. You may not begin posting answers to the new questions until the new cycle begins.

The notification bar above my project reads “Project on Hold.” Does this mean I am behind on my updates?
No, projects on hold are not part of an active cycle. If your team’s project is on hold, no action is required.