



ELIGIBILITY

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 June 27, 2019.

Background

HLC’s Eligibility policy outlines the preliminary process that an unaffiliated institution must follow prior to moving forward with a comprehensive evaluation for Candidacy. The adopted policy change makes minor modifications to the Eligibility policy in order to standardize language and align the policy both with other HLC policies and current practice. These modifications include the following:

- Updates policy language to remove outdated terms such as “self-study” and “initial affiliation” (now called Candidacy).
- Clarifies that an unaffiliated institution must serve a period of candidacy prior to gaining status as an accredited institution.
- Establishes that, consistent with current practice, eligibility reviewers need not also be members of the Institutional Actions Council and may serve renewable four-year terms.

HLC circulated these policy changes to the membership and other interested parties after the Board’s June 2019 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**). Changes between first and second reading, other than

minor editing, are indicated in bold italics (*new wording*). These revisions have been made on HLC's website at hlcommission.org/policies.

Policy Title: Eligibility
Number: INST.B.20.010

Non-affiliated institutions will establish eligibility for a Commission on-site evaluation for ~~initial~~ **candidate** status by completing the Commission's Eligibility Process and by receiving a determination at the conclusion of that process that the institution is ready to schedule and prepare for a visit. An institution seeking a Commission on-site evaluation for ~~initial~~ **candidate** status shall provide sufficient evidence in writing that it meets the Eligibility Requirements. The determination that an institution meets the Eligibility Requirements will take place during the **comprehensive evaluation for Candidacy** ~~review processes involved in establishing an initial affiliation with the Commission: a team and subsequent reviewers will make this determination based on a self study and on evidence derived from the on-site visit.~~

An institution may claim no official Status of Affiliation with the Commission **prior to being granted candidate status** ~~during the Eligibility Process or the self study process.~~

Eligibility Process

The Eligibility Process provides for Commission staff consultation and for review by Eligibility Reviewers to determine the institution's readiness **for a comprehensive evaluation for Candidacy** ~~to begin the self study process.~~ Eligibility Reviewers review the written evidence put forward by a non-affiliated institution that it meets the Eligibility Requirements and determine whether **the institution has provided sufficient evidence to proceed with a comprehensive evaluation for Candidacy** ~~the evidence is sufficient to warrant the Commission scheduling an on-site visit for the institution and allowing it to begin the self study Process. An applying organization may choose to seek either candidate for accreditation or accredited status and must prepare its self study to address the status sought.~~

An organization that does not receive a recommendation to proceed with a Commission visit can petition the Board of Trustees for a review if it can provide evidence that the decision of the Eligibility Reviewers was arbitrary or capricious or was not supported by substantial evidence in the record on which the Reviewers made their decision or that the Commission staff or Eligibility Reviewers departed from established procedures during the review.

Fees will be charged and published in a schedule of fees for the Eligibility Process.

Eligibility Reviewers

The Board of Trustees will choose peer reviewers ~~who have completed terms as members of the Institutional Actions Council~~ to serve as a reviewer of the Eligibility process. These reviewers will fill ~~non-renewable four-year terms, with a maximum of five years of service when a Reviewer is chosen to fill an uncompleted term.~~

Policy History

Last Revised: June 2019

First Adopted: November 1998

Revision History: February 2003, effective May 2003; revised February 2007; renumbered November 2010; revised June 2019

Notes: Policies combined November 2012 – 1.8, 1.8(a), 1.8(b), 1.8(c)

Related Policies: INST.B.20.020 Candidacy