Early Initial Accreditation

Policy Changes Adopted on Second Reading

The Board of Trustees adopted these policies on second reading at its meeting on November 5, 2015.

Background

HLC policy anticipates that an institution applying for accreditation status will complete a period of candidacy before the Board grants initial accreditation. Candidacy is, by policy, a four-year period. An institution can apply for early initial accreditation after two or three years of candidacy. This policy change clarifies that the Board determines early initial accreditation, waiving one or two years of the candidacy period, only if it finds that the institution meets all of the Criteria for Accreditation and Core Components with no concerns.

In such a case, the Board will continue the institution in candidacy. Extending candidacy in those cases reflects that initial accreditation is a high bar for institutions to achieve, and this action allows institutions more time in candidacy to strengthen compliance with HLC expectations before the Board again considers granting initial accreditation.

Implementation

These policies are effective immediately.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Accreditation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INST.B.20.030</td>
<td>Grant of Initial Accreditation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Board of Trustees reviews an institution’s application for initial accreditation and all related materials after the institution has undergone evaluation by a team of peer reviewers and an Institutional Actions Council hearing, as defined in Commission policy. Only institutions that have completed candidacy, or been exempted from candidacy by the Board of Trustees following Commission policies on Candidacy, shall be eligible for initial accreditation. The Board of Trustees may grant or deny initial accreditation based on its determination of whether the institution meets the Eligibility Requirements, Criteria for Accreditation, Core Components, and Federal Compliance Requirements. If the Board of Trustees grants initial accreditation, it may grant such accreditation subject to interim monitoring, restrictions on institutional growth or substantive change, or other contingency.
Early Initial Accreditation
An institution may apply for early initial accreditation after two or three years of candidacy following Commission policies on candidacy. The Board of Trustees shall have the discretion to continue candidacy, instead of granting early initial accreditation, in circumstances including, but not limited to, the following: if the Board determines that one or more of the Core Components are not met or met with concerns; if a recommendation for early initial accreditation is conditioned on the scheduling of interim monitoring; or in other circumstances where the Board concludes that a continuation of candidacy, or extension of candidacy to a fifth year, is warranted. Any extension of candidacy to a fifth year shall be granted following Commission policies on extension of candidacy. Such actions to continue candidacy, thereby denying early initial accreditation, or to extend candidacy to a fifth year shall not be considered denial of status and are not subject to appeal.

Accreditation Cycle
Institutions must have accreditation reaffirmed not later than four years following initial accreditation, and not later than ten years following a reaffirmation action. The time for the next reaffirmation is made a part of the accreditation decision, but may be changed if the institution experiences or plans changes. The Commission may extend the period of accreditation not more than one year beyond the decennial cycle or one year beyond the initial accreditation cycle for institutions that present good and sufficient reason for such extension.

Effective Date of Accreditation
The effective date of initial accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation or other Commission action will be the date the action was taken.

The Commission’s Board may grant initial accreditation, with the contingency noted in this subsection, to an institution that applies for accreditation and is determined by the Commission to have met the Criteria for Accreditation but has not yet graduated a class of students in at least one of its degree programs, as required by the Eligibility Requirements. Institutions shall have completed the two-year required minimum candidacy period or received a waiver from the Commission’s Board of Trustees. Such action shall be contingent on the institution’s graduation of its first graduating class in at least one of its degree programs within no more than thirty days of the Board’s action. In such cases, the effective date of accreditation will be the date of this graduating class.

Assumed Practices in the Evaluative Framework for Initial and Reaffirmation of Accreditation
An institution seeking initial accreditation, accredited to candidate status, or removal of Probation or Show-Cause, must explicitly address these requirements when addressing the Criteria. The institution must demonstrate conformity with these Practices as evidence of demonstrating compliance with the Criteria. Institutions undergoing reaffirmation of accreditation will not explicitly address the Assumed Practices except as identified in section INST.A.10.030. Any exemptions from these Assumed Practices must be granted by the Board and only in exceptional circumstances.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Number Key</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section INST: Institutional Policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter B: Requirements for Achieving and Maintaining Affiliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 20: Defining the Affiliated Entity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Last Revised: November 2015  
First Adopted: August 1987  
Revision History: renumbered November 2010, revised February 2012, revised, June 2015, revised November 2015  
Notes: Policies combined November 2012 - 1.1(a)1, 1.1(a)2, 1.1(a)3, 1.4, 2013 - 1.1(a)1.2, 1.1(a)1.3, 1.1(a)1.4.