



COMPONENTS OF AN INSTITUTION

Policy Change Approved on First Reading

The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Board of Trustees (“the Board”) approved this policy on first reading at its meeting on June 25–26, 2020.

Background

The proposed policy change would consolidate HLC policies Components of Accredited or Candidate Institutions (INST.B. 10.020) and Processes for Including a Component Within or Removing a Component From the Affiliation of an Institution (INST.F.20.090). Revisions to this consolidated policy would clarify when, for purposes of the Eligibility process, various components of an institution’s corporate structure would be included in the institution’s accredited or candidate status and the processes for reviewing the inclusion of such components. In addition, the policy changes would specify when a discrete component of an already accredited institution might seek separate accreditation.

Comments Invited

HLC invites comments on this change before the Board takes final action at its meeting on November 5–6, 2020. Comments can be sent to policycomments@hlcommission.org. Comments are due by September 14, 2020.

Proposed Change

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**). Wording that was moved is shown with a double underline in its new location (moved to) and a double strikethrough in its previous location (~~~~moved from~~~~).

Policy Title: Components of Accredited or Candidate Institutions

Number: INST.B.10.020

Because the Commission is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as an institutional accreditor, the accreditation status the Commission confers applies to an institution as a whole.

The ~~affiliation~~ **accreditation** status of an institution shall include the institution's ~~home main~~ **campus or system administrative** office located within the Commission's region and all its components wherever located. Components of an institution shall include all branch campuses, **additional locations, other** instructional sites, ~~course locations~~ and **any** divisions offering distance ~~delivery~~ **education** or correspondence **education, regardless of where operating inside the region, outside the region but within the United States, or outside the United States.**

~~The operational status of all institutional components will be periodically reviewed under this policy.~~

Characteristics of a Component That May Be Included in the Institution's ~~Affiliation~~ Accredited or Candidate Status

An entity may be deemed a component of an ~~affiliated~~ institution if responsibility for the educational and operational activities of the component is clearly located at a ~~home main~~ **campus or system administrative** office that is central to the institution ~~affiliated~~ **that holds accredited or candidate status** with the Commission.

The component may be included in the institution's ~~affiliation~~ **status** only if it has all of the following characteristics:

1. the ~~home main~~ **campus or system administrative** office has oversight over the finances, administration, and hiring, firing and retention of personnel at the component;
2. an administrator for the component reports to the ~~CEO~~ **chief executive officer** of the ~~affiliated~~ **accredited or candidate** institution or ~~the~~ system;
3. the ~~home main~~ **campus or system** office provides meaningful oversight over the academic programs at the component;
4. degree-granting authority of the ~~home main~~ **campus or system** office encompasses, where possible, the degree or program activity of the component;

5. public information about the institution, the component, and any corporate parent or structure is consistent with the characterization of the entity as a component of the ~~affiliated entity~~ **accredited or candidate institution or system**.

Characteristics of a Separately Accreditable Component

~~An existing component of an accredited larger institution that is currently included in that institution's accreditation may be separately accreditable if a significant portion of responsibility and decision making for its educational activities lies within the component and not in the other parts of the larger system as defined in the characteristics outlined in this section.~~ **seek separate accreditation as an independent institution** ~~The component may be separately accreditable if it has the following characteristics:~~

1. **it has been authorized**, under board policy, **to have** substantial financial and administrative independence from the ~~home~~ **accredited** institution including in matters related to its personnel;
2. **it has a full time chief administrative officer;**
3. **it is empowered**, under board policy, to initiate and sustain its own academic programs;
4. **it has independent** degree-granting authority in the state or jurisdiction in which it is located; and
5. public information about the institution, the component, and any corporate parent or structure is consistent with the characterization of the entity as a separately accreditable entity.

Processes for Including a Component Within ~~or Removing a Component From~~ the Affiliation **Accreditation Status** of the Institution

~~At the time the institution files with the Eligibility Process~~ **an Eligibility Filing**, the Commission will review the status of all components of the institution to determine whether the institution seeking affiliation accreditation constitutes a single entity institution or a system for the purpose of accreditation based on the characteristics identified in this policy.

An ~~affiliated~~ accredited or candidate institution developing a new component(s) (for example, a law school or other component offering new academic programs) must file a change request under Commission policy INST.F.20.040 Institutional Substantive Change. As a part of the review under Commission policy the Commission will review the appropriateness of inclusion of the proposed component in the accreditation of the institution using the characteristics cited above.

An affiliated accredited or candidate institution seeking to have an existing entity that is not currently included as a component in the institution's status deemed a component of the institution must file a change request approval under the Commission's policy regarding change of control, structure or organization.

Process for Commission Consideration of Separate Status for a Component. A component of an institution holding status with the Commission that is seeking separate status from the Commission, or from another recognized accrediting agency, must establish that it meets the separately accreditable characteristics outlined in this Commission policy and, if it is seeking status with this Commission, its eligibility must demonstrate that it meets the Eligibility Requirements through the Commission's Eligibility Process. For those components seeking status from the Commission, if the Eligibility Panel determines that the component is separately accreditable and appears to meet the Eligibility Requirements, the Commission will set a visit for initial status candidacy for the component.

Institutions With Components out of the Region Components of Institutions Holding Status With Accreditors Other Than the Commission. A component located in a region other than that of its home campus must seek separate accreditation in the region in which it exists if of an institution holding status with an institutional accreditor other than the Commission that wishes to seek accreditation with the Commission must demonstrate that it is able to function independent of any operational control of the parent related college or university. A component will be deemed operationally independent and accreditable by the host region when it has demonstrates the characteristics listed in INST.B.10.020.

An institution component identified as separately accreditable will continue to be included in the accreditation of the parent related college or university until it achieves separate Commission accreditation.

Policy Number Key

Section INST: Institutional Processes

Chapter B: Requirements for Achieving and Maintaining Affiliation

Part 10: General

Last Revised: June 2009

First Adopted: January 1983, June 2000

Revision History: June 2000, revised June 2009

Notes: ~~Jointly adopted with Council on Regional Accrediting Agencies.~~ Former Policy number: 3.4(b). Also combined with the following policies November 2012: 3.4, 3.4(a)

Related Policies:

~~Policy Title: Processes for Including a Component Within or Removing a Component From the Affiliation of the Institution~~

~~Number: INST.F.20.090~~

~~At the time the institution files with the Eligibility Process, the Commission will review the status of all components of the institution to determine whether the institution seeking affiliation constitutes a single entity for the purpose of accreditation based on the characteristics identified in this policy.~~

~~An affiliated institution developing a new component(s) must file a change request under Commission policy INST.F.20.040 Institutional Change. As a part of the review under Commission policy the Commission will review the appropriateness of inclusion of the proposed component in the accreditation of the institution using the characteristics cited above.~~

~~An affiliated institution seeking to have an existing entity that is not currently included as a component in the institution's status deemed a component of the institution must file a change request under Commission policy INST.B.20.040 Change of Control, Structure, or Organization. As a part of the review under Commission policy INST.B.20.040 the Commission will review the appropriateness of inclusion of the proposed component in the accreditation of the institution using the characteristics cited above.~~

Process for Commission Consideration of Separate Status for a Component

~~A component of an institution holding status with the Commission that is seeking separate status from the Commission, or from another recognized accrediting agency, must establish that it meets the separately accreditable characteristics outlined in this policy and, if it is seeking status with this Commission, its eligibility through the Commission's Eligibility Process. For those components seeking status from the Commission, if the Eligibility Panel determines that the component is separately accreditable and appears to meet the Eligibility Requirements, the Commission will set a visit for initial status for the component. For those components seeking status from another recognized accreditor, the Commission will make a recommendation to the host agency that it allow the component to begin its process for separate accreditation after a showing by the component and the accredited institution to the Commission that the component may be separated from the parent for the purpose of accreditation.~~

Institutions With Components in the Region

~~For institutions operating solely within the North Central Region, the Commission will follow the process outlined in INST.F.20.090 after the component seeking separate status contacts Commission staff.~~

~~Institutions With Components out of the Region~~

~~Jointly adopted with Council on Regional Accrediting Agencies~~

~~A component located in a region other than that of its home campus must seek separate accreditation in the region in which it exists if functions independent of operational control of the parent college or university. A component will be deemed operationally independent and accreditable by the host region when it has the characteristics listed in INST.B.10.020.~~

~~Each regional commission will determine if any of its affiliated institutions have components that appear to be separately accreditable. Following consultation with the host commission and the institution, and upon learning from the host region the site's potential to meet its eligibility requirements, the home region will make the determination as to the status of such sites that meet these requirements. The host region will agree to take deliberate steps toward reviewing any components identified as operationally independent in keeping with its policies and procedures for applying institutions. An institution identified as separately accreditable will continue to be included in the accreditation of the parent college or university until it achieves separate accreditation.~~

~~When required by the U.S. Department of Education, the Commission will continue to include in its accreditation of an institution components deemed separately accreditable and accredited by another host agency. The Commission will maintain this arrangement under a Memorandum of Understanding with the host agency that makes clear that the Commission remains responsible for the accreditation of the entire institution, including separately accreditable components accredited by another agency, under its Title IV gatekeeping function.~~

~~Policy Number Key~~

~~Section INST: Institutional Processes~~

~~Chapter F: Maintenance and Monitoring~~

~~Part 20: Intermittent Monitoring~~

~~Last Revised: June 2009~~

~~First Adopted: June 2000~~

~~Revision History: June 2009~~

~~Notes: Policies combined November 2012 3.4(a)1, 3.4(b)1, 3.4(c), 3.4(c)1, 3.4(c)2~~

~~Related Policies: INST.F.20.040 Institutional Change, INST.B.20.040 Change of Control, Structure, or Organization,~~

~~INST.B.10.020 Components of Accredited or Candidate Institutions~~