

Observation of HLC Visits by Other Recognized Accreditors and State Agencies

In some instances, an institution may request that another recognized accreditor or state agency be permitted to observe an HLC visit.

Requesting Permission for an Agency to Observe a Visit

If an institution would like to have a representative of another agency observe an HLC visit, the institution must initiate and administer the request. The process for submitting the request to HLC depends on the visit type:

- **Change Visits:** The institution should indicate its request on its substantive change application. On the application, the institution should include the agency name and the agency contact person's name, title and email address. Institutions can request a change visit by submitting a full change application or Part 1 of the application.
- **All Other Visits:** The institution's Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) or chief executive officer should initiate the request by contacting their HLC staff liaison.

If representatives from an agency wish to attend a visit, they should contact the institution directly. If HLC receives a request from an agency to attend a visit, staff will forward the request to the institution's ALO. HLC does not require institutions to have a representative of another agency observe a visit.

Coordinating the Visit Process

The institution hosting the visit will coordinate all logistics. Most HLC visits are scheduled more than six months in advance with input from the institution and peer reviewers. In most instances, other agencies will need to accommodate scheduled HLC visit dates. If the visit has not been scheduled yet, HLC will ask the institution to work with the outside agency and propose dates.

Substantive Change Visits

If an institution is planning a substantive change that requires approval from HLC and another agency and both HLC and the other agency will conduct a visit as part of the substantive change review process, the institution may request that the other agency observe the HLC change visit.

Note: HLC requires that institutions obtain any required approvals from other agencies before applying to HLC regarding a substantive change. If the other agency observes the HLC change visit, HLC will not move forward with its review and decision-making process following the visit until it receives the other agency's final decision regarding the substantive change.

Review

Once HLC receives the application, it will determine the level of review necessary. If HLC determines that it will conduct its review through a process other than a visit, such as a panel or desk review, HLC will return the application to the institution to resubmit after approval from the other agency is received.

If an HLC change visit is required, HLC will send an email to the institution requesting three dates that work for both the institution and the agency. It is the institution's responsibility to coordinate the three proposed dates with the agency. HLC will try to accommodate one of the requested dates when setting the team.

HLC will select the visit date and notify the institution about the date with additional visit information. At this time the institution must notify the agency that the date is set.

HLC will follow that communication with an email to the institution and agency when the peer review team members have been set.

The HLC team conducts the visit per usual policies and procedures and makes a recommendation to HLC's decision making body, the Institutional Actions Council (IAC).

The team's recommendation is not sent to IAC until HLC receives the other agency's final decision about the requested substantive change. The agency should send its decision to changerequests@hlcommission.org.

Decision Making

Once the agency's decision is received, HLC will send the institution a copy of the final report and the recommendation. The institution has two weeks to respond to the recommendation. The application, team report, institutional response and the other agency's decision are then reviewed by IAC for final decision.

All Other Visits

After an institution requests that an outside agency observe an HLC visit, an HLC Accreditation Services staff member will notify the team chair, providing this document and the contact information for the agency representative(s). The team chair is encouraged to reach out to the institution's HLC staff liaison if they have any questions or concerns. HLC expects the institution to share this document with the agency representative(s).

The visit will proceed as scheduled and the agency representative(s) will be considered observers. Should any issues arise, the team chair will promptly notify the institution's ALO and the HLC staff liaison.

Guidelines for Other Agencies Observing HLC Visits

HLC expects agency representatives, institutions and peer reviewers to follow the guidelines below to preserve the integrity of the review process, ensuring that the visit unfolds as it would regardless of the presence of observers.

- Observers are responsible for arranging their own travel to and from the site and should plan to arrive at the designated location at least 15 minutes before the first meeting.
- Observers do not participate in any team deliberations.
- Observers will receive visit logistic information prior to the visit.
- Observers should wear an agency-issued badge or other ID that identifies them and distinguishes them from the HLC peer review team members. Team chairs and/or institutional representatives will inform institutional stakeholders about the observers to the visit.
- Observers follow the lead of the team chair throughout the visit. At the chair's discretion, the observers may not be able to participate in all meetings.
- Observers remain silent during the visit, simply observing the visit.
- Observers refer all questions regarding policy, process or procedure back to the HLC staff.
- Observers are expected to maintain confidentiality and objectivity and take all necessary measures to safeguard HLC's and the institution's materials, data, records and proprietary information that they may have access to during the observation.

Related Policies

[Relations With Other Recognized Accrediting Agencies](#)
(COMM.C.10.020)

[Relations With the U.S. Government, State Higher Education Agencies and Other State Offices](#)
(COMM.C.10.030)

Questions?

Contact the institution's HLC staff liaison.