

# Seeking Accreditation Reviewers

## Proposed Policy Change Approved on First Reading

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The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Board of Trustees (“the Board”) approved this policy on first reading at its meeting on February 27, 2025.

### Background

HLC policy provides that the Board of Trustees will designate a group of peer reviewers to serve as Eligibility Reviewers.

Historically, Eligibility Reviewers conducted reviews for institutions that were seeking accreditation through the Eligibility Process. HLC now has two different processes for seeking accreditation: the Eligibility Process and serving a period of Candidacy; and the Accelerated Process for Initial Accreditation.

The proposed policy changes would change the name of Eligibility Reviewers to the more inclusive term of Seeking Accreditation Reviewers. The policy changes would also clarify other aspects of the Eligibility Process as aligned with current procedures and terminology.

### Comments Invited

HLC invites comments on this change before the Board takes final action at its meeting on June 26-27, 2025. Comments can be sent to [policycomments@hlcommission.org](mailto:policycomments@hlcommission.org). Comments are due by May 12, 2025.

### 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: Eligibility Process

Number: INST.B.20.010

~~Institutions participating in~~ **An institution seeking accreditation through** the Eligibility Process **and candidacy** will establish eligibility for ~~an HLC on-site~~ **a comprehensive** evaluation for ~~candidate status~~ **candidacy** by completing ~~HLC's~~ **the** 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~~ **comprehensive evaluation for candidacy**. **In the Eligibility Process**, ~~An institution seeking an HLC on-site evaluation for candidate status accreditation~~ shall provide **initial** 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 ~~C~~**candidacy**.

An institution participating in the Eligibility Process **does not hold status with HLC until granted candidacy** and may **not** claim ~~no official~~ **to hold status with HLC prior to being granted candidate status unless and until it is granted candidacy**.

The Eligibility Process provides **opportunities** for HLC staff consultation and for review by ~~Eligibility~~ **Seeking Accreditation** Reviewers to determine the institution's readiness for a comprehensive evaluation for ~~C~~**candidacy**. ~~Eligibility~~ **Seeking Accreditation** Reviewers review the written evidence put forward by an institution that it meets the Eligibility Requirements and determine whether the institution has provided sufficient evidence to proceed with a comprehensive evaluation for ~~C~~**candidacy**.

~~Eligibility~~ **Seeking Accreditation** Reviewers

The Board of Trustees will choose peer reviewers to serve as ~~Eligibility~~ **Seeking Accreditation** Reviewers. **Seeking Accreditation Reviewers will be** specifically trained to ~~review the Eligibility Requirements~~ **conduct certain reviews of institutions that are seeking accreditation with HLC**. ~~These Seeking Accreditation~~ **Reviewers** will fill renewable four-year terms.

Policy Title: Accelerated Process for Initial Accreditation

Number: INST.B.20.032

In some instances, institutions that meet the qualifications listed below may be eligible to apply for initial accreditation through an accelerated process.

The accelerated process is distinct from HLC's other processes for seeking accreditation. An institution participating in an accelerated process does not participate in the Eligibility Process.

The institution does not hold candidacy status, and thus does not hold any status with HLC, prior to being granted initial accreditation. **An institution participating in the Accelerated Process for Initial Accreditation may not claim to hold status with HLC unless and until it is granted initial accreditation.**

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## Application for Initial Accreditation Through the Accelerated Process

An institution that meets the qualifications above may apply for initial accreditation through the accelerated process. As part of the application process, an institution will be required to demonstrate through a peer review process that it meets the qualifications for participating in the accelerated process, ~~and that it otherwise preliminarily~~ **including providing initial sufficient evidence in writing that it meets HLC's requirements, including the Eligibility Requirements. The determination that an institution meets HLC requirements, including the Eligibility Requirements, will take place during the comprehensive evaluation for initial accreditation.**

Peer reviewers participating in the initial phases of the accelerated process may be ~~Eligibility~~ **Seeking Accreditation** Reviewers chosen by the Board of Trustees, or other peer reviewers.

As part of the application process, HLC may also require that the institution participate in educational activities designed to familiarize the institution with HLC requirements, policies and procedures.

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