

Evidence of Compliance With the Assumed Practices

Foundational to the Criteria and Core Components is a set of practices shared by institutions of higher education in the United States. Unlike the Criteria for Accreditation, these Assumed Practices are (1) generally matters to be determined as facts, rather than matters requiring professional judgment and (2) not expected to vary by institutional mission or context. Every institution is expected to be in compliance with all Assumed Practices at all times.

The Assumed Practices are organized into four areas: (A) Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct; (B) Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support; (C) Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement; and (D) Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness. These areas link the Assumed Practices to their respective Criteria.

Institutions will be required to affirmatively demonstrate their compliance with the Assumed Practices at particular times. These times include, for example, institutions seeking candidacy, institutions seeking initial accreditation and accredited institutions on Show-Cause.

Instructions

Provide a detailed explanation demonstrating how the institution meets each of the Assumed Practices. The institution may include additional evidence that is directly related to and supports explanations provided in this form. If a particular item is relevant to more than one Assumed Practice, include cross-references to previous narrative or evidence. The institution may also cross-reference relevant information provided in the Institutional Data Form, if applicable.

Upload the completed form and supporting documentation as two separate PDF files to the Forms tab of the Assurance System. The PDF of the supporting documentation should be paginated, bookmarked and searchable with internal document links that allow for ease of movement across chapters, sections and subsections. Institutions seeking accreditation with HLC should follow the general guidelines for submitting required materials that are detailed in the [Eligibility Process and Candidacy](https://download.hlcommission.org/seeking-accreditation/EligibilityCandidacy_PRC.pdf) or the [Accelerated Process for Initial Accreditation](https://download.hlcommission.org/seeking-accreditation/AcceleratedInitialAccreditation_PRC.pdf) overview documents. (Peer reviewers will be able to access the Compliance With Assumed Practices documents through the Forms Tab. There is no need to provide a link to these documents in the narrative of the Assurance Argument.)

## A. Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

1. The institution has a conflict-of-interest policy that ensures that the governing board and the senior administrative personnel act in the best interest of the institution.

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. The institution has ethics policies for faculty and staff regarding conflict of interest, nepotism, recruitment and admissions, financial aid, privacy of personal information, and contracting.

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. The institution provides its students, administrators, faculty, and staff with policies and procedures informing them of their rights and responsibilities within the institution.

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. The institution establishes and publicizes clear procedures for receiving complaints from students and other constituencies, responding to complaints in a timely manner, and analyzing complaints to improve its processes. The institution does not retaliate against those who raise complaints.

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. The institution makes readily available to students and to the general public clear and complete information including:

 a. statements of mission, vision, and values

 b. full descriptions of the requirements for its programs, including all pre-requisite courses

 c. requirements for admission both to the institution and to particular programs or majors

 d. its policies on acceptance of transfer credit, including how the institution applies such credit to its degree requirements. (Except for courses articulated through transfer policies or institutional agreements, the institution makes no promises to prospective students regarding the acceptance of credit awarded by examination, credit for prior learning, or credit for transfer until the institution has conducted an evaluation of such students’ credits in accordance with transfer policies.)

 e. all student costs, including tuition, fees, training, and incidentals; its financial aid policies, practices, and requirements; and its policy on refunds

 f. policies regarding academic good standing, probation, and dismissal; residency or enrollment requirements (if any)

 g. its relationship with any parent organization (corporation, hospital, or church, or other entity that owns the institution) and any external providers of its instruction.

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. The institution assures that all data it makes public are accurate and complete, including those reporting on student achievement of learning and student persistence, retention, and completion.

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. The institution portrays clearly and accurately to the public its current status with the Higher Learning Commission and with any other institutional, specialized, and professional accreditation agencies.

 a. An institution offering programs that require specialized accreditation or recognition by a state licensing board or other entity in order for its students to be certified or to sit for the licensing examination in states where its students reside either has the appropriate accreditation and recognition or discloses publicly and clearly the consequences to the students of the lack thereof. The institution makes clear to students the distinction between institutional and specialized or program accreditation and the relationships between licensure and the various types of accreditation.

 b. An institution offering programs eligible for specialized accreditation at multiple locations discloses the accreditation status and recognition of the program by state licensing boards at each location.

 c. An institution that provides a program that prepares students for a licensure, certification, or other qualifying examination publicly discloses its pass rate on that examination, unless such information is not available to the institution.

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. The governing board and its executive committee, if it has one, include some “public” members. Public members have no significant administrative position or any ownership interest in any of the following: the institution itself; a company that does substantial business with the institution; a company or organization with which the institution has a substantial partnership; a parent, ultimate parent, affiliate, or subsidiary corporation; an investment group or firm substantially involved with one of the above organizations. All publicly-elected members or members appointed by publicly-elected individuals or bodies (governors, elected legislative bodies) are public members.1

*1 Institutions operating under federal control and authorized by Congress are exempt from these requirements. These institutions must have a public board that includes representation by individuals who do not have a current or previous employment or other relationship with the federal government or any military entity. This public board has a significant role in setting policy, reviewing the institution’s finances, reviewing and approving major institutional priorities, and overseeing the academic programs of the institution.*

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. The governing board has the authority to approve the annual budget and to engage and dismiss the chief executive officer.1
*1 Institutions operating under federal control and authorized by Congress are exempt from these requirements. These institutions must have a public board that includes representation by individuals who do not have a current or previous employment or other relationship with the federal government or any military entity. This public board has a significant role in setting policy, reviewing the institution’s finances, reviewing and approving* *major institutional priorities, and overseeing the academic programs of the institution.*

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. The institution remains in compliance at all times with all applicable laws, including laws related to authorization of educational activities and consumer protection wherever it does business.

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. The institution documents outsourcing of all services in written agreements, including agreements with parent or affiliated organizations.

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. The institution takes responsibility for the ethical and responsible behavior of its contractual partners in relation to actions taken on its behalf.

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

## B. Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

### 1. Programs, Courses, and Credits

1. The institution conforms to commonly accepted minimum program length: 60 semester credits for associate’s degrees, 120 semester credits for bachelor’s degrees, and 30 semester credits beyond the bachelor’s for master’s degrees. Any variation from these minima must be explained and justified.

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. The institution maintains structures or practices that ensure the coherence and quality of the programs for which it awards a degree. Typically institutions will require that at minimum 30 of the 120 credits earned for the bachelor’s degree and 15 of the 60 credits for the associate’s degree be credits earned at the institution itself, through arrangements with other accredited institutions, or through contractual relationships approved by HLC. Any variation from the typical minima must be explained and justified.

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. The institution’s policy and practice assure that at least 50% of courses applied to a graduate program are courses designed for graduate work, rather than undergraduate courses credited toward a graduate degree. (Cf. Criterion 3.A.1 and 2.)
(An institution may allow well-prepared advanced students to substitute its graduate courses for required or elective courses in an undergraduate degree program and then subsequently count those same courses as fulfilling graduate requirements in a related graduate program that the institution offers. In “4+1” or “2+3” programs, at least 50% of the credits allocated for the master’s degree – usually 15 of 30 – must be for courses designed for graduate work.)

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. The institution adheres to policies on student academic load per term that reflect reasonable expectations for successful learning and course completion.

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. Courses that carry academic credit toward college-level credentials have content and rigor appropriate to higher education.

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. The institution has a process for ensuring that all courses transferred and applied toward degree requirements demonstrate equivalence with its own courses required for that degree or are of equivalent rigor.

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. The institution has a clear policy on the maximum allowable credit for prior learning as a reasonable proportion of the credits required to complete the student’s program. Credit awarded for prior learning is documented, evaluated, and appropriate for the level of degree awarded. (Note that this requirement does not apply to courses transferred from other institutions.)

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. The institution maintains a minimum requirement for general education for all of its undergraduate programs whether through a traditional practice of distributed curricula (15 semester credits for AAS degrees, 24 for AS or AA degrees, and 30 for bachelor’s degrees) or through integrated, embedded, interdisciplinary, or other accepted models that demonstrate a minimum requirement equivalent to the distributed model. Any variation is explained and justified.

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

### 2. Faculty Roles and Qualifications

1. The institution establishes and maintains reasonable policies and procedures to determine that faculty are qualified. The factors that an institution considers as part of these policies and procedures could include, but are not limited to: the achievement of academic credentials, progress toward academic credentials, equivalent experience, or some combination thereof. The institution’s obligations in this regard extend to all instructors and all other entities to which it assigns the responsibility of instruction. HLC will maintain “Institutional Policies and Procedures for Determining Faculty Qualifications Guidelines” to further explain requirements for reasonable policies and procedures in accordance with this Assumed Practice.

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. Faculty participate substantially in:

i. oversight of the curriculum offered—its development, vetting and implementation; academic substance; currency; and relevance for internal and external constituencies;

ii. assurance of consistency in the level and quality of instruction and in the expectations of student performance;

iii. establishment of the qualifications for instructors, including instructors provided by third parties;

iv. analysis of data and appropriate action on assessment of student learning and program completion.

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

### 3. Support Services

1. Financial aid advising clearly and comprehensively reviews students’ eligibility for financial assistance and assists students in a full understanding of their debt and its consequences.

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. The institution maintains timely and accurate transcript and records services.

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

## C. Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

1. Instructors (excluding for this requirement teaching assistants enrolled in a graduate program and supervised by faculty) have the authority for the assignment of any measure of student achievement. (This requirement allows for collective responsibility, as, for example, when a faculty committee has the authority to override a grade on appeal.)

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. The institution refrains from the transcription of credit from other institutions or providers that it will not apply to its own programs.

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. The institution has formal and current written agreements for managing any internships and clinical placements included in its programs.

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. A predominantly or solely single-purpose institution in fields that require licensure for practice is also accredited by or is actively in the process of applying to a relevant accreditor for each field, as sufficient for licensure, if such a recognized accreditor exists.

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. Instructors communicate course requirements to students in writing and in a timely manner.

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. Institutional data on assessment of student learning are accurate and address the full range of students who enroll.

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. Institutional data on student retention, persistence, and completion are accurate and address the full range of students who enroll.

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

## D. Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

1. The institution is able to meet its current financial obligations.

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. The institution has a prepared budget for the current year and the capacity to compare it with budgets and actual results of previous years.

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. The institution has future financial projections addressing its long-term financial sustainability.

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. The institution maintains effective systems for collecting, analyzing, and using institutional information.

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. The institution undergoes an external audit by a certified public accountant or a public audit agency that reports financial statements on the institution separately from any other related entity or parent corporation. For private institutions the audit is annual; for public institutions it is at least every two years.2
*2 Institutions under federal control are exempted provided that they have other reliable information to document the institution’s fiscal resources and management.*

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. The institution’s administrative structure includes a chief executive officer, chief financial officer, and chief academic officer (titles may vary) with appropriate credentials and experience and sufficient focus on the institution to ensure appropriate leadership and oversight. (An institution may outsource its financial functions but must have the capacity to assure the effectiveness of that arrangement.)

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.

1. The institution’s planning activities demonstrate careful and detailed consideration of student needs (including but not limited to the preservation of student records) and protocols to be followed in the event an orderly institutional closure becomes necessary.

**Evaluative Narrative.** Explain how the institution meets the Assumed Practice.

**Supporting Documentation.** List the specific materials provided as evidence for this Assumed Practice.