Accreditation and Assessment: Implications of the HLC’s New Criteria for the Institution and for Assessment

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Disclaimer

The views and opinions in this session represent those of the presenters and do not necessarily represent the views of the Higher Learning Commission.
Traditional View of Accreditation
President of the HLC, Sylvia Manning, speaks at a hearing before the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions in 2011
Value to the institution
Activity

Consider the following prompts during our presentation:

• In what ways do the new criteria confirm or challenge your view on accreditation?

• What implications do you see for your role at the institution? For the institution? For your department?
“In its review of institutions, the Higher Learning Commission seeks a culture of aspiration and continual improvement rather than satisfaction of minimum requirements”
HLC Guiding Values

1. Focus on student learning
   – Teaching mission as primary
   – Other missions, such as research or healthcare, recognized in relation to the teaching mission
   – Comprehensive view – from recruitment through what happens after graduation
HLC Guiding Values

2. Education as a public purpose
   – A “solemn responsibility for which they should hold themselves accountable”
   – Includes all types of institutions, public and for-profit

3. Education for a diverse, technological, globally connected world
   – Life-long learning and broader civic learning and intellectual capabilities
HLC Guiding Values

4. A culture of continuous improvement
   – Commitment to assessment should be deeply embedded in an institution’s activities
   – Assessment applies not only to student learning and educational outcomes but to an institution’s approach to improvement of institutional effectiveness (i.e., organizational learning)
   – Assessment at the program level that proceeds from clear goals, involves faculty at all points, and analyzes the assessment results
     • Institution improves its programs or ancillary services or other operations on the basis of those analyses
HLC Guiding Values

5. Evidence-based institutional learning and self-presentation
   - Assessment and the processes an institution learns from should be well-grounded in evidence.

6. Integrity, transparency, and ethical behavior or practice

7. Governance for the well-being of the institution
   - Well being of the institution over the well-being of the interests of the board or of any other entity
   - Includes a significant role for faculty
HLC Guiding Values

8. Planning and management of resources to ensure institutional sustainability
   – “Students do expect, however, that an institution will be in operation for the duration of their degree programs.”

9. Mission-centered evaluation

10. Accreditation through peer review
The Open Pathway

The Open Pathway is divided into two distinct parts:

Assurance Review

Quality Initiative
The Open Pathway

Assurance Review

Accreditation Criteria & Core Components

Evidence File
The institution undertakes a multi-year process to increase retention, to increase graduation rates, and to decrease time to graduation.
Criterion One

Mission

The institution’s mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution’s operations.
Criterion Two

Integrity:
Ethical and Responsible Conduct

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.
Criterion Three

Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.
Criterion Four

Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.
Criterion Five

Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

The institution’s resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.
“The institution **demonstrates responsibility** for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it **evaluates their effectiveness for student learning** through processes designed to promote **continuous improvement**”

[bold added]
HLC’s Assumed Practices Related to Assessment

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

• Institutional data on student retention, persistence, and completion are accurate and address the full range of students who enroll
4.A. Institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs

- Regular program reviews
- Evaluation of all transcripted learning (including prior learning or experiential learning, and policies on transfer credit)
- Maintains authority over prerequisites, rigor of courses, faculty qualifications
- Assures dual credit are equivalent in learning outcomes and achievement
- Maintains specialized accreditation as appropriate
- Success of graduates is evaluated
4.B. Institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning

- Clearly stated goals for student learning
- Effective processes for assessment of these goals
- Assesses learning outcomes in curricular and co-curricular programs
- Assessment reflects good practice, including substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members
- Institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning
4.C. Commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in degree and certificate programs

– Has defined goals that are ambitious but attainable and appropriate for mission
– Institution collects and analyzes data on retention, persistence, completion
– Institution uses information on retention, persistence, completion to make improvements as warranted
– Process reflects good practice (not required to use IPEDS definitions)
Implications for Program Assessment

• Serious about seeing EVIDENCE that assessment is USED to improve student learning
• Increased focus on continual improvement
• Expectations for assessment are heightened; expect good practice
• Addition of retention, persistence, and completion as important measures of quality
Implications

• Assessment expected in ALL campus units
  – Units that do not have a mission related to student learning are expected to assess and improve themselves relative to their operational effectiveness (generally under criteria 3 and 5)
  – Focus is still on use of results for improvement
The End of the Traditional Model of Accreditation
“We are about oranges, we gather apples, and wonder why our grape harvest is no good.”
Discussion

- Is OSU an “oranges, apples, grapes” place?
- Is your degree program an “oranges, apples, grapes” place?
- What implications for your program did you see from the presentation?
- How has your view on accreditation changed by the new criteria?