

# HLC Criteria for Accreditation

Criterion 1: Mission	HLC Assumed Practices	HLC Federal Compliance				
The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly. It guides the institution's operations.						
<b>Core Components</b>	<b>Assumed Practices</b>	<b>Federal Compliance</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Data</b>	<b>Improvement</b>
<b>1.A. The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.</b>						
1. The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board.						
2. The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission.						
3. The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission. (This sub-component may be addressed by reference to the response to Criterion 5.C.1.)						
<b>1.B. The mission is articulated publicly.</b>						
1. The institution clearly articulates its mission through one or more public documents, such as statements of purpose, vision, values, goals, plans, or institutional priorities.						
2. The mission document or documents are current and explain the extent of the institution's emphasis on the various aspects of its mission, such as instruction, scholarship, research, application of research, creative works, clinical service, public service, economic development, and religious or cultural purpose.						
3. The mission document or documents identify the nature, scope, and intended constituents of the higher education programs and services the institution provides.						
<b>1.C. The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society.</b>						
1. The institution addresses its role in a multicultural society.						
2. The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.						
<b>1.D. The institution's mission demonstrates commitment to the public good.</b>						
1. Actions and decisions reflect an understanding that in its educational role the institution serves the public, not solely the institution, and thus entails a public obligation.						
2. The institution's educational responsibilities take primacy over other purposes, such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.						
3. The institution engages with its identified external constituencies and communities of interest and responds to their needs as its mission and capacity allow.						
<b>Criterion 2: Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Behavior</b>						
The institution acts with integrity. Its conduct is ethical and responsible.						
<b>Core Components</b>	<b>Assumed Practices</b>	<b>Federal Compliance</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Data</b>	<b>Improvement</b>
<b>2.A. The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows policies and processes for fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.</b>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial</li> <li>• Academic</li> <li>• Personnel</li> <li>• Auxiliary</li> </ul>						
<b>2.B. The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.</b>						
<b>2.C. The governing board of the institution is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity.</b>						
1. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.						
2. The governing board reviews and considers the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.						
3. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests, or other external parties when such influence would not be in the best interest of the institution.						
4. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters.						
<b>2.D. The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning.</b>						
<b>2.E. The institution's policies and procedures call for responsible acquisition, discovery and application of knowledge by its faculty, students, and staff.</b>						
1. The institution provides effective oversight and support services to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by its faculty, staff, and students.						
2. Students are offered guidance in the ethical use of information resources.						
3. The institution has and enforces policies on academic honesty and integrity.						
<b>Criterion 3: Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support</b>						
The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.						
<b>Core Components</b>	<b>Assumed Practices</b>	<b>Federal Compliance</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Data</b>	<b>Improvements</b>
<b>3.A. The institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education.</b>						
1. Courses and programs are current and require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded.						
2. The institution articulates and differentiates learning goals for its undergraduate, graduate, post-baccalaureate, post-graduate, and certificate programs.						
3. The institution's program quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality).						
<b>3.B. The institution demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs.</b>						
1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution.						
2. The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.						
3. Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.						
4. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work.						
5. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their programs and the institution's mission.						
<b>3.C. The institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services.</b>						
1. The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution.						
2. The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess.						
3. Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments.						
4. The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work.						

5. The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their programs and the institution's mission.						
<b>3.D. The institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching.</b>						
1. The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.						
2. The institution provides for learning support and preparatory instruction to address the academic needs of its students. It has a process for directing entering students to courses and programs for which the students are adequately prepared.						
3. The institution provides academic advising suited to its programs and the needs of its students.						
4. The institution provides to students and instructors the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (technological infrastructure, scientific laboratories, libraries, performance spaces, clinical practice sites, museum collections, as appropriate to the institution's offerings).						
5. The institution provides to students guidance in the effective use of research and information resources.						
<b>3.E. The institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment.</b>						
1. Co-curricular programs are suited to the institution's mission and contribute to the educational experience of its students.						
2. The institution demonstrates any claims it makes about contributions to its students' educational experience by virtue of aspects of its mission, such as research, community engagement, service learning, religious or spiritual purpose, and economic development.						
<b>Criterion 4: Teaching and Learning, Evaluation and Improvement</b>						
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.						
<b>Core Components</b>	<b>Assumed Practices</b>	<b>Federal Compliance</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Data</b>	<b>Improvements</b>
<b>4.A. The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.</b>						
1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.						
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.						
3. The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.	36 AP F -- Transfer of Credit Policies	19 FC B -- Transfer of Credit Policies	<a href="https://bartonccc.edu/transcripts/transferanncst">https://bartonccc.edu/transcripts/transferanncst</a>			
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It assures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.						
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.						
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and Americorps).						
<b>4.B. The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.</b>						
1. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.						
2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.						
3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.						
4. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.						
<b>4.C. The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.</b>						
1. The institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion that are ambitious but attainable and appropriate to its mission, student populations, and educational offerings.						
2. The institution collects and analyzes information on student retention, persistence, and completion of its programs.						
3. The institution uses information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs to make improvements as warranted by the data.						
4. The institution's processes and methodologies for collecting and analyzing information on student retention, persistence, and completion of programs reflect good practice. (Institutions are not required to use IPEDS definitions in their determination of persistence or completion rates. Institutions are encouraged to choose measures that are suitable to their student populations, but institutions are accountable for the validity of their measures.)						
<b>Criterion 5: Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness</b>						
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.						
<b>Core Components</b>	<b>Assumed Practices</b>	<b>Federal Compliance</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Data</b>	<b>Improvements</b>
<b>5.A. The institution's resource base supports its current educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.</b>						
1. The institution has the fiscal and human resources and physical and technological infrastructure sufficient to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered.						
2. The institution's resource allocation process ensures that its educational purposes are not adversely affected by elective resource allocations to other areas or disbursement of revenue to a superordinate entity.						
3. The goals incorporated into mission statements or elaborations of mission statements are realistic in light of the institution's organization, resources, and opportunities.						
4. The institution's staff in all areas are appropriately qualified and trained.		8-FSA Training				
5. The institution has a well-developed process in place for budgeting and for monitoring expense.						
<b>5.B. The institution's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission.</b>						
1. The governing board is knowledgeable about the institution; it provides oversight of the institution's financial and academic policies and practices and meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.						
2. The institution has and employs policies and procedures to engage its internal constituencies—including its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students—in the institution's governance.						
3. Administration, faculty, staff, and students are involved in setting academic requirements, policy, and processes through effective structures for contribution and collaborative effort.						
<b>5.C. The institution engages in systematic and integrated planning.</b>						
1. The institution allocates its resources in alignment with its mission and priorities.						
2. The institution links its processes for assessment of student learning, evaluation of operations, planning, and budgeting.						
3. The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.						
4. The institution plans on the basis of a sound understanding of its current capacity. Institutional plans anticipate the possible impact of fluctuations in the institution's sources of revenue, such as enrollment, the economy, and state support.						
5. Institutional planning anticipates emerging factors, such as technology, demographic shifts, and globalization.						
<b>5.D. The institution works systematically to improve its performance.</b>						
1. The institution develops and documents evidence of performance in its operations.						
2. The institution learns from its operational experience and applies that learning to improve its institutional effectiveness, capabilities, and sustainability, overall and in its component parts.						

## HLC Assumed Practices

A: Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct	Evidence	Comments
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.		
2. 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.		
3. The institution provides its students, administrators, faculty, and staff with policies and procedures informing them of their rights and responsibilities within the institution.		
4. The institution provides clear information regarding its procedures for receiving complaints and grievances from students and other constituencies, responds to them in a timely manner, and analyzes them to improve its processes.		
5. 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. policies on acceptance of transfer credit, including how credit is applied to 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 an evaluation has been conducted.)		
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. a full list of its instructors and their academic credentials		
h. its relationship with any parent organization (corporation, hospital, or church, or other entity that owns the institution) and any external providers of its instruction.		
6. 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.		
7. The institution portrays clearly and accurately to the public its current status with the Higher Learning Commission and with specialized, national, 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 regional 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.		
8. 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.*		
9. The governing board has the authority to approve the annual budget and to engage and dismiss the chief executive officer.*		
10. The institution remains in compliance at all times with state laws including laws related to authorization of educational activities and consumer protection wherever it does business and state law applies.		

11. The institution documents outsourcing of all services in written agreements, including agreements with parent or affiliated organizations.		
12. The institution takes responsibility for the ethical and responsible behavior of its contractual partners in relation to actions taken on its behalf.		
<i>*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.</i>		
<b>B. Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support</b>		
1. Programs, Courses, and Credits		
a. 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.		
b. 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 the Commission. Any variation from the typical minima must be explained and justified.		
c. 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.)		
d. The institution adheres to policies on student academic load per term that reflect reasonable expectations for successful learning and course completion.		
e. Courses that carry academic credit toward college-level credentials have content and rigor appropriate to higher education.		
f. 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.	<a href="https://bartonccc.edu/transcripts/sendatranscript">https://bartonccc.edu/transcripts/sendatranscript</a>	<a href="https://bartonccc.edu/transcripts/sendatranscript">https://bartonccc.edu/transcripts/sendatranscript</a>
g. 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.)		
h. 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.		
2. Faculty Roles and Qualifications		

<p>a. Qualified faculty members are identified primarily by credentials, but other factors, including but not limited to equivalent experience, may be considered by the institution in determining whether a faculty member is qualified. Instructors (excluding for this requirement teaching assistants enrolled in a graduate program and supervised by faculty) possess an academic degree relevant to what they are teaching and at least one level above the level at which they teach, except in programs for terminal degrees or when equivalent experience is established. In terminal degree programs, faculty members possess the same level of degree. When faculty members are employed based on equivalent experience, the institution defines a minimum threshold of experience and an evaluation process that is used in the appointment process. Faculty teaching general education courses, or other non-occupational courses, hold a master's degree or higher in the discipline or subfield. If a faculty member holds a master's degree or higher in a discipline or subfield other than that in which he or she is teaching, that faculty member should have completed a minimum of 18 graduate credit hours in the discipline or subfield in which they teach.</p>		
<p>b. Instructors teaching in graduate programs should hold the terminal degree determined by the discipline and have a record of research, scholarship or achievement appropriate for the graduate program.</p>		
<p>c. Instructors teaching at the doctoral level have a record of recognized scholarship, creative endeavor, or achievement in practice commensurate with doctoral expectations.</p>		
<p>d. Faculty participate substantially in:</p>		
<p>a. oversight of the curriculum—its development and implementation, academic substance, currency, and relevance for internal and external constituencies;</p>		
<p>b. assurance of consistency in the level and quality of instruction and in the expectations of student performance;</p>		
<p>c. establishment of the academic qualifications for instructional personnel;</p>		
<p>d. analysis of data and appropriate action on assessment of student learning and program completion.</p>		
<p>3. Support Services</p>		
<p>a. 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.</p>		
<p>b. The institution maintains timely and accurate transcript and records services.</p>		
<p><b>C. Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement</b></p>		
<p>1. Instructors (excluding for this requirement teaching assistants enrolled in a graduate program and supervised by faculty) have the authority for the assignment of grades. (This requirement allows for collective responsibility, as when a faculty committee has the authority to override a grade on appeal.)</p>		
<p>2. The institution refrains from the transcription of credit from other institutions or providers that it will not apply to its own programs.</p>		
<p>3. The institution has formal and current written agreements for managing any internships and clinical placements included in its programs.</p>		
<p>4. 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 recognized specialized accrediting agency for each field, if such agency exists.</p>		
<p>5. Instructors communicate course requirements to students in writing and in a timely manner.</p>		
<p>6. Institutional data on assessment of student learning are accurate and address the full range of students who enroll.</p>		
<p>7. Institutional data on student retention, persistence, and completion are accurate and address the full range of students who enroll.</p>		
<p><b>D. Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness</b></p>		
<p>1. The institution is able to meet its current financial obligations.</p>		
<p>2. The institution has a prepared budget for the current year and the capacity to compare it with budgets and actual results of previous years.</p>		
<p>3. The institution has future financial projections addressing its long-term financial sustainability.</p>		
<p>4. The institution maintains effective systems for collecting, analyzing, and using institutional information.</p>		

5. 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.*		
6. 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.)		
<i>*Institutions under federal control are exempted provided that they have other reliable information to document the institution's fiscal resources and management.</i>		