

Note: This document was compiled in 2012 in collaboration between the Higher Learning Commission and the 14 Pioneer Pathways institutions that helped developed the new model for accreditation. This document identifies the scope of evidence that would help demonstrate an institution's compliance with the criteria for accreditation, what documents in which such evidence is likely found, and what institutional practices or situations would constitute a red flag issue. The x's beside some statements indicate the degree of agreement or consensus of the participants as to their relevance or importance to accreditation and the continuous improvement of an institution.

Criterion One - Mission

EVIDENCE

- Mission statement and documents prevalent everywhere, on line, web, linked with planning (xxxxxxxxxx)
- Orientation programs for staff, faculty that focus on mission, vision, strategic goals (xx)
- Handbooks with mission in them, subunits with mission statements, clear alignment in programs, departments (xxx)
- Catalogs and handbooks with mission in them (xxxxxxxx)
- President refers to mission in speeches
- Processes clearly aligned with mission (planning, budgeting, services, etc.) (xx)
- Mission reflects the reality of what is being done—the mission is practiced (xxx)
- General education assessment planning process
- Admissions documents and processes that show mission in action (xx)
- Program reviews that include a mission component, public good, data on service to community, have processes for developing programs in relationship to mission or prioritization of academics to mission—even courses (xxxx)
- Marketing materials that include mission, show service (x)
- Adopted diversity statement (xxxx)
- Diversity figures, demographics, recruiting processes for faculty and students aligned with community diversity (xxxxxx)
- Financial statements, graphics, with investment breakouts and reports that show budget alignment with mission, services (xxxxx)
- Committees with external/public members and vice versa (xx)
- Clear articulation of how resource allocation follows mission (xx)
- Post-grad employment rates—achieve mission? Public good? (xx)
- Advisory boards—for public good, assist in operation (xxxxx)
- Evidence of service learning/volunteering in place, partnerships, internships, athletics, etc. (xxx)
- Organizational framework to show what services promote and provide diversity
- Implemented programs for faculty, staff, students on diversity of all types in curricula and co-curricula, general education (xx)
- Student life activities, schedules
- Professional school related to the mission—expansion of programs related to mission and strategic goals (xxx)
- Promotional documents bragging/showing partnerships, collaborations, service (xx)
- List of partnerships with community, workforce, volunteer, press conferences (institutional service record)
- Benefits of university to community (workforce dev., technology transfer, professionals to workforce, provision of healthcare, impact of the arts, impact on schools); policy impact in community (xxxx)
- Strategic plan and any annual review processes for planning
- Evidence of achievement of strategic goals
- Gov. board demonstrating adoption of mission, etc.—minutes (xxx)
- Minutes of committees that show mission relationship
- Syllabi and curricula that reflect the mission (xxx)
- Data from interviews and surveys of staff—interviews while on visit showing mission lives/is understood and articulated across staff, faculty, even students, community (xxxxx)
- Margins for mission investments
- Clear resources for staff development, faculty dev., student dev. (xx)
- Student success data, graduation rates, default rates, student debt—data that shows mission achieved (xxxx)
- Course schedules that show ability to meet diverse needs, enrollments in these—evidence of access in practice (xx)
- Academic programs tied to employment/community needs (xx)
- Enrollment management planning—plan implemented and results reviewed (xx)
- Student support and life activities, clubs, etc., activities that show the mission and alignment with students (xxx)
- Publications on services, programs, activities—reports on participation
- Diverse programming to meet needs (OLLI, Comm. ed., ABE, GED, ESOL, etc.)
- Positions dedicated to mission-related services

- GLBT statement
- Diversity reports
- Reinvestment of surplus in mission-related or public good outreach (xx)
- Clear governance processes
- Process for reviewing and changing mission, vision, planning (xx)

FLAGS

- Disconnect about claims and what they are really doing
- Disconnects between mission and programs—conflicting statements (xxx)
- Mismatch between mission and diversity of student pop. (xx)
- Documents in place, but not in action (xx)
- Mission missing in major documents, not communicated (xxx)
- Conversations on campus make you question if mission is in action—no one knows where it is, etc. (xx)
- Confusion between evidence and documents
- Lack of sense of the mission and institution as a whole—no one knows mission (xx)
- No articulation or evidence that serves the common good
- Bad press in community
- Lack of positive relationship with the community
- A mission hostile to diversity
- Lack of diversity of faculty (race, religion, age, academic bkgnd)
- Poor completion & employment rates
- Lack of evidence for commitment to diversity)
- Multi-cultural mission statements may not be explicit but actions may show compliance
- Lack of support mechanisms in place for ensuring diversity
- Out of date information on website, docs., conflicting or old mission statements
- Lack of any evidence above
- Mission, diversity—other position statements not available, not on web, buried, etc. (xxx)
- Mission statement from 1800s, not revised or reviewed (xx)

DOCUMENTS

- Mission statement (publicly displayed)
- Mission development process
- Annual Reports (1B3)
- Public Events Calendars
- College and local newspaper
- Affirmative Action documents
- Website
- Strategic Plan
- Recruiting documents
- Enrollment profile
- Enrollment management plan
- Policy manual
- Advisory board minutes
- Committee minutes
- Student handbook
- Staff/Faculty handbook
- Catalog
- Budget planning documents/allocation process
- Faculty/staff evaluation process
- New employee orientation

CRITERION TWO - Integrity

EVIDENCE

- Board minutes and actions
- Posting results and outcomes
- Board appointment process is clear, transparent (xx)
- Board policies, processes in place and followed (xxx)
- Transparency in decision-making clear in documents, processes (xx)
- Marketing materials clear, complete, honest, accurate—no hidden fees (xxx)
- Documents on accreditation are public (xx)
- Workplace harassment training
- How plagiarism is handled
- Hosting events that represent diverse expression
- Orientation process (xxx)
- Ethics statements, codes of conduct, training appropriate HR documents, processes—demonstrating ethics, integrity (xxxx)
- Articulation of ethics at Board level (xx)
- Discipline committee history and minutes—upholds academic freedom, issues of integrity, ethics (xx)
- General education is obvious regarding literacy
- Pursuit of truth
- Planning aligns with mission
- Student learning center
- Annual external audits
- Support for faculty research (xxx)
- Policies and practices ensuring student business ventures are ethical/responsible
- Student handbook statements on honesty, intellectual property, training for students in ethics
- Results from policies and processes in action, summary of actions taken
- Evidence policies and processes are implemented and followed (xxx)
- Examples of speakers, etc.
- Separation of foundations, boards, admin.
- Alignment between catalog and curricula and processes for reviewing and maintaining
- Policy manuals
- Board training
- Drop rate
- Checks and balances (complaint process, due process, grievance procedures)
- Curriculum process
- Clarity of organizational structure
- Faculty senate
- Policies and procedures for academic honesty
- Documentation of program changes, substitutions, etc.
- Policies, patents, copyrights, ownership of courses online, authorship (xxx)
- IRB in place (xxxxx)
- Class schedule
- Public reporting appropriate to the control of the institution exists and is updated frequently
- Human subject policies and processes
- Work load release policy
- Grievance as examples including documents of resolution
- Anything showing distance—coherence but appropriate separation of gov. board and academic programs
- Reports to board on academic programs
- Statements on academic freedom
- Student orientation, library workshops, program requirements
- Recruitment materials consistent with student experience
- Faculty work life consistent with faculty handbook
- Full list of faculty and their credentials (xxx)
- Explicit statement protecting freedom of speech and expression (xx)
- Interviews with faculty, admin, students, board staff—results of interviews and meetings (xx)

- Intellectual property statements
- Governance structure shows autonomy and transparency
- Student orientation focus
- Time to degree
- Academic integrity statements, code of integrity (xx)
- Crisis management
- Process to ensure safe work environment

FLAGS

Board—

- Interference with academic affairs
- Micro-management of President
- High turnover
- Conflicts of interest
- Lack of board minutes
- Mission policies/procedures
- Can't determine autonomy of board

Policies—

- No written disciplinary policy
- No academic freedom or integrity policies
- No appeals process
- No harassment or grievance policy
- "We have that policy but we don't enforce it"

Faculty/Staff—

- Punished for offending Board members
- Evidence in interviews of faculty/staff feeling unsupported
- Report reluctance from administration to share budget/financial information

Students—

- Convoluting requirements
- Complaints about hidden fees
- Lack of access to documents to guide them
- Lack of process to guide students in requirements for graduation

No IRB or access to IRB

No attendance tracking system

No support for research and scholarship

Nepotism in administration, board, and/or faculty

Patterns of complaints against the institution

Inconsistency of publicly disseminated information

Unclear distinction between regional and professional accreditation

Evidence of constant course substitution

Inconsistent documentation of curriculum

Disconnect btw documented relationship and practice of programs involving community work (nursing, teaching, etc.)

Is the institution financially solvent?

DOCUMENTS

- Plagiarism/academic honesty/integrity policy
- Student newspaper
- IRB policies, documents, minutes
- Marketing materials
- Program review results
- Strategic planning documents
- Financial aid records
- Specialized accreditation info
- Materials from compliance officer(s)

- Hiring documents
- New employee orientation and training materials
- Discipline committee records
- Pass an online harassment course
- Organizational chart
- Course syllabi
- Statements on academic freedom
- Annual financial audits
- Faculty senate minutes
- Faculty handbook and promotion/tenure documents
- Faculty vita
- Student handbook and conduct code
- Ethics and conflict of interest statements/policies/codes/forms
- Bylaws, agendas, minutes from Board meetings

Board policy manual, membership, background

CRITERION 3 – Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support

EVIDENCE

- Clearly articulated SLOs, including general education outcomes—outcomes linked to curricular experiences (xxxxx)
- A sense that gen. ed. has purpose, definition, and commitment; gen. ed. outcomes and philosophy stated and followed (xx)
- Student opinion surveys and their use
- Student organizations, processes, recruitment, level of participation; Students engaged in the learning process (xxxx)
- Annual performance evaluations (xxxx)
- Does program requirements reflect state and industry standards
- Class sizes appropriate to the mode of instruction and content and level (xx)
- Are goals uniform in the assessment plan and syllabi—spot check
- Information literacy programs and assessments
- Lists of resources
- Placement testing processes—valid, effective (xxx)
- Effective technology, appropriate use and support for technology
- Opportunities for students to engage out of the classroom
- Links in curricula that show evidence of addressing diversity
- Institution is following its policy for full-time/adjunct ratio.
- Hiring policies and practices
- Listing of awards, publications of faculty, students (alumni newsletters, dept. newsletters)
- List of student activities with missions
- Assessment implemented and is increasingly pervasive across programs, disciplines (xxxx)
- Known, discussed, consistent understanding of SLOs
- Data showing students are prepared for the job, the next degree, the next course, the next level (xx)
- Number and qualifications of faculty and staff—appropriately qualified faculty, staff, support (xxxxx)
- Study abroad, evidence of international students on campus
- Requirement that students need to see from outside regional, national, western perspective
- Capstone experiences, high-impact practices (xx)
- Distinctions between requirements for grads and undergrads in cross-listed courses
- Documentation of recent searches and hires
- Annual reviews of student services
- Claims made by admissions, materials connected to evidence on campus
- Institution demonstrates recognition of areas for improvement and balances with mission
- Breadth of evidence and examples of processes in action, data analyzed (xxxx)
- Policies and practices on office hours, contact info on syllabi (exp. Distance students) (xx)
- Enrollment reports
- Specialized program accreditation, results reports, criteria met
- Appropriate and implemented student learning and support programs (xxx)
- ADA compliance

- Effective advising processes
- Classroom technology and support—lab techs immediately available
- Faculty engagement in program review and improvement—both cyclical and ongoing (xxx)
- First destination surveys and use of their data (employment, post-grad)
- Appropriate balance of tenure track, professional track, adjuncts
- Resource support for student support services, academic services—staffed, aligned with mission and programs and students (xxx)
- Curriculum development and modification processes in place and operational—faculty responsible for them (xx)
- Appropriate faculty oversight of teaching, learning, curricula, assessment (xxx)
- Co-curricular offerings are aligned with mission, student body—and with what institution publishes and promises
- Faculty and staff development available and used (xxx)
- Student success, tutoring support services committed to student success, engagement, and completion (xxx)
- Galleries, art, other exhibits, cultural programming as appropriate to students, mission, college (xx)
- Appropriate modes of instruction well-delivered
- Comparison of curricula, student work, assessment across modalities and locations
- Sequential success rate, post-remedial
- Assessment and placement of students at entry
- Faculty development attendance and participation (xxxxx)
- Faculty evaluation processes
- Faculty rewards processes
- Examples of student work
- Curriculum examples, syllabi (xxx)
- Clear benchmarks, transfer data, GPAs
- CLA, CAP
- Credentialing and development opportunities for advising staff
- Turnover in staff and faculty
- Data from interviews with students and faculty—link with resources and access
- Library tutorials, new student orientation, first-year experience
- Statements by alumni and interactions with students and community
- Assessment plans and outcomes
- Advisory boards for terminal degrees
- Licensure rates
- Use of engagement methods and assessments (NSSE, CCSSE)
- Appropriate learning resources—that are used (xx)
- Evaluation and improvement of co-curricula
- External advisory board reviews
- Requirements for general education, appropriate general education, general education aligned with external requirements (xxx)

FLAGS

Students—

- Student feedback points to lack of faculty interaction, resources, advising, etc.
- Large student populations without corresponding services (i.e. veterans)
- Understaffed support offices
- Lack of tracking of student support
- Lack of or poor academic advising
- Campus dead—not much engagement in activities outside of class

Learning and Learning Outcomes—

- Quality varies across learning delivery or campuses
- Lack of learning outcomes; or they are not accessible/usable/well-defined
- No LOs for co-curricular programs
- Lack of rigor in general
- Syllabi for distance ed courses suggest lack of rigor compared to traditional courses

Faculty/Staff—

- Hiring practices not well documented

- Poor search practices
- Haphazard professional development
- Issues of inadequate staff/faculty surfaces in accreditation and program reviews
- Lack of acceptable ratio of tenured/tenure track to adjunct faculty
- Faculty credentials don't match instruction; not appropriately credentialed

Funding and Budget—

- Sudden budgetary fluctuations vis-à-vis teaching and learning
- Lack of appropriate funding and resources to support faculty and students relative to size of institution

General—

- Institution makes claims that aren't evident to students or practice
- Patterns—multiple sources of evidence pointing to problems
- Inconsistency and/or lack of documents

DOCUMENTS

Student-related –

- Employers regarding graduate preparation
- Assessment of co-curricular units
- Alumni surveys
- NSSE data
- Surveys of academic resources
- Student evaluations of faculty

Faculty-related –

- Faculty evaluation policies
- Data regarding number of faculty members per degree program
- Faculty credentials
- FT/PT faculty reports
- Faculty cvs
- Directory information
- Department credentialing requirements
- Tenure and promotional policies

Policies –

- Advising policies, procedures, advising assignments
- Faculty office hours and policies
- Policies regarding faculty and staff evaluations
- Hiring policies and procedures
- Faculty and staff handbooks and procedural manuals
- Faculty workload policies/contractual requirements

General Education –

- Philosophy statement
- General Ed requirements
- General Ed outcomes as stated in catalog and website

Learning Outcomes –

- Identification of outcomes in public documents
- Explanations in public forums of learning goals and outcomes
- Assessment plans for learning outcomes by course, department, disciplines, degrees
- Documents indicating consistency of learning outcomes regardless of delivery method

Assessment of student learning –

- Professional degree requirements for assessment
- Specialized program accreditation letters
- Accreditation reports
- Policies for curricular review
- Website for assessment

- Degree audits
- Program review documents and reports

Institutional documents/agreements –

- Syllabi
- Catalog
- Student Handbook
- Faculty Handbook
- State articulation agreements
- Inter-institutional articulation agreements
- Student transcripts
- Academic calendar
- Documents relating to diversity (co-curricular activities, study abroad, international office)

Curriculum –

- Curriculum committee policies and reports
- Syllabi
- Internal review process for courses and programs
- Budgetary documents indicating support for curricular programs

Human Resources –

- Staff rosters and qualifications
- Professional training philosophy, activities, and evaluations
- Organizational charts
- Grant-funded versus institutional support of human resources

CRITERION 4 – Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

EVIDENCE

- Workings of curriculum committee
- Robust registrar role and related processes—registrar involvement with faculty (xx)
- Goals set, strategies implemented to improve student success—evidence this is in the works (xxxx)
- Faculty in key roles related to programs, assessment, student success (x)
- Means for ensuring rigor despite variety of modalities and dual enrollment, new means of teaching and learning, MOOCs (xxx)
- Implemented program review process, clear record of practices and results (xxxxxxxx)
- Specialized accreditation demonstrates quality (xxxxx)
- Clearly stated outcomes
- Articulation process
- Process of defining and determining equivalencies
- Actual data on student learning made public
- Student retention, persistence, and completion data made public
- Graduate employment rates
- Licensure tests passed
- Institution tracks graduates; Institution surveys of graduates, alumni, employers—data used; analysis of graduate outcomes and placement (xxxxxx)
- Transcript policies
- Benchmark comparisons to peer institutions
- Consistency in assessment, student work, expected levels of performance across different modalities, in dual enrollment (xxxx)
- Credit transfer and award policies and procedures (xxx)
- Working group and process for overseeing requirements, valid system for determining rigor, assuring educational excellence
- Presence of feedback loops in all assessment processes
- Data is being collected on retention, completion—goals are set (xxx)
- Data is analyzed related to programs, student learning, retention and completion (xxx)
- Assessment very mature, ongoing plan and implementation, reflects good practice, changes in student learning documented, outcomes refined, faculty involved (xxxx)
- Evidence of need for approval and demonstrated process revision—processes continually improved

- Regent's policy requiring program reviews
- Assessment results published
- IR office is involved, qualified, supported—and can provide support for program review, student success, and assessment efforts (xx)
- Faculty awareness and involvement in program review
- Clear links among Criterion 4 processes and Criterion 5 processes
- Clear results, improvements, impact of assessment and program evaluation processes (xxx)
- Gainful employment information available, on website; employment rates (xx)
- Follow-up and analysis of persistence failures
- How evidence of learning was used to inform instructional improvement

FLAGS

Retention—

- No retention data
- Low or dropping retention rates
- Lack of tracking in special populations
- Unusually good or high retention data
- No concept of persistence or completion

Assessment—

- Lack of faculty involvement/engagement in assessment
- Assessment culture on campus is weak
- Lack of evidence of program review process
- No evidence of assessment plans/reports
- Lots of data but no evidence its being used
- Leadership not interested in assessment
- Institution says it has 100% compliance on assessment

Curriculum—

- Overly static
- Faculty not aware of curricular process or how credit is awarded
- Lack of process for judging soundness and rigor of curriculum
- Gen ed is ignored
- No evidence of curriculum committee meetings/proceedings

Faculty—

- No faculty for specialized accreditation programs (i.e. RNs)
- Dual-credit faculty without appropriate credentials
- Faculty do not evaluate credit for experiential learning

Institutional—

- No transfer policy
- No articulation agreements for accepting credits from elsewhere

DOCUMENTS

Institutional documents/agreements –

- Strategic Plan
- Faculty Handbook
- Catalogs
- Articulation agreements

Assessment of student learning –

- Specialized program accreditation letters
- Accreditation reports
- Dual enrollment program data
- Common data set
- Institutional assessment plan
- Program review documents and reports

Curriculum –

- Reporting system for curriculum change
- Processes for course and program approval
- Syllabi
- Internal review process for courses and programs
- Budgetary documents indicating support for curricular programs

Students and Student Services—

- Enrollment management plan
- Transfer guides and policies
- Registrar policies and processes
- Admission policies and processes
- Policies for evaluating transcripts
- Retention, persistence, and graduation rates
- Alumni surveys

CRITERION FIVE – Resources, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness

EVIDENCE

- Clear alignments across all institutional processes: budget, planning, assessment, etc.—integration of data from all evaluation and planning processes (xxx)
- Data from interviews with board, faculty, staff, CFO, president, board (xxx)
- Clear organizational chart, job descriptions—organizational structure, health “ducks in a row” (xxx)
- Documents showing financial capacity—audits—data on finances and resource allocation (xxxx)
- Shared governance structures defined, operational, minutes, reflective of higher education (xxx)
- Processes for review and updating of policies (board, institutional)
- Clear delineation of resource allocation process (xxx)
- Robust financial reporting processes aligned with audits and HLC data on finances (xx)
- Demonstrated critical thinking as an institution
- Direct cost of instruction ratio, debt obligations, use of debt strategically; i.e., financial competence (xxx)
- Clear ability to cost out innovation, strategic priorities
- Documents that show strategies for institutional capacity, viability, ability to improve, data management (xx)
- Committee minutes (xxx)
- Institutional effectiveness goals, metrics, measures, benchmarks (xxxx)
- Clear studies of student markets, demographic makeup of students/recruitment markets (xx)
- Includes data from monitoring employment outlooks related to programs offered
- External consultant reviews
- Process for identifying problems, recommendations to resolve concerns
- Student learning results integrated into planning and decisions (xx)
- Benchmarking processes (xx)
- Financial allocation and priorities linked to strategic plan
- Well-documented strategic planning and improvement processes, data, strategies (xx)
- Long and short-range budgeting (xx)
- Shared governance model appropriate to the institution size, control, type
- Budget allocations reflective of institutional mission and priorities
- Highly resourced IR office
- Clear policies and processes for governing board’s responsibilities for oversight—minutes, votes (xxx)
- Budget planning at all levels

- Programs in place for tech training for all
- Cost of instruction figures and cost-benefit analysis for programs (xx)
- Staff reductions
- Budget contingency plans
- Use of, health of endowment
- Institutional advancement in support of mission
- Performance appraisals—succession planning (xx)
- Academic calendar for sabbatical requests, assessment reports, etc.
- Procedure for selecting dept./school chairs
- Internal structures for committees to prevent redundancies, inefficiencies, or gaps.
- Reports of completion and retention
- Educational master plan

FLAGS

Finance and Budget—

- Provost/academic affairs not part of budgeting process
- Academic programs not getting adequate funds—too much going to facilities
- Public disclosure of financial malfeasance
- Debt level of institution
- Debt level of graduates
- Failure to anticipate budget shortfalls
- Unfunded strategic initiatives
- Programs are not asking for more funds
- No deferred maintenance plan or it is excessive
- Audit findings
- Significant % of revenue going to another institution or campus

Institutional—

- No awareness of organizational environment
- Procedures made without faculty involvement
- Board members don't know who runs the institution
- Lack of connection btw strategic plan and ongoing operations
- Strategic plan developed by selected administrators
- No comprehensive strategic plan
- Lack of any future-oriented plans
- Institution's understanding of its own capacity is unrealistic
- Lack of documentation for procedure
- Discrepancy on resource adequacy btw documents and argument/interviews
- Tuition pricing and student recruitment models are unrealistic
- How is institution balancing quality vs. resources?
- Faculty involvement or not in governance--morale

DOCUMENTS

- Master planning documents from all areas (xxxxxxx)
- Chart of committee structure, meeting schedule, minutes
- Job descriptions
- Community and other external group minutes—advisory committees
- Market analysis reports
- Minutes of all related committees (xxxx)
- Strategic planning documents (xxxxxxx)
- Meeting minutes, notes, decisions-the tracking of all planning, evaluation, improvement processes
- Financial statements, audits, documents related to budgeting and financial processes, fiscal model (xxxxxxx)
- Organizational charts and documents
- Policy manuals (xxx)
- Institutional performance dashboard

- Reports submitted to Board on institutional performance
- Governance structure documents
- Hiring, screening, development, HR documents