

Overview:

HLC has developed a new process for maintaining accreditation, replacing the PEAQ process with the Open Pathway. The goals are:

- To enhance institutional value by opening the improvement aspect of accreditation so that institutions may choose Quality Initiatives to suit their current circumstances
- To reduce the reporting burden on institutions by utilizing as much information and data as possible from existing institutional processes and collecting them in electronic form as they naturally occur over time
- To enhance rigor by checking institutional data annually (Institutional Update) and conducting Assurance Reviews twice in the ten-year cycle
- To integrate as much as possible all HLC processes and HLC requests for data into the reaffirmation of accreditation cycle

Assurance and Improvement in the Open Pathway

The Open Pathway separates the continued accreditation process into two components: the Assurance Review and the Quality Initiative.

- Two Assurance Reviews take place in the ten-year cycle;
 1. one in Year 4 (waived) and
 2. one in Year 10.

The Year 4 (waived) review occurs through the Commission's online Assurance System and without a visit.

The Year 10 review also is conducted with the Assurance System but includes a visit to the campus.

- Between Years 5 and 9 of the ten-year cycle, the institution proposes and completes a Quality Initiative. The Assurance Reviews free the Quality Initiative to focus on institutional innovation and improvement. The institution undertakes a Quality Initiative as something it elects to suit its own purposes. Its timeframe is flexible to accommodate the amount of time necessary to complete or make substantial progress toward completion.
- In Year 10, the institution undergoes a comprehensive evaluation.

Comprehensive Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation takes place in Year 10 of the ten-year Open Pathway accreditation cycle. The components of the comprehensive evaluation in the Open Pathway are these:

1. An Assurance Review:
2. A review of Federal Compliance
3. An on-site visit

The Quality Initiative

The Open Pathway requires the institution to undertake a major Quality Initiative designed to suit its present concerns or aspirations.

The Quality Initiative takes place between Years 5 and 9 of the 10-year Open Pathway cycle. A Quality Initiative may be designed to begin and be completed during this time or it may continue an initiative already in progress or achieve a key milestone in the work of a longer initiative. The Quality Initiative must have scope and significance and the support of the entire institution.

Institution goals of the Initiative:

- Take risks
- Aim high
- Learn from success or failure
- Strive for significant impact
- Sincere, earnest, and engaged work

Timeline

2015-16 through 2017-18 Quality Initiative Proposal Submitted for Review

Goal: Submit by Fall 2015

The institution submits a Quality Initiative proposal to the Commission for approval. The institution completes the proposal using a template provided by the Commission. Quality Initiative proposals are no longer than 4,500 words and are submitted electronically.

Upon approval, the institution conducts the Initiative over 4 years.

2017-18 through 2019-20 Quality Initiative Report Filed for Review

Goal: Submit by Fall 2019

At the end of the Initiative, beginning in Year 4 but no later than Year 9 of the ten-year Open Pathway cycle, the institution prepares and submits a Quality Initiative Report, in the framework outlined in the approved proposal. Within four weeks of submission, Commission staff screens the Quality Initiative Report for completeness and forward it for peer review.

2020-2021 Comprehensive Evaluation / Site Visit

Other Major Projects:

Strategic Plan

Move

Comprehensive Visit for NASAD Self-Study: 2017-2018