



Assumed Practices within the Criteria for Accreditation

Worksheet A

Foundational to the Criteria and Core Components is a set of practices shared by institutions of higher education in the United States. Unlike Criteria and Core Components, these Assumed Practices are (1) generally matters to be determined as facts, rather than matters requiring professional judgment and (2) unlikely to vary by institutional mission or context.

The Assumed Practices are organized by 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 seeking candidacy will be required to meet all of the Practices prior to admission to candidacy. Institutions in candidacy that do not maintain these Assumed Practices during the candidacy period may have that status withdrawn. Institutions seeking initial accreditation will be granted that status only when all Assumed Practices and all Criteria for Accreditation are in place at the level expected of accredited institutions.

A. Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct	Met	Not Met ¹
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		

¹ Documenting the Unmet Assumed Practices

In addition to documenting the specific reason the practice is not met on this form, the team should also reference any unmet Assumed Practice in the appropriate area of the main team report; i.e., the related eligibility requirement, Federal Compliance requirement, or Core Component(s).

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 refund		
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, 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 in order for its students to be certified or to sit for licensing examinations either has the appropriate accreditation 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 of the program at each location.		
c. An institution that advertises a program as preparation for a licensure examination publicly discloses its licensure 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		

<p>the above organizations. All publicly-elected members or members appointed by publicly-elected individuals or bodies (governors, elected legislative bodies) are public members. *</p> <p><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></p>		
<p>9. The governing board has the authority to approve the annual budget and to engage and dismiss the chief executive officer.*</p> <p><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></p>		
<p>10. The institution documents outsourcing of all services in written agreements, including agreements with parent or affiliated organizations.</p>		
<p>11. The institution takes responsibility for the ethical and responsible behavior of its contractual partners in relation to actions taken on its behalf.</p>		
<p>Rationale for Assumed Practices indicated as unmet:</p>		

B. Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support	Met	Not Met ¹
<p>1. Programs, Courses, and Credits</p>		
<p>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.</p>		

¹ **Documenting the Unmet Assumed Practices**

In addition to documenting the specific reason the practice is not met on this form, the team should also reference any unmet Assumed Practice in the appropriate area of the main team report; i.e., the related eligibility requirement, Federal Compliance requirement, or Core Component(s).

Audience: Peer Reviewers

Form

© Higher Learning Commission

Process: Comprehensive Visit

Contact: 800.621.7440

Published: April 2013

Version 02 – 2013-04

<p>b. The institution requires that 30 of the last 60 credits earned for a bachelor’s degree that the institution awards and 15 of the final 30 for an associate’s degree it awards be credits earned at the institution.* Institutions that do not maintain such a requirement, or have programs that do not, are able to demonstrate structures or practices that ensure coherence and quality to the degree. (Consortial arrangements are considered to be such structures. In addition, an institution that complies with the criteria for academic residency requirements of the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) will not be deemed out of conformity with this Assumed Practice provided that its policy is an exception for active-duty servicemembers and not for students in general.)</p> <p><i>*For example, for a bachelor’s degree requiring 120 credits, the institution accepts no more than 90 credits in total through transfer or other assessment of prior learning, and the remaining 30 must fall within the last 60 credits awarded the student.</i></p>		
<p>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. (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.)</p>		
<p>d. The institution adheres to policies on student academic load per term that reflect reasonable expectations for successful learning and course completion.</p>		
<p>e. Courses that carry academic credit toward college-level credentials have content and rigor appropriate to higher education.</p>		
<p>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.</p>		
<p>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.)</p>		
<p>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.</p>		

2. Faculty Roles and Qualifications		
<p>a. 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.</p>		
<p>b. Instructors teaching at the doctoral level have a record of recognized scholarship, creative endeavor, or achievement in practice commensurate with doctoral expectations.</p>		
<p>c. Faculty participate substantially in:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) oversight of the curriculum—its development and implementation, academic substance, currency, and relevance for internal and external constituencies; 2) assurance of consistency in the level and quality of instruction and in the expectations of student performance; 3) establishment of the academic qualifications for instructional personnel; 4) analysis of data and appropriate action of assessment of student learning and program completion. 		
3. Support Services		
<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>Rationale for Assumed Practices indicated as unmet:</p>		

C. Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement	Met	Not Met¹
1. Instructors (excluding for this requirement teaching assistants enrolled in a graduate		

¹ **Documenting the Unmet Assumed Practices**

In addition to documenting the specific reason the practice is not met on this form, the team should also reference any unmet Assumed Practice in the appropriate area of the main team report; i.e., the related eligibility requirement, Federal Compliance requirement, or Core Component(s).

Audience: Peer Reviewers

Form

© Higher Learning Commission

Process: Comprehensive Visit

Contact: 800.621.7440


Published: April 2013

Version 02 – 2013-04

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.)		
2. The institution refrains from the transcription of credit from other institutions or providers that it will not apply to its own programs.		
3. The institution has formal and current written agreements for managing any internships and clinical placements included in its programs.		
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.		
5. Instructors communicate course requirements to students through syllabi.		
6. Institutional data on assessment of student learning are accurate and address the full range of students who enroll.		
7. Institutional data on student retention, persistence, and completion are accurate and address the full range of students who enroll.		
Rationale for Assumed Practices indicated as unmet:		

D. Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness	Met	Not Met¹
1. The institution is able to meet its current financial obligations.		
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.		
3. The institution has future financial projections addressing its long-term financial sustainability.		
4. The institution maintains effective systems for collecting, analyzing, and using institutional information.		
5. The institution undergoes an external audit by a certified public accountant or a public audit agency of its own financial and educational activities and maintains audited financial statements. For private institutions the audit is annual; for public institutions it is at least every two years.*		
*Institutions under federal control are exempted provided that they have other reliable information to document the institution's fiscal resources and management.		

¹ **Documenting the Unmet Assumed Practices**

In addition to documenting the specific reason the practice is not met on this form, the team should also reference any unmet Assumed Practice in the appropriate area of the main team report; i.e., the related eligibility requirement, Federal Compliance requirement, or Core Component(s). 

<p>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.</p>		
<p>Rationale for Assumed Practices indicated as unmet:</p>		

Team Determination: *(Insert one of the following statements.)*

The team has reviewed all Assumed Practices within the Criteria for Accreditation and the institution meets all expectations.

The team has reviewed all Assumed Practices with the Criteria for Accreditation and has determined that the institution does not meet the Assumed Practice(s) (listed below):

Team Recommendation Related to the Assumed Practices:

(If the institution does not meet every Assumed Practice, the institution cannot be granted Candidacy or Initial Accreditation. If the institution is currently in Candidacy and fails to meet one or more Assumed Practices, then the team may determine if the Candidacy should be terminated or another course of action taken.)

Rationale for Team Recommendation Related to the Assumed Practices: