

HLC accreditation brief for Division of Regional Campuses leadership

Overview

Kent State University has been accredited by the Higher Learning Commission since 1915. Accreditation is a process of continuous improvement and validation of the quality of an institution. While accreditation is a voluntary process, it is required of institutions that want to receive federal grants and for their students to be eligible for federal financial aid.

We are on the HLC Open Pathway which, over a ten-year cycle, requires annual updates, location reviews, a mid-cycle assurance review, a quality initiative, and a comprehensive evaluation with site visit in Year 10. **Our Year 10 visit will be April 14-15, 2025**, and the goal of this process is referred to as “reaffirmation of accreditation.” We will be visited by a team of Peer Reviewers consisting of experienced faculty, administrators and staff from other HLC-accredited institutions who have been trained by HLC for this role. HLC accreditation includes the entire university, so the accreditor will select a subset of regional campuses for the team to visit as well. The regional campus selection will be provided to us approximately six months before the site visit. Kent State’s Accreditation Liaison Officer (Susan Perry) is the designated person for communicating with the team and HLC, although a team chair will sometimes reach out to the president directly about some matters.

Two months prior to the visit all students will receive a link (emailed by Kent State) to an HLC survey asking questions about various aspects of their experience (e.g., advising, financial aid, faculty, coursework, student support). We receive the results of that survey one month prior to the site visit. More information about the survey and sample questions can be found [here](#). Around this time, we also submit a completed self-study (Assurance Argument) with supporting evidence documents to HLC. The Assurance Argument, evidence documents, and student survey results will assist the on-site peer reviewers in developing questions for their meetings while on campus. More information about our progress through this cycle can be found [here](#). Below is a description of possible ways you can contribute to our preparation for this comprehensive review prior to the site visit and opportunities to engage during the site visit itself.

Prior to the site visit

As part of our Assurance Argument, we are required to provide evidence that we meet HLC expectations (Criteria). **We are asking all divisions to provide evidence from their areas to support our argument.** HLC requires that all evidence be in PDF format. The list below is not an exhaustive list from the HLC criteria of items that may be relevant for your unit, but it is provided as a starting point. A full list of criteria can be found [here](#). Note that items are focused at the level of the university since HLC is an institutional accreditor. Therefore, it is important to demonstrate whenever possible how your processes align with overall university strategy, values and mission. It is also important to include all campuses and locations that are relevant to your area since HLC expects equivalence in quality wherever and however services and instruction are provided.

Feedback from previous reviews indicates a need to make a clearer distinction between process and results and to increase the focus on results in our evidence for the Assurance Argument. **Direct**

evidence of the effectiveness of initiatives, activities, programming, policies and processes as documented in annual reports, longitudinal data (and analysis) and meeting minutes is preferred when possible. Reviewers will also be looking for evidence of consistent and systematic use of data to inform decisions. More comprehensive guidance on types of evidence can be found [here](#). Procedures that will be followed to protect personally identifiable information before evidence is submitted to HLC can be found [here](#).

HLC subcomponents we have identified that may directly align with your unit include:

- **Criterion 1 - Mission**
 - **1.B.1** - The institution's actions and decisions demonstrate that its educational role is to serve the public, not solely the institution or any superordinate entity.
 - **Examples of sources of evidence:** List of efforts, programs and certificates that meet community or constituent needs; a list of partnerships and consulting arrangements with local businesses; evidence of how regional campuses serve the neighboring communities
- **Criterion 2 – Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct**
 - **2.B.1** - The institution ensures the accuracy of any representations it makes regarding academic offerings, requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, governance structure and accreditation relationships.
 - **2.B.2** - The institution ensures evidence is available to support any claims it makes regarding its contributions to the educational experience through research, community engagement, experiential learning, religious or spiritual purpose and economic development.
 - **Examples of sources of evidence:** Documentation of partnerships with internal and external entities to offer community service opportunities or service-learning experiences; examples of how the regional campuses contribute to economic growth of the area;
- **Criterion 3 – Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support**
 - **3.A.1** - Courses and programs are current and require levels of student performance appropriate to the credential awarded.
 - **3.D.1** - The institution provides student support services suited to the needs of its student populations.
 - **3.D.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 and museum collections, as appropriate to the institution's offerings).
 - **Examples of sources of evidence:** Examples of course- and program-learning goals for associate programs; student support services offered at regional campuses; List of technical infrastructure
- **Criterion 4 – Teaching and learning: Evaluation and improvement**
 - **4.A.1** - The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews and acts upon the findings.
 - **Examples of sources of evidence:** Overview of the CATS Program Analysis process; program advisory board agendas and minutes. Curriculum review committee minutes

- **Criterion 5 – Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning**
 - **5.C.3** - The planning process encompasses the institution as a whole and considers the perspectives of internal and external constituent groups.
 - **Examples of sources of evidence:** Documentation of regional campus input to show incorporation into planning processes

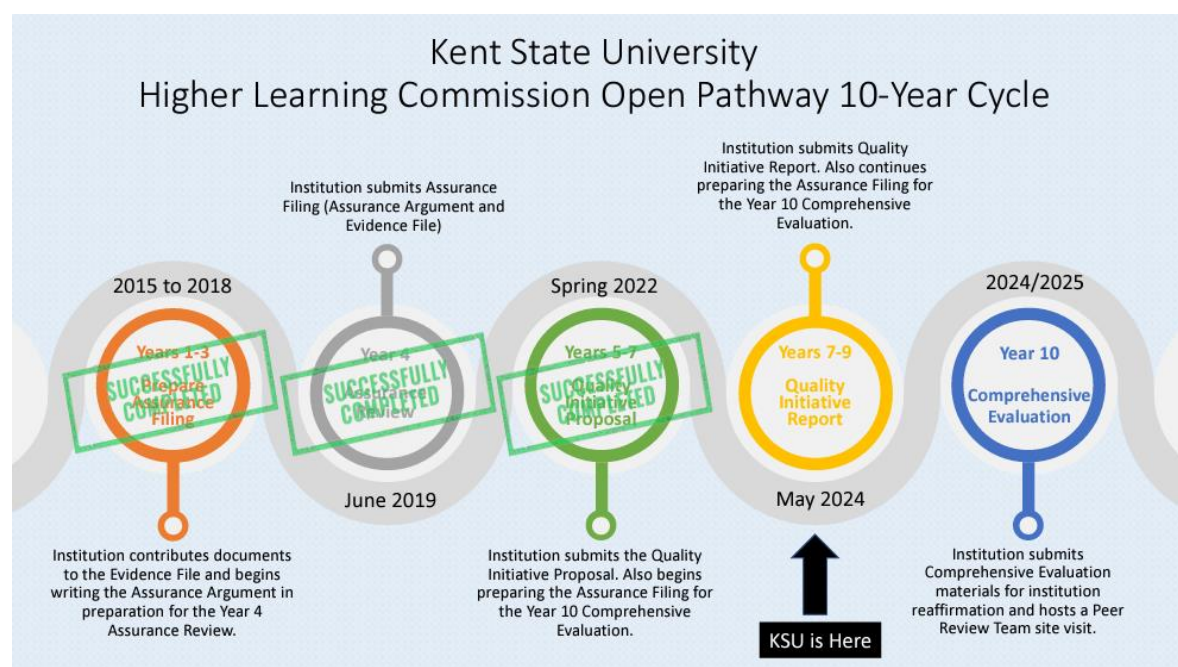
Terms/definitions related to these subcomponents: A full list can be found [here](#).

Site visit (April 14-15, 2025)

The visit agenda is set by the Peer Reviewer team chairs a month or two before the site visit. Since the Assurance Argument and student survey results influence the focus of peer reviewer questions, there is no uniform agenda that is common across these visits. Typically, the team meets with the President, Board of Trustees, Cabinet, Deans/ALG, the accreditation committee ([University Committee on Accreditation and Accountability](#)), have forums focusing on the 5 HLC criteria and also open sessions to talk with students, faculty, and staff. Focus area meetings are requested by the reviewer team, and these vary based on institutional context and the review of our materials. Examples of focus meetings that have occurred during other comprehensive visits include federal compliance, advising, academic support services, research, program review, student learning assessment and budget.

A [website](#) is currently available to the campus community as a resource and place to find updates about Kent State’s reaffirmation. As we approach the date of the visit, additional information will be shared through various channels to help students, faculty and staff better understand the process along the way. Closer to the site visit date, you will also be provided with example questions to help you prepare for conversations with the site visit team.

Accreditation Timeline



Summary

In summary, it takes engagement from the entire Kent State community to ensure that the institution remains accredited, it is not solely the work of one division or office. There are many amazing things going on at Kent State but we need your help in gathering the evidence to tell our story. To recap, this is how you can help.

- Know and understand what institutional accreditation is and why it is important
- Communicate this message to the various areas within your division
- Point us to or [submit documentation and evidence](#) to support the HLC Assurance Argument
- Participate in site visit meetings (if applicable)