



HLC Accreditation Update

Board of Trustees

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UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING



Higher Learning Commission (HLC)

- What it is and why we care
- “Old” accreditation process
- New Open Pathways Quality Initiative process
- UW’s QI Report - First Year Seminar Implementation



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HLC – What and Why

In order to receive federal support, public post-secondary institutions are required to have accreditation from their regional accreditor:

- Since 1913, UW has been accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC, formerly the North Central Association)
- The HLC is our “US Department of Education gateway.” That means they watch over and vouch for the quality, rigor, robustness of our curriculum, student support, governance, finances.
- Ongoing updates to HLC from UW – annually and significant changes.



“Old” Accreditation Process

- Ongoing – annual report, significant changes reported
- Reaffirmation of status every 10 years
 - Create body of evidence in self-study report
 - Submit to HLC and host visit just prior to reaffirmation
 - Very intense, but did not incentivize continuous improvement or behavior required for it.



“New” Process – Open Pathway

- Regular monitoring
- Checkpoint at year 4/10 (called an Assurance Review)
- Quality Initiative – design & implement significant & bold project intended to allow institutions to take risks, aim high, & learn from success, partial success, even failure.
- Comprehensive evaluation at end of 10 year cycle



Open Pathway and UW's QI

Proposal: Implementation of First Year Seminar

- Part of redesign of UW's University Studies Program (USP) to USP 2015
- All UW students must take – and pass – in their first year and cannot be a college or major requirement
- Must be taught by faculty (not grad students, not temp hires) with at least 2 years of experience; class size < 25; must have options from every college
- Must meet “critical and creative thinking” student learning outcomes, promote design thinking, and be approved by USP committee



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FYS Learning Outcomes

1. Access diverse information through focused research, active discussion, and collaboration with peers;
2. Separate facts from inferences and relevant from irrelevant information, and explain limitations of information;
3. Evaluate the credibility, accuracy, and reliability of conclusions drawn from information;
4. Recognize and synthesize multiple perspectives to develop innovative viewpoints;
5. Analyze one's own and others' assumptions and evaluate contexts when presenting a position; and
6. Communicate ideas in writing using appropriate documentation.



UW's Quality Initiative Proposal

- Incentivize and provide assistance to a broad swath of faculty to design dozens of sections of a brand new course.
 - Experienced faculty may still not have a lot of experience in teaching first year students, so must provide significant development support.
 - Must have enough approved sections of this new course over an academic year to accommodate every incoming freshman. Every section must meet required student learning outcomes.
 - Do this in a few months.



UW's Quality Initiative Proposal

- Collect as much data as possible.
 - From students
 - From faculty
 - From advisors



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UW's Quality Initiative Proposal

- Solve problems – quickly – inherent in a massive new change in curriculum.
 - What if a student fails once? Twice? More?
 - What if students try “wait it out.”
 - What if faculty or departments or colleges do XYZ that’s “not allowed” by policy?



Specific QI Goals and Results

- Goal: Develop enough courses for entire incoming class
 - AY 2015-16 estimated need: 71 sections
 - AY 2015-16 actual offered: 93 sections
 - AY 2016-17 estimated need: 76 sections
 - AY 2016-17 actual offered: 94 sections
 - Fill rates: 90% +



Specific QI Goals and Results

- Goal: Offer wide range across UW taught by experienced faculty
 - Each college is given a “section quota” based on their incoming student class.
 - 91% of faculty teaching the course have 2+ years of experience; 56% of faculty teaching the course have 10+ years of experience



Specific QI Goals and Results

- Goal: Develop a comprehensive plan for evaluating initiative and carry it out.
 - Multiple surveys and evaluations administered; quick problem solving based on evidence collected
 - Worked with our learning-management system (LMS) vendor, Canvas, to design tool to collect anonymized student work across all sections
 - Faculty working group assessed this work to determine progress in mastering critical/creative thinking.



Specific QI Goals and Results

- Overall: More successful than we'd imagined in range and quality of offerings, but:
 - Continue to mainstream use of LMS by faculty and students so we can make assessment more systemic and simple
 - Continue to provide options we'd not even dreamed of at proposal phase.
 - Examine learning outcomes (ability of one class to meet all?) and course caps
 - Incentivize development opportunities for instructors
 - Integrate FYS into a full-blown First Year Experience that helps students learn to not only be successful in the classroom, but beyond.



OPEN PATHWAY 10-YEAR CYCLE



Transition Map for Institutions with PEAQ Reaffirmation Visits in 2019-20

Cycle Year	Institutional Activities	Peer Review	HLC Decision-Making ¹
2012-13 Year 3	Institution may contribute documents to Evidence File		
2013-14 Year 4	Assurance Review Waived		
2014-15 Year 5	Institution may contribute documents to Evidence File	Period to submit Quality Initiative Proposal	Review Quality Initiative Proposal
2015-16 Year 6			
2016-17 Year 7	Submit Comprehensive Evaluation Materials ⁵	Period to submit Quality Initiative Report	Review Quality Initiative Report
2017-18 Year 8			
2018-19 Year 9	Submit Comprehensive Evaluation Materials ⁵	Conduct Comprehensive Evaluation (with visit)	Action on Comprehensive Evaluation and Reaffirmation of Accreditation ⁶
2019-20 Year 10			

UW QI proposal accepted 2015

UW QI Report submitted Jan. 2017

UW begins preparing for evaluation visit



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Questions?



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