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1 Step 2. HLC Application

! Important

About 30 days prior to submitting the application, the college should notify HLC of its intention to apply. This allows HLC time to setup your college in their system prior to the actual application. The college will then be able to transfer the application fee funds¹ immediately following the application.

You can use the [inquiry form](#) to start this conversation or submit a more formal letter of notification. An example letter is provided below.

¹HLC Dues and Fees Schedule

²HLC Accelerated Process for Initial Accreditation



Application and Evidence

As part of the accelerated process² application, colleges need to submit 13 pieces of evidence in addition to the brief application³. You should use the Microsoft Word template provided by HLC to complete the evidence portion of the application. This should be converted to a PDF and submitted with the application. Be sure to include links from an index page to each piece of evidence in the PDF as well as links back to the index page.

Here is a summary of those pieces of evidence with some tips for each:

1.1.a 1. Official Communications

All communications between the institution and its current accreditor from the past 12 months.

- If the institution has recently completed a Fifth-Year Interim Report, include only the findings letter from SACSCOC when it is received.
- In general, do not include any of the submission materials (Fifth-Year Interim Report, New Program Prospectus, etc.) unless specifically requested. You can include the cover letter included with the submission materials or even the confirmation email from the upload.
- If no response has been received for one of the institution's submissions prior to submission of the application, include the a note indicating a response is pending.

1.1.b 2. Accreditation Documentation

Proof of current institutional accreditation by a USED-recognized accreditor.

- Include a screenshot from the US Department of Education's Database of Accredited Postsecondary Institutions and Programs <https://ope.ed.gov/dapip/>.

1.1.c 3. Reaffirmation of Accreditation

Evidence of one reaffirmation of accreditation or other indicators of continuity and stability.

- The screenshot from
[2. Accreditation Documentation](#)

includes the recent history and the date of first accreditation, which satisfies this evidence as well.

1.1.d 4. Sanction Status

Documentation showing no sanctions or negative actions from the current accreditor for at least five years.

- The screenshot from

³HLC Application Link



Accreditation Documentation

Includes the recent history, including any sanctions or negative actions from SACSCOC.

1.1.e 5. USED Approval

Approval from the USED Federal Student Aid office for changing or maintaining multiple accreditations.

- Just include a copy of the letter received from the USED Federal Student Aid office.

1.1.f 6. Substantial Presence Worksheet

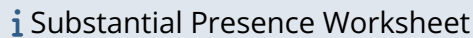
Completed worksheet⁴ demonstrating substantial presence within HLC's jurisdiction.

The Substantial Presence Worksheet is a document that HLC uses to determine if an institution has a substantial presence in their jurisdiction. This is important because it helps HLC understand the institution's operations and its relationship with the students and communities it serves.

i For NC Working Group institutions

This is relatively straightforward as the institution is located in NC and serves students in NC. See below for details on each portion.

⁴HLC Substantial Presence Worksheet



- For state institutions, this is likely answered by referring to state law.

An acceptable answer would be: "The institution is authorized by law to operate in County in the state of North Carolina."

- List all the locations where the institution is authorized to offer educational programs.

An acceptable answer would be: "North Carolina"

- The CEO is the president of the institution. This is typically where the president's office is located.

An acceptable answer would be: "The work of the CEO is typically conducted in person on campus at Community College in , NC."

- The senior administrators are the vice presidents and other senior leaders of the institution. The cabinet is typically the executive team of the institution.

An acceptable answer would be: "The senior administrators and cabinet typically meet in person on campus at Community College in , NC. The executive team typically meets and includes the . The meets every and includes ."

[illegible]

This is typically where the institutions have been largely ignored. Because

This is typically where the institutions' accountability to the public is strongest.

til 6/1 i periodicitic. From where are these activities managed and supported?

This is where working group institutions and additional locations are located.

This is where the institution's vendors are relationships created and where it's created



Incorporation Documentation

Prohibit incorporation or operation under federal authority within HLC's jurisdiction. This will depend on how the institution is organized and operates. State institutions are likely governed by state law and may not have a formal incorporation document. Refer to the statutes to establish the legal foundation of the institution.

i For NC Working Group institutions

Make reference to NC General Statutes 115D-5 which authorizes the State Board to regulate all aspects of community college operations, including the approval of curricula and the awarding of degrees, diplomas, and certificates.

Then reference NCCCS State Board Code Section 1A SBCCC 300.1 which provides definitions that establish the framework for community college governance, including the definition of "service area".

Finally, reference NCCCS State Board Code Section 1A SBCCC 300.3 which defines the specific service areas for each community college in North Carolina.

1.1.h 8. Degree Authorization

Legal authorization to award degrees in at least one state or jurisdiction within HLC's area.

Similarly to

7. Incorporation Documentation

above, public institutions are likely governed by state law and may not have a formal incorporation document. Refer to the statutes to establish the authorization to award degrees.

i For NC Working Group institutions

Make reference to NCCCS State Board Code Section 1D SBCCC 400.6 which outlines the process by which the State Board approves degree, diploma, and certificate programs.

1.1.i 9. Educational Programs List

List of all educational programs offered, including those by distance or correspondence education.

- Should include all programs offered by the institution at a particular point in time.
- Include the time frame for the list, such as "All active programs for AY 2024-2025".
- Can combine with



Enrollment Information

to provide a comprehensive view of the institution's educational offerings. It should include the mode of delivery (e.g., in-person, online, correspondence) and the location (campus) of each program.

1.1.j 10. Enrollment Information

Current enrollments in all educational programs by program, location, and mode of delivery.

- This can be included with the full list of programs under [9. Educational Programs List](#).

1.1.k 11. Accreditor Relationships

Inventory of relationships with other recognized accreditors, including any sanctions or adverse actions.

- These should be reflective of accreditors and state authorizing agencies that have accredited or approved the institution's programs.
- For NC community colleges, this includes the NC Board of Nursing. It does not include BLET or EMS programs if they are housed within continuing education.
- This is just a list of these relationships and does not include any documentation. It should include the name of the program, the accreditor, and the date of the last review or action, and the current standing.
- You may consider including documentation for any adverse actions or sanctions.

1.1.l 12. Governing Board Authorization

Documentation indicating the governing board's authorization to seek accreditation with HLC.

- Here are some sample board presentation outlines:
 - Haywood Community College
 - Board was presented their discussion and motion from previous year where the institution decided to submit an application to USED for permission to apply to HLC.
 - Board was shown letter from USED granting approval to proceed with applying to HLC.
 - [2025-03-20 USED Approval Letter](#)
 - Board made a motion directing the president or her designee to apply for accreditation with HLC.
 - Board was shown letters to both SACSCOC and NCCCS declaring our intentions for their information.
 - [2025-05-07 SACSCOC Notification Letter](#)



2025-05-07 NCCCS Notification Letter

NOTE: Letters were sent the day after the board meeting and HLC was notified of the intent to apply via the [HLC Inquiry Form](#).

1.2 Other Resources

See [Resources](#) for more details.

- Seeking Accreditation Workshop handout

1.3 Other topics of interest

- Learn about the responsibilities of the Accreditation Liaison Office⁵

1.4 Actual Sample Applications

1.4.a Haywood Community College

- 2025-05-30 Application with Evidence
- 2025-06-20 Application Acceptance Letter

1.5 Resources

- [HLC Application Link](#)
- [HLC Inquiry Form](#)
- [HLC Accelerated Process for Initial Accreditation](#)
- [HLC Dues and Fees Schedule](#)
- [HLC Accreditation Liaison Office role and responsibility](#)
- [HLC Substantial Presence Worksheet](#)

i Icon Reference

- ▶ Excel document
- ▶ Webpage link
- ▶ PDF document
- ▶ Policy link or document
- ▶ Video link
- ▶ Word document

1.6 Updates

1.6.a 2025-07-30

- Created the Actual Sample Applications section.
- Added the links to the sample applications section.
- Added tips for

⁵HLC Accreditation Liaison Office role and responsibility



Documentation

Authorization

- Added tips for
9. Educational Programs List

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1.6.b 2025-05-13

- Revised the list of evidence to remove the “Voluntary Decision Explanation” (formerly Evidence 6) as it is no longer needed.

Bibliography