

HLC Fact of the Week:
“HLC Assumed Practices”
(February 24, 2017)

As we prepare for our HLC comprehensive evaluation, we must not only demonstrate how we meet HLC’s [Criteria for Accreditation](#), we must also meet HLC’s [Assumed Practices](#). Assumed Practices are the shared, basic practices that are fundamental to institutions of higher education in the United States. It is **assumed** that institutions are following these core practices.

Assumed Practices are foundational to HLC’s evaluation process. However, Assumed Practices are generally matters determined as facts rather than requiring professional judgment and are unlikely to vary by institutional mission or context.

Areas covered by HLC’s list of Assumed Practices include Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct; Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support; Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement; and Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness. As examples, here are the Assumed Practices for Resources, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness:

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 that reports financial statements on the institution separately from any other related entity or parent corporation. For private institutions the audit is annual; for public institutions it is at least every two years.
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. (An institution may outsource its financial functions but must have the capacity to assure the effectiveness of that arrangement.)

HLC does not ask that Assumed Practices be explicitly addressed in the evaluation process as accredited institutions engage in these core practices routinely. However, if HLC discovers that an accredited institution is not following an Assumed Practice, it can initiate a review to determine whether the institution remains in compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. And an accredited institution that finds on its own that it is no longer in line with the Assumed Practices should take immediate corrective action.

To learn more about accreditation and Lindenwood’s comprehensive evaluation and site visit scheduled for November 6-7, 2017, and to see the countdown clock to the visit, go to the HLC page on the Lindenwood website here: <http://www.lindenwood.edu/about/higher-learning-commission/>.

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