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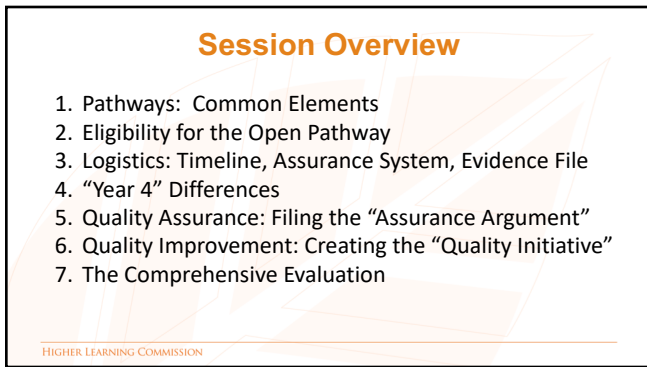
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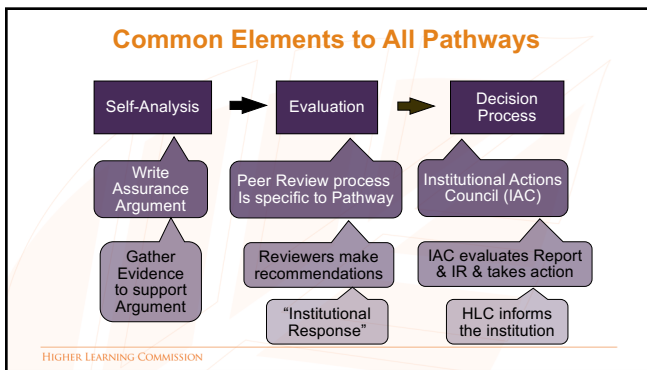
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## Eligibility Criteria for the Open Pathway

- Must be accredited for at least 10 years
- Must have had no recent Change of Control, Structure, Org.
- ... No recent Commission sanction (e.g., Notice, Probation)
- ... No recent designation as “Under Governmental Investigation”
- ... No extensive past or future monitoring
- ... No significant Commission concerns in areas such as leadership turnover, changes to the mission or student body, financial management

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## Open Pathway: 10-year Cycle




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## Year 10 Comprehensive: Reaffirmation Visit

- Reaffirmation of accreditation takes place; this is the beginning and the ending of the 10 year cycle.
- All Comprehensive Evaluations include an on-site visit, a student survey, and a Federal Compliance Panel.
- Year 10 “sets the table” for Year 4, which in the Open Pathway is *different kind of evaluation* than Year 10: In **Year 4**, there is: **No on-site visit; no student survey; no Federal Compliance Panel.** This is unique to the Open Pathway.

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## Open Pathway: Assurance Timeline

YEAR  
4

### ASSURANCE REVIEW

Institution: Submit Assurance Filing (Assurance Argument and Evidence File).

Peer Review: Conduct Assurance Review (no visit).

HLC Decision Making: Acceptance of or action on Assurance Review.



- Electronic Assurance Review for Year 4. NO Student Survey; NO Federal Compliance Filing; NO on-campus visit; the institutional focus is on "updating" the Commission
- Year 4 Reviewers interact with the institution electronically and with each other by conference call, and in some cases may require a visit
- Additional materials may be requested by Visiting Teams and may be added in the Addendum Folder, if needed.

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## The Assurance System

- "Assurance means Compliance:" The institution makes the case that it meets the Criteria for Accreditation using the System
- Note: this is **not** a "self-study"
- Web-based system where you deposit the Assurance Argument narrative and your supporting data, which then becomes organized, by core component, into an Evidence File; web-links connect your narrative to your evidence, similar to footnotes
- Maintained by your Assurance System Coordinator and your ALO, with secure access for 15 additional institutional representatives
- No additional technology needed
- Peer review teams access the Assurance System in advance of your evaluation to read your materials and discuss in conference calls

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## Logistics: Assurance System Examples:

<https://www.hlcommission.org/Accreditation/assurance-samples.html>

Institution	Username
Blue Ridge Community and Technical College Standard Pathway	hlc.guest1@gmail.com
Marian University Open Pathway	hlc.guest2@gmail.com
Marshall University Open Pathway	hlc.guest3@gmail.com
New Mexico Junior College Open Pathway	hlc.guest4@gmail.com
Ohio Christian University Standard Pathway	hlc.guest5@gmail.com
Tohono O'odham Community College Standard Pathway	hlc.guest6@gmail.com
Kansas State University Open Pathway	hlc.guest7@gmail.com
Texas Community and Technical College (partial sample) AQIP Pathway mock institution	hlc.guest8@gmail.com

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Assurance Argument - Dashboard

This Assurance Argument is locked for review. No further changes can be made.

Argument	File	File Size	Assigned to	Word Count
1	Assurance	100	Charles, Charles	80
1.1	Core Component 1.1	100	Charles, Charles	100
1.2	Core Component 1.2	100	Charles, Charles	100
1.3	Core Component 1.3	100	Charles, Charles	100
1.4	Core Component 1.4	100	Charles, Charles	100
1.5	Core Component 1.5	100	Charles, Charles	100
1.6	Core Component 1.6	100	Charles, Charles	100
1.7	Core Component 1.7	100	Charles, Charles	100
1.8	Core Component 1.8	100	Charles, Charles	100
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1.96	Core Component 1.96	100	Charles, Charles	100
1.97	Core Component 1.97	100	Charles, Charles	100
1.98	Core Component 1.98	100	Charles, Charles	100
1.99	Core Component 1.99	100	Charles, Charles	100
1.100	Core Component 1.100	100	Charles, Charles	100

Open Pathway Word Limit = 35,000

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Assurance Argument - Criterion

The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

Status: Completed Due Date: 6/30/2012 Assigned User: Lashina White, And...

Argument

Develop argument and link to evidence

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### “Writing to the Criteria”

- ✓ Produce a Criterion introduction
- ✓ Articulate how the institution is meeting each Core Component, using appropriate evidence to support the institution's argument
- ✓ Use embedded links to take readers directly to the Evidence File (pdf files; 5 exceptions for web content)
- ✓ Explain how the institution has addressed any previously-identified concerns
- ✓ Produce a Criterion summary

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## After the Year 10 Reaffirmation

- HLC archives the institution's Argument and Evidence File
- A decision is then required by the Assurance System Coordinator to determine how to prepare for the next review in Year 4:
  - Clone argument
  - Clone evidence
  - Clone argument and evidence (**recommended!**)
  - Clone nothing
- Note: the cloning decision is final

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## Quality Initiative: Proposal

YEARS  
5-7

### QUALITY INITIATIVE PROPOSAL

Institution: Submit Quality Initiative Proposal no later than August 31 of Year 7. May also begin preparing Assurance Filing for Year 10 comprehensive evaluation.

Peer Review: Review Quality Initiative Proposal.



- Project areas are identified by the institution to suit its needs; the project is reviewed and must be approved by peer reviewers
- Common elements for all proposals: appropriate scope, significance, clear outcomes, evidence of commitment and capacity, realistic timeline

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## Quality Initiative: Report and Review

YEARS  
7-9

### QUALITY INITIATIVE REPORT

Institution: Submit Quality Initiative Report no later than August 31 of Year 9. May also continue preparing Assuring Filing for Year 10 comprehensive evaluation.

Peer Review: Review Quality Initiative Report.



- Institutions complete the Q.I. project & write a Report on their activities
- Achieving the proposed program goals is not the required object of the Q.I. activity; rather, the object is to demonstrate the activity of quality improvement
- Peer reviewers confirm "genuine effort" and offer feedback if requested

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### Year 10 Comprehensive Evaluation: Review

- Occurs only in Year 10 for the Open Pathway (For the Year 4 Review, only the Assurance Filing is required)
- Reviewers visit your campus having examined, in advance:
  - Assurance Argument and Evidence File
  - Federal Compliance Materials and Credit Hour Worksheet
  - Student Survey Results
  - Other components if required (multi-campus, embedded change requests)
- Reviewers may assign interim monitoring, but not a Focused Visit
- The "Quality Initiative" is not reviewed by the Comprehensive Evaluation Team, by design

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### Comprehensive Evaluation: On-Campus Visit

- Team visit in Year 10: 1½-day onsite visit
- In advance of the campus visit, peer review teams will identify "areas of interest or concern" and determine a fixed agenda
- Typical team sizes will be 4, 5 or 7 (may need more due to complex circumstances or a large student body)
- Team reports lead to the reaffirmation of accreditation decision and Pathway determination at Year 10
- Student Survey results are shared with the institution

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### Due Process and Decision-Making

- Peer reviewers create a "draft report," which is shared with the institution, which identifies and corrects errors-of-fact in the draft
- The institution receives the final team report, and then provides a formal written response to be considered by IAC
- IAC reads the full record, as well as the Quality Initiative results, which are kept separate from the team report
- IAC affirms or denies the reaffirmation of accreditation to the next 10-year cycle and issues an "action letter" affirming the institution's status
- **NOTE:** Failure to complete the Quality Initiative process, or the assessment of a Focused Visit will remove an institution from the Open Pathway

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### Additional Resources

- ✓ Assurance Arguments and Evidence Files: Visit the HLC Booth in the Exhibit Hall to view sample Assurance Arguments produced by member institutions.
- ✓ Quality Initiatives: Learn more about quality initiatives and view sample proposals on **qi.hlcommission.org**
- ✓ At the Conference: **Two** Quality Initiatives sessions.

jrosen@hlcommission.org

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