**Higher Learning Commission (HLC) and Department of Education (DOE)**

**Compliance Approval Process**

# Background:

Programs that are submitted via the curriculum process either as modifications or new programs should be reviewed to determine if they require compliance approvals from the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) and the Higher Learning Commission (HLC).

AAS programs (that do not represent a significant departure from current programmatic offerings requiring an HLC Substantive Change) and Academic Programs (AA/AB/AS/AGS) are approved under each institution's comprehensive accreditation status and do not require additional HLC/DOE approval.

Academic Certificates are not eligible for federal financial aid and therefore are not submitted to DOE for approval.

Certificates of Completion (CCL) may or may not require HLC/DOE approval depending on the nature of the program.

> Please use the general guide below to help you make determinations on compliance approvals. As a general rule, it is best to consult with the appropriate departments at your institution when following accreditation and regulatory requirements such as the compliance officer and financial aid director.

**Programs that DO require Compliance Approval:**

- HLC:  New programs that represent a significant departure from current programmatic offerings requiring an HLC Substantive Change must be submitted to HLC.

- HLC:  All new Certificate of Completion (CCL) programs must be submitted to HLC. Please use the HLC Online Certificate Application.

- DOE:  New Certificate of Completion (CCL) programs that are 16 credits or more and for which the college plans to offer financial aid must be submitted to DOE.

- DOE:  If 50% or more of an existing or new Academic Program is to be offered at a location other than the institutions main campus as a Financial Aid eligible program then the new location must be added to the institutions ECAR.

- HLC and DOE:  Adoption of an existing sister college's CCL for which the college plans to offer financial aid must be submitted to both HLC and then to DOE.  Note: Shared programs require compliance approvals from each participating institution.  Each participating institution is responsible for submitting a compliance form in ACRES.

- Other: HLC and DOE add or change reporting requirements at times. This is intended to be a guide but not a comprehensive compliance review.  Stay updated on institutional requirements and work with the District Curriculum Office to ensure all needs are met.

**The following is a screenshot of the HLC Online Certificate Application:**

**Program Availability:**

Programs will be unavailable in SIS and on the web until the Center for Curriculum and Transfer and Articulation (CCTA) receives confirmation from the college that the necessary approvals are in place or that the college wishes to make the program immediately available.  This is a college based decision that should be made by the VPAA/Dean in conjunction with the Financial Aid director and compliance lead at the college.

- If a CCL is on hold pending compliance approvals and this CCL is imbedded in an AAS, then the AAS will be put on hold until the CCL compliance approvals are received.

- If a shared program is pending compliance approvals, the website will display only for those colleges that have proper approvals.

**Approval Process before submitting a compliance form in the Academic Curriculum Review and Evaluation System (ACRES):**

Once the MCCCD Governing Board approval is received, colleges should submit programs to Higher Learning Commission (HLC) through the certificate approval webpage.  The HLC approval is needed as supporting documentation for when the program is submitted to the Department of Education (DOE) as part of requesting Financial Aid Eligibility.

Once the DOE approval is received for inclusion on the Program Participation Agreement (PPA), the compliance ACRES form can be submitted to CCTA.

If the program was on hold pending approvals and the institution submits a request for deletion or moratorium, the request should be submitted for documentation purposes in ACRES and a program end term will be added in SIS and ACRES per standard.

Once the approvals have been received and/or a decision reached regarding making the program available, colleges should submit a Program Compliance Form to CCTA via ACRES to document the necessary approvals.  Upon submission of the compliance form, CCTA will release the program in SIS and on the web.  The compliance form would also include the Gainful Employment (GE) disclosure URL for the program. Example:

http://www.cgc.maricopa.edu/Academics/GE/Pages/Accounting.aspx

http://www2.gccaz.edu/ge/accounting

**Information needed on the Compliance Form Submitted to CCTA:**

- Attach a copy of the HLC approval documentation to the compliance form in ACRES. If HLC response indicates that this certificate does not require separate approval by the Higher Learning Commission, then a screenshot of this email should be attached to the compliance form. See example below on page 5.

- The college curriculum office should check with the financial aid director if the program is approved for inclusion on the PPA. Attach a PDF copy or a screenshot of the approval for PPA inclusion.

- If the Gainful Employment (GE) Disclosure URL is available, it should be provided on the ACRES compliance form.

  Notice: A change in Effective Term may occur due to timeline of approval and release of program for display and marketing.

  The following are the fields needed on the compliance form in ACRES:

  **Program Compliance**

  * Department: [            ▼]
  * Requestor: [            ]
  * Major Code: [    ]
  * Program Title: [Provide the current program title.]
  * CIPS Code: [    ]
  * SOC Code: [            ] What's this?
  * SOC Code Description: [            ]
  * HLC Approval Received: [        ] What's this?
  * DOE Approval for Inclusion on PPA Received: [        ] What's this?
  * Approved Effective Year/Term: [        ]
  * Authorized GE Program: ☐ No  ☐ Yes  What's this?
  Program Disclosure URL: [                            ] What's this?
  Comments: [                            ] What's this?
  Attachment: [Add Attachment]

**The following is an example if HLC approval is not required:**

Your recent request for approval of Web Page, Digital/Multimedia and Information Resources Design; Adobe Creative Suite in Business: Master Suite is the name of the program itself. does not require additional Commission authorization.

Reasons:

Program does not have courses which are not currently in any existing degree programs.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Patricia Newton-Curran
Director of Accreditation Operations
The Higher Learning Commission of NCA
230 South LaSalle Street, Suite 7-500
Chicago, IL 60604-1413
(800) 621-7440 x146 (voice) / (312) 263-7462 (fax)
E-mail: pnewton@hlcommission.org

DOE Regulatory References:

Per 34 CFR 600.10(c)(2) Student Financial Assistance can only be awarded to students enrolled in an eligible program included on the institution's Eligibility and Certification Approval Report (ECAR).  In addition, 34 CFR 600.20(c)(1) and 600.21 requires the ECAR to list the institution's main campus and each location that offers 50% or more of an eligible program.