

Programmatic Changes & the Higher Learning Commission

July 27, 2022





Fast Facts

Each university maintains its own accreditation through the Higher Learning Commission.

Each university appoints an AAC liaison:

- BHSU – Pam Carriveau
- DSU – Jeanette McGreevy
- NSU – Erin Fouberg
- SDSMT – Darcy Briggs
- SDSU – Teresa Seefeldt
- USD – Lisa Bonneau

Many university actions require approval or notification by the HLC and result in expense.



Does this require HLC approval or notification?

Your history department creates a 4-course certificate. The courses are common courses and can be completed entirely online. Does this require an HLC action?

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Program with common courses

Yes, approval

Yes, notification

Possibly

No

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Does this require HLC approval or notification?

- Your history department creates a 4-course certificate. The courses are common courses, and can be completed entirely online. Does this require an HLC action?
- **Possibly.** If a student could complete 50% or more of an academic program at a location separate from its main campus, the institution must apply for approval of that site as an additional location.
- Cost = \$95 per additional location and potentially \$725 + expenses for additional location confirmation visit



Does this require HLC approval or notification?

SD Department of Education regulations have changed, and the requirements for a Biology endorsement have increased from 10 courses (30 cr) to 13 courses (39 cr). Does this require an HLC action?

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Change to number of credits in a program

Yes, approval

Yes, notification

Possibly

No

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Does this require HLC approval or notification?

- SD Department of Education regulations have changed, and the requirements for a Biology endorsement have increased from 10 courses (30 cr) to 13 courses (39 cr). Does this require an HLC action?
- **Yes, approval.** If the total number of credit hours required for successful completion of a program increases by 25% or more since its most recent accreditation review, approval is required.
- Cost = \$1025 desk review



Does this require HLC approval or notification?

SD Department of Education regulations have changed for the Biology endorsement. Within your 39-credit program, you must shift 6 credits to plant biology and 6 credits to environmental biology.

Does this require an HLC action?

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Change to the contents of a program

Yes, approval

Yes, notification

Possibly

No

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Does this require HLC approval or notification?

- SD Department of Education regulations have changed for the Biology endorsement. Within your 39-credit program, you must shift 6 credits to plant biology and 6 credits to environmental biology. Does this require an HLC action?
- **Yes, notification.** If there is an aggregate change of 25% or more to the content of a program since its most recent HLC accreditation review, HLC notification is required.
- Cost = none



Does this require HLC approval or notification?

The nursing department offers a gerontology graduate certificate. The program has great enrollment from nurses within 30 miles of the university, but doesn't adequately meet the needs of the state's nurses in rural areas. The university would like to offer the certificate program online. Does this require an HLC action?

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Adding an online program

Yes, approval

Yes, notification

Possibly

No

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Does this require HLC approval or notification?

- The nursing department offers a gerontology graduate certificate. The program has great enrollment from nurses within 30 miles of the university, but doesn't adequately meet the needs of the state's nurses in rural areas. The university would like to offer the certificate program online. Does this require an HLC action?
- **Yes, notification.** If the institution's stipulation for distance education is "Approved to offer distance education courses and programs," then notification is required. If the institution does not have that stipulation, it must complete the screening form and HLC staff will review it to determine whether prior approval is needed.
- Cost = depends on determination



Substantive Change

HLC recognizes that change at institutions of higher learning is constant, and it supports institutional efforts to improve educational quality. Depending on the type of change an institution plans to make—expanding its academic offerings, opening a new location, changing its mission, etc.—it may be required to apply for prior HLC approval or notify HLC of the change.

When prior approval is required, the institution must submit an application describing the change. The application will be [reviewed by HLC staff or peer reviewers](#) (depending on the complexity of the change), and an HLC decision-making body will take final action to approve or deny the request. Some changes also require a follow-up review after approval. This process ensures that institutions continue to meet HLC's standards as they evolve and grow.

<https://www.hlcommission.org/Accreditation/substantive-change.html>

<https://www.hlcommission.org/Accreditation/dues-and-fees-schedule.html>



Does this require HLC approval or notification?

The Board of Regents has used the LMS provider D2L for more than a decade. Recently the BOR released an RFP to determine whether a change to the current LMS is necessary. The BOR has reviewed proposals from two vendors – D2L and Canvas. If the BOR chooses to change the LMS to Canvas, would this require each university to take an action with the HLC?

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Change of LMS

Yes, approval

Yes, notification

Possibly

No

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- The Board of Regents has used the LMS provider D2L for more than a decade. Recently the BOR released an RFP to determine whether a change to the current LMS is necessary. The BOR has reviewed proposals from two vendors – D2L and Canvas. If the BOR chooses to change the LMS to Canvas, would this require each university to take an action with the HLC?
- **No.** HLC action is not required for arrangements between an institution and a third party where the contractual partner provides only the platform for internet-based instruction.
- Cost = no



Does this require HLC approval or notification?

The Board of Regents has approved a review of all university missions. If the review *changes* the mission of the university in Board policy 1, would this require an action from the HLC?

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Change to university mission

Yes, approval

Yes, notification

Possibly

No

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Does this require HLC approval or notification?

- The Board of Regents has approved a review of all university missions. If the review *changes* the mission of the university in Board policy 1, would this require an action from the HLC?
- **Yes, approval.** Prior approval is required for any changes in the actual or apparent mission of an institution or its educational objectives, as well as for significant changes in the character or nature of the student body of the institution.
- Cost = \$1025 desk review



Does this require HLC approval or notification?

The business school offers a bachelor's degree in management. Students can choose to add a specialization in human resource management if they wish. The department head would like to add a new specialization in supply chain management. Does this require an action from the HLC?

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Adding a specialization

Yes, approval

Yes, notification

Possibly

No

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Does this require HLC approval or notification?

- The business school offers a bachelor's degree in management. Students can choose to add a specialization in human resource management if they wish. The department head would like to add a new specialization in supply chain management. Does this require an action from the HLC?
- **Possibly.** A concentration or specialization may be a significant departure from the original approval based on a variety of factors, including but not limited to, whether the institution plans to hire additional faculty with new expertise or to acquire specialized accreditation.
- Cost = depends



Take Aways

Contact your ALO early when considering any substantive change:

- Program addition
- Program change (content, credit hours)
- New site location
- Online
- Degrees at a different level

The cost of the change should be figured into your budget.

HLC approval may delay the start of your desired change.