

Prepare for the Reaffirmation of Accreditation Campus Visit with the Higher Learning Commission

Monday, March 26 — Tuesday, March 27, 2018



What is accreditation?

- A process for assuring and advancing the quality of higher learning.
- A requirement to be eligible for federal student financial aid and to provide educational programs for military students.
- A designation that Youngstown State University has met accepted standards which also validates any requests for public or private support.

Who is Youngstown State University's accreditor?

- The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) is an independent corporation that was founded in 1895 as one of six regional institutional accreditors in the United States.
- Youngstown State has been accredited by the HLC since February 1, 1945.
- Youngstown State last received 10-year reaffirmation of accreditation on July 3, 2008.

What happens during reaffirmation of accreditation?

Youngstown State's review will be carried out through the HLC Open Pathway process. This process includes regular monitoring, proposing and implementing a Quality Initiative, writing an evidence-based Assurance Argument, and hosting a campus visit by a team of reviewers made up of faculty and staff from other universities.

- Peer Review Team (PRT) arrives March 25.
- PRT conducts interviews with the campus community March 26 - 27.
- PRT reports findings to Youngstown State several weeks after the visit.

What will occur during the HLC campus visit?

Five peer review team members will conduct interviews with a full range of campus community members including the president, provost and board of trustees, deans and department heads, faculty and students, staff, and many offices, as well as leaders in the city of Youngstown.

- PRT will seek to validate the evidence that we have presented in the Assurance Argument and comments from the public provided to the team six weeks prior to the visit.
- PRT will coordinate group interviews, observe classrooms or co-curricular activities and visit various programs and departments to determine whether Youngstown State meets the standards for reaccreditation.
- In addition to interviews, an open session for faculty and students is typically held during the visit. A schedule of the visit will be available at www.yzu.edu/accreditation upon release from HLC.

What am I expected to know in order to prepare for the HLC visit?

- Know what your role is at the university and how your work connects to Youngstown State's mission; visit www.yzu.edu/accreditation/mission to explore the themes of our mission statement.
- Everyone should know about the 2020 Strategic Plan, its cornerstones, and how the plan operationalizes the mission of the university.
- Everyone should be aware of what the HLC is and the purpose for the site visit. The Assurance Argument addresses the HLC's five criteria for accreditation and federal compliance reporting; it can be found at www.yzu.edu/accreditation.

How can I contribute to a positive accreditation outcome?

- Participate in one of the HLC Steering Committee's focus sessions during the fall semester designed to provide information and solicit examples that support the Assurance Argument.
- Attend scheduled sessions during the spring semester visit as necessary.
- Answer questions from the review team candidly and thoughtfully during the visit. If you do not know an answer, there is no need to guess. It is okay to say "I don't know."

Criteria for Accreditation

The criteria and core components are the standards by which HLC determines whether Youngstown State merits reaffirmation. The criteria have been designed to seek evidence of continual improvement. Underlying the criteria and core components is a set of Assumed Practices shared by all institutions.

To maintain accreditation, Youngstown State must demonstrate that it is meeting each criterion (listed below) AND all of its core components. For more comprehensive information, visit hlcommission.org.

Criterion One. Mission

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

Criterion Two. Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

Criterion Three. Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

The institution provides high quality education wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

Criterion Four. Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

Criterion Five. Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

Federal Compliance

HLC is required by the U.S. Department of Education to assure that Youngstown State is complying with the expectations of specific regulations accreditors must enforce as a part of their federal recognition on Title IV program responsibilities.

Questions You May Be Asked

Questions for Faculty and Deans

1. How do you contribute to the university's mission?
2. What is your department's vision for the future? How does this relate to the university's vision?
3. Can you describe the tenure and promotion process? What is your impression of the process?
4. Talk about shared governance and how faculty participate in decision-making at different levels of the university (department, college, institution). What are the biggest resource challenges at YSU?
5. How would you describe the relationship between faculty and administration? What works and what needs improvement? YSU's colleges. What collaborations currently exist?
6. What resources are available to support faculty (e.g., library, internal grants, external grant support, faculty development, travel, etc.)? Are these sufficient in meeting faculty needs?
7. Is your department actively involved in assessing student learning? How has your department used its assessment findings? What evidence do you have that students achieve your program's intended learning outcomes?
8. For those who've recently had a program accreditation visit, what have you learned from the process of writing the self-study, external visit experience, and from the external visitor's written report?
9. Do you have undergraduate students and graduate students in the same classroom? How do you differentiate between undergraduate and graduate learning outcomes?
10. What is the purpose of YSU's general education requirement? In what ways does the program achieve its goals for students? How could it be improved?
11. How are your students doing once they graduate?
12. Are you involved in research? How does the university's focus on research further YSU's mission? What opportunities do students in your program have to gain experience with research? Community or civic engagement? Diversity or multiculturalism?
13. For some common faculty issues (workload, salary, sabbatical leaves, etc.), what works well and what needs to be improved?
14. What is the role of faculty in ensuring academic quality?
15. How do you ensure that all classes – online, blended, off-campus, dual credit - have the same student learning outcomes and equivalent assessments?
16. Does your department offer courses or programs via distance education? If so, how does the department ensure the quality of the curriculum regardless of how or where it is delivered?

Questions for Board of Trustees

1. What is the agenda and the materials used in the orientation of new board members? What type of annual training do all board members receive?
2. How has the board enhanced YSU's ability to fulfill its mission? How has it assisted in generating resources needed to sustain and improve the institution?
3. Are there clearly defined expectations and protocols for trustee obligations and communications with each other, the President, employees and community members?
4. How are records of resource allocation decisions made by the board shared with the university community? What are the biggest resource challenges at YSU?
5. Does the board periodically and objectively assess its effectiveness and the effectiveness of YSU's governance structure?

Questions for Staff and Administration

1. How does your department support the mission of the university? How do you contribute to the university's mission?
2. What is it like to be a staff member at YSU? How is morale on campus?
3. What opportunities do you have for professional development? Are staff members treated equitably in their access to these opportunities?
4. How are staff evaluated at YSU? What is your impression of the evaluation process?
5. How are staff involved in campus decision-making processes? Do you think that staff have sufficient input into decisions that affect them? What are the biggest resource challenges you face at YSU?
6. How would you describe the relationship between staff and administration? What works and what could be improved?
7. What are some important benefits about working at YSU? What do you like best about your job? What would you change if you could?
8. How do units across campus work collaboratively? What works well and what could be improved?
9. Do you feel that the work you do is valued by administration? Faculty? Other staff members? Students?
10. How does your department contribute to student learning and development? How does your department assess or evaluate effectiveness?

Questions for Students

1. Why did you choose to enroll at YSU? Have your expectations been met?
2. What do you think is special about a YSU education?
3. Would you recommend YSU to other students?
4. What do you like best about YSU? What would you change if you could?
5. Have you experienced any problems getting the courses you need in a timely manner?
6. Describe your experiences with academic advising.
7. Do you know where to go for help with the following? (a) academic support; (b) career planning; (c) personal counseling; (e) making a complaint; (f) technology support.
8. Do you use any of the following: library, tutorial services, dining services, health clinic, recreational facilities? If yes, what has been your experience?
9. Are you able to estimate your bill each semester or are you surprised when you receive it?
10. Do you know if you are enrolled in an accredited program?
11. Describe the relationship between students and faculty.
12. What opportunities do you have to conduct research? Participate in community or service learning experiences? Interact with people and cultures different from your own? Gain real world experience related to your educational and career goals?
13. Tell us about programming that happens outside of academic departments where you have learned something.
14. If you have transferred in credits, what was the experience like for you?
15. Do you think the university is clear in its communication with students about topics such as financial aid, student conduct, costs, and graduation requirements? What improvements would you recommend?

Additional information about the HLC Accreditation process can be found at www.ysu.edu/accreditation

Youngstown State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, natural origin, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, disability, age, religion or veteran/military status in its programs or activities. Please visit www.ysu.edu/ada-accessibility for contact information of persons designated to handle questions about this policy.