University Accreditation Site Visit

Open Meetings

As part of the university's institutional accreditation review, the campus will be visited by a team of peer reviewers from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) on March 25-26, 2019. During this visit, reviewers will meet with university leadership and representatives of shared governance, and they will also hold Open Meetings with members of the university community.

What is the purpose of Open Meetings during the HLC site visit?

About one month before the site visit, peer reviewers received a copy of the Assurance Argument, a 100-page document describing ways that the university meets each of HLC's five criteria for accreditation (see page 2 for an Executive Summary).

The purpose of the site visit is to give peer reviewers opportunities to verify claims made in the Assurance Argument, explore how well the Assurance Argument aligns with information gained through face-to-face meetings on campus, and ask for elaboration or clarification in cases where they think additional information is needed. The full text of the Assurance Argument and a schedule of open meetings are available at https://uiowa.edu/accreditation/reaffirmation-2019

Who are the peer reviewers?

Peer reviewers are faculty members and administrators from other public research universities accredited by HLC, including a number of Big Ten and AAU peer institutions. Reviewers are not solely responsible for determining UI’s accreditation status. After the visit, they prepare a report that summarizes their observations and recommendations. The HLC Board will review the site visit report, alongside materials submitted by the university, and make a final decision about our accreditation status later this year.

What will peer reviewers ask about at Open Meetings?

Reviewers are working to get a sense of the university as a whole, and they know the value of hearing many voices from throughout the university community. They might ask for detailed information on specific topics (for example, exploring an issue that has come up in their review), and they will also want to hear your experiences and perspectives as members of the university community.

How am I supposed to answer?

If you participate in any of the Open Meetings during the site visit, you are welcome to speak on the basis of your experiences with the university. Individual participants in Open Meetings aren’t expected to speak on behalf of the entire university. Peer Reviewers want to hear from you, and they will add your perspective to the bigger picture they are forming through their meetings during the site visit and their review of the materials submitted by the university prior to the visit.

What happens after the site visit?

Reviewers will prepare a site visit report and submit it to HLC. HLC decision-making bodies will review these recommendations, along with the Assurance Argument and any additional documentation submitted by the university in response to requests during the site visit. These documents will provide the basis for HLC’s final decision about the university’s accreditation status.

Accreditation FAQ:

For other questions about university accreditation criteria and procedures, visit the FAQ section of the UI accreditation site: https://uiowa.edu/accreditation/frequently-asked-questions
Executive Summary

Criterion 1 - Mission

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

The university serves the state of Iowa, the nation, and the world through its threefold mission of teaching, research, and public service. Foundational to success across all parts of that mission is the commitment to achieving “excellence through diversity.” The strategic plan, which articulates areas of focus and emphasis within the broader mission, provides a framework to guide decision-making across the university.

The core mission, strategic priorities, and commitments to diversity, inclusion, and the public good are communicated in myriad ways to students, faculty, staff, and the public, and are enacted through direct public services, active community engagement, and integration across academic and co-curricular experiences. Campus-wide initiatives during the last decade have made it an institutional priority to broaden and deepen commitments in these areas and to increase both the quality and the coordination of efforts to support student success, to create a more equitable and inclusive university community, and to advance university outreach and public engagement.

Criterion 2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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

The university establishes and enforces policies that enact its commitments to freedom of expression, pursuit of truth, and integrity in all its practices. The university provides oversight and institutional resources to support both the quality and the integrity of research and scholarly work, and provides students with education and guidance in ethical and responsible uses of information.

Established university policies and practices uphold ethical and responsible conduct in academic, financial, personnel, and auxiliary operations. The university demonstrates the integrity of its operations by regularly reporting to the state-appointed Board of Regents, other state and federal regulating bodies, and accrediting agencies, and by transparently representing its programs, requirements, faculty, staff, costs, and accreditation relationships to students, faculty, staff, and the public.

Criterion 3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

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

The university maintains systematic support and oversight for programs that offer high-quality education, first and foremost through a commitment to supporting its faculty and staff. Through their leadership of programs and new initiatives, oversight of curricular and co-curricular offerings, participation in shared governance, and ongoing scholarly and professional development, faculty and staff develop and maintain a wide variety of educational opportunities that support student success and challenge students to excel.

Criterion 4 - 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.

The university maintains responsibility for quality of educational programs through a variety of integrated, complementary systems, including:

- Regular comprehensive reviews of departments, colleges, and co-curricular programs.
- Unit-based annual updates on teaching, learning, and continuous improvement in academic and co-curricular programming.
- Cross-unit assessment of General Education and high-stakes gateway courses, first-year experiences, and transition to college.
- Regular monitoring of student engagement, success, and post-graduation outcomes.

Through sustained implementation of these distributed systems, the university maintains commitment to systematic collection and use of assessment evidence by the units that are directly responsible for assuring program quality and for making decisions about future program development.

Criterion 5 - Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

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

The university remains in a strong financial position to support its mission and operations, after navigating the significant physical and fiscal challenges posed by the historic flood of 2008 and steadily declining state appropriations. The university works to allocate resources effectively through strategic planning processes, which seek broad input from the university community approximately every 5 years, and the “Path Forward” strategic plan implementation process, which is continual and rooted in shared governance.

Through these processes, the university prioritizes areas of emphasis within its broader mission and implements strategies that respond to current and emerging challenges and opportunities. With its newly implemented budget model, the university expects to facilitate more effective planning, increase transparency, encourage collaboration, and ensure that academics are at the center of the resource allocation decision-making process.

The full text of the Assurance Argument is available at https://uiowa.edu/accreditation/reaffirmation-2019