

DIN: 3065-3-02
Name of Procedure: Gaining Higher Learning Commission Approval for Certificate/Diploma Programs

Purpose

To delineate all the steps involved in gaining Higher Learning Commission approval for new certificates or diplomas, and identifying who should provide input/information for the various sections of the form and the timeline for the submission.

Scope

This procedure is directed by the Vice President of Academic Affairs or designee with input from various other college personnel. It applies to any Certificate or Diploma that has been approved by the Minnesota State Academic Programs and Collaboration Unit that meets all of the following criteria:

1. The certificate or degree program is freestanding and does not require enrollment in a concurrent degree program.
2. The courses are credit-bearing.
3. The courses are at any degree level or at the pre-associate's degree level.
4. 50 percent or more of the courses supporting the program have been developed for the certificate or diploma program, and are not drawn from those courses supporting an existing degree program or a previously-approved certificate or diploma program; and
5. The certificate/diploma program is Title IV eligible (eligible for financial aid).

The Certificate Program Screening Form must be submitted to the Higher Learning Commission at least 90 days prior to advertising the program and/or enrolling learners to determine if prior Higher Learning Commission approval is required.

Definitions

The following is a list of key definitions:

Term/Phrase	Definition/Description
Certificate Program Screening Form	A document available on the Higher Learning Commission website that the college completes and submits to determine if prior HLC approval is required.
Certificate (according to the Higher Learning Commission (HLC))	HLC language uses the word Certificate to apply to what NTC calls Certificates or Diplomas. This means anything other than an associate's degree at the technical college level.

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<p>“Additional Location” (according to HLC)</p>	<p>A place, geographically separate from any main or branch campus, where instruction takes place and students can do one or more of the following: 1. Complete 50 percent or more of the courses leading to a degree program; 2. Complete 50 percent or more of the courses leading to a Title IV eligible certificate; 3. Complete a degree program that they began at another institution even if the degree completion program provides less than 50 percent of the courses leading to a degree program. There is no base or threshold number of students or distance from the campus necessary for a facility to qualify as an additional location under this definition.</p> <p>An additional location typically does not have a full range of administrative and student services staffed by the facility’s personnel. Such services may be provided from the main campus or another campus.</p> <p>A facility may provide access to instruction requiring students to be present at a physical location that receives interactive TV, video or online teaching. It is considered an additional location when 50 percent or more of a distance delivery program is available through one or more of these modalities that facility.</p> <p>NOTE: Instruction offered online does not constitute an “Additional Location.”</p>
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Procedure

The table below describes the steps in this procedure:

Step	Action
1	Upon notice that the program has been approved by the Minnesota State Programs and Collaboration Unit, determine whether the program meets the above criteria (listed under Scope). If yes, initiate the completion of a Certificate Program Screening Form (available on the Higher Learning Commission website) for the program.

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	<p>If the new program is related to an existing program, send request to the Division Chair to briefly describe the processes for the assessment of student learning, including development and measurement of student learning outcomes.</p>	<p>If the new program is unrelated to any existing programs, the Vice President of Academic Affairs will secure outside advisors appropriate for providing this information for the new program.</p>
2	<p>In preparation for completing the Higher Learning Commission Certificate Program Screening Form, it is helpful to do the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Briefly describe the nature of the certificate program. (This means both certificate and diploma in HLC terms.) 2. Briefly describe any contractual or cooperative agreements associated with the certificate program. <i>(NOTE: If NTC is partnering or contracting with a corporation or institution either not accredited or accredited by an agency not recognized by the U.S. Department of Education to offer a percentage of the academic content, including course content, instructional design, academic services or related aspects, the application must identify the information or services provided by the entity and the percentage or portion of the educational program the entity is providing.)</i> 3. Briefly describe the necessary qualifications of the faculty teaching in this certificate program. How are these qualifications being met with new or additional faculty? 4. Briefly describe the processes for the assessment of student learning, including development and measurement student learning outcomes. 5. Briefly describe the processes to ensure academic control of the program, such as admission, program content and quality. 6. List the courses that make up the certificate and specify the number of credits to be earned in each course. <p>The Higher Learning Commission Certificate Program Screening Form asks the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are the courses in the certificate program credit-bearing? Yes or No 2. Is the certificate program a competency-based education (CBE) program? Yes or No 3. Is the certificate program eligible for Title IV financial aid (i.e., has the institution applied to receive Title IV funds for the program or does it plan to do so in the future? Yes or No 4. Were 50 percent or more of the courses for this requested certificate program developed specifically for the program (i.e., the requested certificate program is NOT a subset of courses from an existing degree program)? Yes or No 5. How will the certificate program be offered? Select all that apply. On-ground instruction, Distance education, Correspondence education 6. Has the institution outsourced a portion of the program to an entity not accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education? Yes or No 	

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	7. Is the institution partnering with any entities accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education to deliver courses (content or platform) or to outsource certain aspects of the program? Yes or No
3.	Submit the completed Certificate Program Screening Form to the Higher Learning Commission at changerequests@hlcommission.org at least 90 days prior to advertising and/or enrolling new learners in the program.
4.	IF the program will be offered at a location other than the campus, refer to Higher Learning Commission policies INST.F.20.040 Institutional Change and INST.F.20.050 Review of Institutional Change for guidance.
5.	Upon receipt of notice of approval to offer the new certificate or diploma, notify admissions staff, marketing staff, AASC chair, and appropriate division chair(s) and faculty of the program's approval so that they can begin advertising and enrolling learners in the program. Add the program to the College's official list of programs.

Supporting references

Listed below are college document(s) that support this procedure:

- 3065-1-01 New Program Proposal (policy)
- 3065-2-01 New Program Proposal Process
- Minnesota State form: New Program Application
- Minnesota State form: New Program Intent

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