

## Higher Learning Commission Guidelines for Notification and Approval Updated: September 2020

The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) is Bradley University's institutional, regional, accreditor. They are also the gatekeeper for federal financial aid. Bradley's Statement of Affiliation Status with HLC allows for Bradley to offer Bachelor's and Master's degree programs within the disciplines in which we currently offer programs. Bradley is able to offer doctoral degrees in three areas. Please review the considerations below for areas where additional approval may be required from HLC or the Department of Education prior to implementing a new program. The approval process will need to be added to your timeline.

**Please contact Jennifer Gruening Burge ([jgruening@bradley.edu](mailto:jgruening@bradley.edu)) with questions.**

- **Certificate Programs:** Certificate Programs that are eligible for Title IV Federal Financial Aid either require HLC Notification or Approval and will require an update with the Department of Education. Certificate Programs that are focused on professional development and do not award academic credit would not need to follow these approval or notification processes.
- **Doctoral Degrees:** Any new doctoral degrees require HLC approval. Our accreditation currently limits us to three doctoral degree programs: DPT, DNP, Ed.D.
- **New Programs:** If offering a program in a new discipline or at a new degree level, please check early on in the process to go through a screening process to ensure the new program does not require approval from HLC.
- **Degree Completion Programs:** Degree Completion Programs based on the current breadth of Bradley degree program offerings are considered by HLC as an additional Bachelor's degree. However, if Bachelor's degree completion programs grow significantly, this may require approval from HLC in the future due to a change in nature of the student body, which would then include more adult learners.
- **Offering Courses Off Campus:** HLC requires notification of any location where we are offering courses. If courses are being offered anywhere other than the physical Bradley campus in Peoria, IL, HLC notification is required. As long as it is less than 50% of a degree program, notification is all that is needed. Closing any course locations also requires HLC notification.
- **Offering Programs Off Campus:** Once course offerings off campus include 50% or more of a degree program, this requires HLC approval prior to offering the program off campus. Again, off-campus sites would be any location other than the physical Bradley campus in Peoria, Illinois. Additionally, the federal government requires that the first three sites established by an institution are visited by HLC evaluators. Bradley has already had two visits completed (Abingdon and Deer Creek Mackinaw).
  - Keep in mind that offering courses or programs off campus may also require approval from IBHE or the state in which courses or programs are being offered.
- **Dual Credit Courses:** Currently, Bradley does not offer dual-credit courses. If considering dual-credit course offerings, Bradley needs to ensure the faculty teaching the courses have the same faculty credentials as any other Bradley faculty would. HLC also has faculty credential policies to review as well. If Bradley faculty are offering instruction at an off-campus site (such as in a high school), this is now an off-campus course location, which would require notification or approval, depending on the suite of offerings.

*Keep in mind that this information only applies to HLC. Any programmatic or other change may have implications with other areas, such as financial aid, and they need to be consulted as well. Programmatic accreditors should be consulted as well.*

- **Distance Delivery of Degree Programs:** Bradley is allowed to offer our current programs via Distance Delivery. However, offering a program in conjunction with a third-party will require the submission of a contractual arrangement screening form, as we are contracting with a third party to assist with the delivery of the program.
  - **State Authorizations:** If offering a program online, be sure Bradley is authorized to operate in the targeted state. If offering a program that requires licensure, that state's licensing boards must be informed and approve the Bradley program.
- **Consortial Arrangement:** Contracting with another regionally-accredited institution to offer courses to our students would require HLC notification or approval, depending on the number of courses.
- Other major changes that an institution might go through would also require HLC approval. Examples include: change in mission or structure; significant change in the student body; change from credit hours to clock hours.

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