

Regional Accreditation FAQ

What is regional accreditation?

Regional accreditation provides assurance that institutions of higher education meet established standards of quality and encourages continuous improvement. Regional accrediting bodies are nongovernmental organizations comprised of member institutions. In the United States, there are six regional accreditors who review public, private, non-profit, and for-profit colleges and universities. Regional accreditors must be recognized by the US Department of Education.

Regional accreditors work with member institutions to define rigorous standards of quality that each institution must meet in order to be accredited. Accreditors also review whether institutions have the capacity to sustain these quality standards in the foreseeable future. Unlike professional or specialized accreditation, regional accreditation is granted to the entire institution.

What are the guiding principles behind regional accreditation?

In the United States, regional accreditors adhere to values that are familiar to most academics. Accreditation standards are defined with input from the member institutions which are then evaluated within the context of their unique missions. This contrasts with accreditation in other countries where the standards are defined by government agencies.

The evaluation process is carried out through peer review.

How do institutions become or remain accredited?

Every few years, institutions complete a comprehensive, multi-year self-study that examines how well the institution meets the accreditation standards. Institutions also use the self-study to plan for the future and identify areas needing improvement. The self-study culminates with an accreditation visit conducted by a team of faculty and administrators from other accredited campuses. The review team submits a report of its findings to the accreditor's decision-making body, which determines the institution's subsequent accreditation status. If the review team finds significant problems, the institution could be required to meet additional conditions, and in some cases, may lose its accredited status.

How does regional accreditation affect UE?

Participation in regional accreditation is voluntary; however, there are strong incentives for institutions to seek and maintain accreditation. For example, regional accreditation

- Qualifies institutions to administer federal financial aid for students and to receive other federal grants and contracts.
- Supports (but does not guarantee) transferability and recognition of credits earned by students.
- May be required by state governments for eligibility to operate within the state or to receive state funds.

Is UE regionally accredited?

UE has been accredited by the North Central Association's Higher Learning Commission (HLC) since 1931. UE's accreditation was reaffirmed in 2006, following a comprehensive external review process. In February 2016, the HLC will return to UE for our next accreditation review. Additional information about UE's accreditation status is available at www.hlcommission.org.

How can members of the UE community become involved in preparing for accreditation?

The HLC encourages and expects that institutions will seek participation from the entire community in establishing their Assurance Documents. At UE, there will be multiple opportunities for faculty, staff and students to participate, including the following:

- Serving as representatives on committees;
- Participating in surveys, open forums, focus groups, and interviews; and
- Providing feedback on the Assurance Argument.

Where can we find more information?

For more information, contact the HLC accreditation coordinators: Mark Valenzuela at mv23@evansville.edu or Chris Mohn at mm333@evansville.edu.