

National Louis University

Regulatory Guidance on Program & Curriculum Development

2025-2026



NATIONAL
LOUIS
UNIVERSITY

Purpose:

This guidance document is for faculty and program leaders initiating new programs or changes to ensure compliance and prevent delays in implementation.

Federal definition of a program

1. A legally authorized postsecondary program of organized instruction or study that:
 - i. Leads to an academic, professional, or vocational degree, or certificate, or other recognized educational credential, or is a comprehensive transition and postsecondary program, as described in 34 CFR part 668, subpart O; and
 - ii. May, in lieu of credit hours or clock hours as a measure of student learning, utilize direct assessment of student learning, or recognize the direct assessment of student learning by others, if such assessment is consistent with the accreditation of the institution or program utilizing the results of the assessment and with the provisions of 34 CFR § 668.10.
2. HLC does not consider that an institution provides an educational program if the institution does not provide instruction itself (including a course of independent study) but merely gives credit for one or more of the following: Instruction provided by other institutions or schools; examinations or direct assessments provided by agencies or organizations; or other accomplishments such as “life experience.”

NEW Degree & Certificate Programs

All new degree and certificate programs must be submitted for approval or notification to the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). This also applies to the addition of new credentials with clustered curricula that are transcribed. Please contact Accreditation during the initial planning stage to determine levels of approvals needed (state, programmatic accreditation, etc.) to launch the new credential and consideration of time needed to receive final approval.

- New **Degree** programs: Review [New Degree Program Screening Form](#) (must be submitted by the university Accreditation Liaison Officer)
- Note that the New Degree Program Screening Form asks about intention to enter into a contractual agreement. If yes, we need to complete the [contractual arrangement screening form also](#). In general, HLC is looking for NLU to indicate we are facilitating at least 50% of the program. Here is DOE guidance on [Written Arrangements Between Title IV-Eligible Institutions and Ineligible Third-Party Entities Providing a Portion of an Academic Program](#)
- New **Certificate** programs: Review [Certificate Program Screening Form](#) (must be submitted by the university Accreditation Liaison Officer)
 - Certificate are defined as any packaged set of courses that are:
 - Financial aid eligible (minimum 16SH/24QH) and/or
 - Six courses and more

Watermark - New Program Academic Alert

How to Complete Section 5. Current Program Approvals & Authorizations

5a. Higher Learning Commission (HLC), NLU's institutional accreditor

Notification required

Substantive change application for approval required

Not applicable (new minor, concentration, endorsement, or exception made by Provost Office)

When Notification is Required	• The program is in a field related to existing offerings - determined by CIP Code (same four-digit CIP code XX.XX at the same credential level) • The program is using 50% or more of existing or revised curricula for the new program
When a Substantive Change Application for Approval is Required	• The field is outside NLU's current academic portfolio - determined by CIP Code • Programs requiring substantial new resources: faculty hiring, new

	learning environments • First competency-based program, direct-assessment program, or prison education program
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5b. Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), state authority for Illinois colleges and universities

If the program will be offered on-ground in Illinois, notification is required - NLU Accreditation Team will submit to IBHE.

Chicago Campus

Wheeling Campus

Lisle Campus

N/A (Offered only online or outside of Illinois)

5c. Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), state agency oversees initial and advanced teacher preparation programs

Select one:

Notification submitted

Seeking approval

N/A

5d. Florida Department of Education- Commission for Independent Education (CIE)

If the program will be offered at the NLU Florida Regional Center, additional approvals may be required

Select one:

Approved to be offered

Seeking approval

N/A

Approved to be offered	• The program will only be offered online • The program will not be available to military-connected students
Seeking approval	• The program is offered in-person or low-residency • The program is available to international and military-connected students

5e. National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (NC-SARA), an agreement among member states to comply with postsecondary distance education standards

If the program will be offered online it is authorized as a distance education program through NLU's membership with NC-SARA.

Select one:

Authorized to be offered online

Program not offered online

5f. Programmatic Accreditation

Please state the accreditor and select one option:

Accrediting Body

Notification submitted

Seeking approval

N/A

Changes to Existing Degree Programs

The following changes will be tracked by the accreditation team and will be reported to HLC within 30 days of the program changes being implemented. The accreditation team will use Watermark Curriculum Management Data Collection forms to track changes in the Program Change Tracker, which can be accessed [here](#).

- Change in modality of an existing program
- Development of an Advanced Pathway of an existing program
 - Advanced pathways are those in which graduate courses are taken by undergrads to create an accelerated graduate pathway
- Addition of Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) options to an existing program or general education courses
- 25% Change (at once or cumulative total of changes since last HLC accreditation review) of an existing program
 - Include in the 25% programmatic change calculation when there is a change in:

- Total number of credit hours (increase or decrease) - count credits of course(s) toward total credits in program [HLC approval is required when this change is 25% or more prior to implementing].
- Program content changes including curriculum, learning objectives, competencies, or required clinical experiences.

Watermark - Revised Program Academic Alert

How to Complete Section 5. Current Program Approvals & Authorizations

5a. Higher Learning Commission (HLC), NLU's institutional accreditor

- ☐ Less than 25% cumulative change, No action required
- ☐ 25% or more cumulative content change, Notification submitted
- ☐ 25% or more credit hour change (increase or decrease), Seeking approval

Cumulative Change	The Accreditation Office keeps track of program changes. Contact Accreditation to learn what percent change your program is currently at and if the proposed change will set the program above the 25% threshold.
Credit Hour Change	Increasing or decreasing the number of credit hours required for completion of a degree program by 25% or more

5b. Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), state authority for Illinois colleges and universities

If the program will be offered on-ground in Illinois, notification is required - NLU Accreditation Team will submit to IBHE.

Chicago Campus

Wheeling Campus

Lisle Campus

N/A (Offered only online or outside of Illinois)

5c. Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), state agency oversees initial and advanced teacher preparation programs

Select one:

Notification submitted
Seeking approval
N/A

5d. Florida Department of Education- Commission for Independent Education (CIE)

If the program will be offered at the NLU Florida Regional Center, additional approvals may be required.

Select one:

Less than 20% change, No action required
20% or more change, Program modification application required
N/A (Offered online or outside Florida)

5e. National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (NC-SARA), an agreement among member **states to** comply with postsecondary distance education standards

If the program will be offered online it is authorized as a distance education program through NLU's membership with NC-SARA.

Select one:

Authorized to be offered online
Program not offered online

5f. Programmatic Accreditation

Please state the accreditor and select one option:

Accrediting Body

Notification submitted/Approved to offer
Seeking approval
N/A

Type of Change	HLC Requirement	State Requirement Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE)	Programmatic Accreditation Requirement *Please check accreditor	NLU BOT Approval Required	Timeline to Approval from Submission
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		Florida Commission of Independent Education (CIE)	requirements for specifics		
New certificate program - Certificate and endorsement programs are defined as any packaged set of courses that are: - Financial aid eligible (minimum 16 semester hours or minimum 24 quarter hours) and/or - Six courses and more	Certificate is NOT a subset of an existing program: HLC APPROVAL Certificate is a subset of an existing program: HLC NOTIFICATION Certificate Screening Form to determine review process and timeline	IBHE APPROVAL (only if offered in non-home regions) CIE APPROVAL (90 days)	If applicable	YES (certificate only)	30-90 days
New degree program* - Degree programs are defined as any packaged set of courses that are transcribed: - Degrees - Majors - Minors - Concentrations	New Degree Program Screening Form to determine review process and timeline	IBHE APPROVAL (only if offered in non-home regions) CIE APPROVAL (90 days)	If Applicable	YES	3 - 9 months (may take longer in some circumstances)
Change in Modality of an existing program	HLC NOTIFICATION	CIE APPROVAL (90 days)	ISBE CAEP CACREP CSWE APA	NO	90 days
Development of an Advanced Pathway of an existing program/certificate/endorsement	HLC NOTIFICATION			NO	

Advanced pathways are those in which graduate courses are taken by undergrads to create an accelerated graduate pathway					
Addition of Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) options to an existing program or general education courses	HLC NOTIFICATION			NO	
25% Aggregate Change of an existing program Change in credit hours (increase or decrease) Creation of new Watermark Data Collection	HLC APPROVAL for change in credit hours over 25% HLC NOTIFICATION of all changes			NO	
Establishment of an offsite location (50% or more of a <i>credential</i> [degree program, certificate, endorsement] offered or can be completed by a student at the location) See Offsite Locations Guidance for details	HLC APPROVAL	IBHE APPROVAL (only if offered in non-home regions) CIE APPROVAL			90 days
The initiation, modification or renewal of a contractual or other arrangement wherein an institution outsources some portion of its educational programs (including instruction, oversight of the curriculum, assurance of the consistency in the level and quality of instruction and in expectations of student performance and/or the establishment of the academic qualifications for instructional personnel) to any of the following parties: an unaccredited institution; an institution that is not accredited by an accreditor recognized by the U.S. Department of Education; or a corporation or other entity. See Partnerships Overview for details.	HLC APPROVAL required when 25% or more outsourced	N/A			30-90 days

Meeting Month	NLU Board of Trustees (BOT)	HLC Board	IBHE Board	CIE Board
January		*		*
February		*		
March	*	*	*	*
April				
May		*		*
June	*	*	*	
July				*
August			*	
September	*	*	*	*
October				
November		*		
December	*		*	