MOHAVE COMMUNITY COLLEGE is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the 19-state North Central Association of Colleges and Schools based in Chicago, Illinois. Mohave Community College was reaccredited last in 2003. Under the current, PEAQ process, every ten years the college must successfully complete the process of reaccreditation in order to maintain its standing with the association.

AN OVERVIEW OF ACCREDITATION

What is accreditation?

Accreditation is the result of a positive external review by an authorized agency such as The Higher Learning Commission (HLC): A Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Accreditation assures the public that a college, university, school, or program can do its job. While many academic agencies accredit particular programs of study (nursing, business, physical therapy assistant, etc.), The Higher Learning Commission and other regional accrediting agencies are responsible for assuring that colleges and universities meet certain standards in terms of their missions, operations, and activities in teaching and student learning, discovery and promotion of knowledge, and service. Unaccredited schools are not eligible for many kinds of federal support.

What is the purpose of accreditation?

The purpose of accreditation is to provide public assurance of educational quality and institutional integrity.

Who accredits institutions of higher education?

Six regional associations are responsible for the accreditation of colleges, universities and other institutions of higher learning: North Central, Middle States, New England, Northwest, Southern and Western Associations. Mohave Community College is accredited by the North Central Association-Higher Learning Commission.

What is the value of institutional accreditation?

For members of the community and especially prospective students of Mohave Community College, institutional accreditation provided by the North Central Association-Higher Learning Commission means that the accredited institution has been found to meet the Commission's requirements and criteria and has the mechanisms in place to sustain institutional quality. Reaching this conclusion requires that an institution open itself to external examination conducted by qualified peer reviewers using accepted criteria. For the accredited institution, the process of accreditation provides an opportunity for critical self-analysis leading to improvement in quality and for consultation and advice from persons from other institutions. Thus accreditation provides public certification of acceptable institutional quality and an opportunity and incentive for institutional self-improvement.
Is there a difference between regional accreditation and state licensure?

Yes. While many states have established regulations that must be met before an institution can operate, in most states such regulations represent a minimum basis for protection of students. State authorization should not be confused with institutional or specialized accreditation. An institution may have state authorization to operate, but it may not necessarily be accredited by an institutional or specialized accrediting association. In fact, an institution must have the appropriate authorization by a state to operate before it can seek a status with the Commission.

Can the Commission recommend a college to a student?

No, selection of a college to attend is a decision that must be made individually. There are so many different types of institutions (small, large, single-program, multiple-program, urban, rural, public, private, etc.) that matching the student’s interests and abilities to the characteristics of a college requires detailed information about the student. Information about colleges may be found in various books and directories (available in many libraries), and students are advised to consult with counselors or advisors in secondary schools. The admissions officers of colleges are often able to provide assistance, although they will have the most knowledge of the institution they represent. The public information available from the Commission is limited to that describing the institution’s status with the Commission.

Is institutional accreditation the same as program accreditation?

No, institutional accreditation speaks to the overall quality of the institution without making judgments about specific programs. Institutional accreditation is accreditation of the whole institution, including all programs and sites. The accreditation of individual programs, such as those preparing students to practice a profession, is different from institutional accreditation and is carried out by “specialized” or “program” accrediting bodies that apply specific standards for curriculum and course content. The Higher Learning Commission does not maintain lists of programs offered by its accredited institutions.

Does accreditation guarantee that credits and degrees can be transferred to another institution?

No. Transferability of credits and degrees is a matter determined by the institution receiving the credits. Transferability depends on several factors: the institution at which credits or degrees were earned; how well the credits offered for transfer mesh with the curriculum offered by the institution to which the student wishes to transfer; and how well the student did in the courses. Accreditation speaks only to the first of these factors and, therefore, cannot by itself guarantee transfer of credits; however, many institutions choose to accept transfer credits only from accredited institutions so that transfer of credits from an unaccredited institution may be excluded. Some institutions have specific agreements with other institutions guaranteeing transfer of credits, but students should be skeptical of any institution that makes unqualified assertions that its credits will transfer to all other institutions. Anyone planning to transfer credits should consult the receiving institution about the transfer at the earliest opportunity before taking the courses for transfer, if possible.
Who evaluates the Commission?

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) is a United States organization of degree-granting colleges and universities. It identifies its purpose as providing national advocacy for self-regulation of academic quality through accreditation in order to certify the quality of higher education accrediting organizations, including regional, faith-based, private career, and programmatic accrediting organizations.

The organization has approximately 3,000 academic institutions as members, and currently recognizes approximately 60 accrediting organizations. It maintains an International Directory which "contains contact information about 467 quality assurance bodies, accreditation bodies and Ministries of Education in 175 countries. The quality assurance and accreditation bodies have been authorized to operate by their respective governments either as agencies of the government or as private (nongovernmental) organizations."

The U.S. Secretary of Education maintains a list of accrediting bodies determined by the Secretary to be "reliable authorities as to the quality of training offered by educational institutions and programs." The Secretary's list serves as a basis of eligibility for participation in federally-funded programs, including student financial aid. To appear on the list an accrediting body must demonstrate its compliance with a series of criteria established by the Secretary. Reconsideration of status on the list is conducted approximately every four years.

How does the PEAQ accreditation process work?

The Higher Learning Commission of The North Central Association of Colleges and Schools provides two programs for maintaining accredited status: the Program to Evaluate and Advance Quality (PEAQ) and the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP). Mohave Community College is reviewed as part of PEAQ, which employs a five-step comprehensive evaluation process to determine continued accredited status.

1. The organization engages in a self-study process for approximately two years and prepares a report of its findings in accordance with Commission expectations.

2. The Commission sends an evaluation team of Consultant-Evaluators to conduct a comprehensive visit for continued accreditation and to write a report containing the team’s recommendations.

3. The report of the evaluation team and other documents relating to the comprehensive visit are reviewed by a Readers Panel or, in some situations, a Review Committee of the HLC.

4. The Institutional Actions Council (IAC) takes action on the Readers Panel’s recommendation.

5. If a Review Committee reviewed the visit, the Review Committee takes action.

The Board of Trustees validates the work of IAC or a Review Committee, finalizing the action. Evaluations for initial and continued candidacy and initial accreditation follow the processes outlined above.
What does the HLC look for when it accredits colleges and universities?

In 2005, the HLC adopted a new set of criteria for evaluation:

- Criterion One: Mission and Integrity
- Criterion Two: Preparing for the Future
- Criterion Three: Student Learning and Effective Teaching
- Criterion Four: Acquisition, Discovery and Application of Knowledge
- Criterion Five: Engagement and Service

HLC expects that MCC has evaluated examples of evidence to support each criterion and its components. In addition, the Consultant-Evaluators also expect to see evidence that the organization values the four themes of orientation, as follows: future-oriented, learning-focused, connected, and distinctive.

When will the HLC re-accreditation visit take place?

Mohave Community College last went through the re-accreditation process in 2003. Our next site visit will occur in the fall of 2012.

How is the college preparing for the re-accreditation visit in 2012?

MCC has formed a Steering Committee and Criteria-based subcommittees to evaluate evidence, make sense of that evidence in light of each criterion and the cross-cutting themes, and will help to prepare the college for the 2012 visit.

What will the team do during the visit?

The visiting peer review team will receive the complete MCC Self-Study Report six weeks prior to the visit and will have access to documents via the web site. During the visit, they seek to validate the content of the report in terms of the identified strengths, as well as concerns that need attention or issues that may confront us in the future. Team members will have meetings with key individuals and groups from across the college and will hold open meetings.

Will any findings be reported?

The HLC team addresses the Criteria and Core Components for accreditation. The team notes the Components that have been met, any that have not been met and any qualifications or concerns regarding them. In addition, the team provides advice to the college about issues that might be of concern and ways in which MCC might seek to approach or address those issues in the Advancement section. A report of the visit is sent to the college president a month to six weeks after the visit.

Where can I get more information on accreditation?

What are the HLC Criteria?

I. Mission and Integrity

The organization operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.

II. Preparing for the Future

The organization’s allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

III. Student Learning and Effective Teaching

The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.

IV. Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge

The organization promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.

V. Engagement and Service

As called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both values.

What are the four themes of orientation?

I. The Future-Oriented Organization
   - Engages in planning
   - Is driven by the mission
   - Understands social and economic change
   - Focuses on the futures of constituents
   - Integrates new technology

II. The Learning-Focus Organization
   - Assesses student learning
   - Supports learning
   - Supports scholarship
   - Creates the capacity for lifelong learning
   - Strengthens organizational learning

III. The Connected Organization
➢ Serves the common good
➢ Serves constituents
➢ Creates a culture of service
➢ Collaborates
➢ Engages in healthy internal communication

IV. The Distinctive Organization
➢ Has an unambiguous mission
➢ Appreciates diversity
➢ Is accountable
➢ Is self-reflective
➢ Is committed to improvement