

## 1.4 - Academic Program Quality

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Academic Program Quality focuses on ensuring quality across all programs, modalities and locations. The institution should provide evidence for Core Components 3.A. and 4.A. in this section.

### 1P4: PROCESSES

Describe the processes for ensuring quality academic programming. This includes, but is not limited to, descriptions of key processes for the following:

- Determining and communicating the preparation required of students for the specific curricula, programs, courses and learning they will pursue (4.A.4)
- Evaluating and ensuring program rigor for all modalities, locations, consortia and dual-credit programs (3.A.1, 3.A.3, 4.A.4)
- Awarding prior learning and transfer credits (4.A.2, 4.A.3)
- Selecting, implementing and maintaining specialized accreditation(s) (4.A.5)
- Assessing the level of outcomes attainment by graduates at all levels (3.A.2, 4.A.6)
- Selecting the tools, methods and instruments used to assess program rigor across all modalities

### 1R4: RESULTS

What are the results for determining the quality of academic programs? The results presented should be for the processes identified in 1P4. All data presented should include the population studied, response rate and sample size. All results should also include a brief explanation of how often the data is collected, who is involved in collecting the data and how the results are shared. These results might include:

- Summary results of assessments (include tables and figures when possible)
- Comparison of results with internal targets and external benchmarks
- Interpretation of results and insights gained

### 1I4: IMPROVEMENT

Based on 1R4, what process improvements have been implemented or will be implemented in the next one to three years?

## Responses

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### **1P4a. Determining and communicating the preparation required of students for the specific curricula, programs, courses and learning they will pursue (4.A.4)**

The College's process for determining and communicating the preparation required of students for the specific curricula, programs, courses and learning they will pursue relies on the student

placement procedure, the Master Courses of Record (MCOR) procedure, and on individual programs with closed admission or special accreditation requirements that specify student preparation.

The College revised its student placement process for math and English courses using faculty SMEs and IR research for 2016-17 (when COMPASS was discontinued). A [2018 IR study](#) (pg. 20) confirmed that the College's new placement process had predictive value and revealed that a higher proportion of students were getting through college level courses. [Placement](#) now initially relies on high school GPA, followed by ACT scores and subject-based tests (ALEX for math and McCann for English). Many students requiring placement are advised to take a college level course along with a developmental co-requisite course. Admissions staff communicate this process to students through its [LCCC Website](#) and its mandatory orientations. The Website also informs students about orientation and advising resources.

Program faculty SMEs, their advisory committees and specialized accrediting or industry criteria determine course competencies and their rigor and identify pre-requisites. College faculty document and share pre-requisites with other LCCC faculty through the MCOR process. A comprehensive communication network informs students of pre-requisites and course sequencing. It includes mandatory student orientation, the required freshman seminar, the [Student Handbook](#), the College's [catalog](#) (course sequencing of programs, prerequisites, [placement testing](#)), mandatory holistic advising for students, the course schedule and course syllabi (4.A.4).

Specific requirements for entry into select-admission programs are determined by program faculty in consultation with external accrediting agencies, advisory boards, employers, and/or other SMEs. This process ensures that course-based and discipline-based competencies are identified to inform preparatory activities prior to application. Preparation information is communicated through program-specific informational materials such as the [Nursing Admissions Package](#) (specifically pages 1 and 7) and through advising and program-specific orientation (4.A.4).

#### **1P4b. Evaluating and ensuring program rigor for all modalities, locations, consortia and dual-credit programs (3.A.1, 3.A.3, 4.A.4)**

The College evaluates and ensures program rigor for all modalities, locations, consortia, and dual credit programs through its course management (MCOR) and quality assurance processes. Individual course rigor is documented in the [Course Competencies](#) (pg. 3) section of each MCOR. MCORs are located in and communicated through the online software CurrIQnet. All instructors, regardless of course modality and location, must use the same course MCOR, instructing to the established common course competencies and completing the identified common course assessments.

The College ensures and evaluates common rigor across all modalities and locations using its program review quality assurance process, specifically [self-study section II.B.3](#) (*Student Learning Competencies are Consistent Across All Instructors and All Modalities*, pg. 6). Internal peer-review teams evaluate programs' evidence for this self-study section and rate compliance to

the academic standard using the program review rubric. Quality assurance includes special accreditation reviews (e.g., nursing or dental hygiene and others), which further reinforce evaluation of rigor across modalities in all locations but does not substitute for LCCC program review. Both program review and special accreditation link rigor to stakeholder feedback (advisory boards and clinical site supervisors) (3.A.1, 3.A.3, 4.A.4).

Dual/concurrent enrollment is further evaluated utilizing [National Center for Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships](#) (NACEP) standards. NACEP accreditation annual reporting ensures program rigor for all dual-credit programming. LCCC assigns lead instructors who work with high school instructors to ensure courses taught in the high school align with college course competencies and rigor (see [NACEP Standards](#), pg.4) (3.A.1, 3.A.3, 4.A.4).

#### **1P4c. Awarding prior learning and transfer credits (4.A.2, 4.A.3)**

LCCC's process for awarding prior learning and transfer credits is articulated in [Transfer of Credit Procedure 3.18P](#) (pg. 2) and administrated by the Registrar's Office. The process for transfer of credit (from all sources) includes (1) students submitting official copies of transcripts, (2) Office of the Registrar determining course equivalencies (if necessary), and (3) transcript evaluations completed for students (4.A.3). Procedure 3.18P describes the evaluation procedure for transfer credit from regionally accredited post-secondary institutions, transfer credit from international post-secondary institutions, credit for military experience, and prior learning assessment (PLA) credit. The LCCC Technical Studies AAS degree awards credit for completion of specified federal apprenticeship programs (4.A.2).

PLA credit is awarded through several mechanisms, including examinations, portfolios, demonstrations, or program-specific methods as determined by faculty and the Registrar. Experiential-learning based credit awards may not exceed 25% of the required credits for any degree. Students must be admitted and enrolled at LCCC in a degree program or credential to be eligible for PLA credit (4.A.2). Prior-learning credit criteria are communicated to all stakeholders in the [LCCC Catalog](#), available online. Lists of acceptable scores for CLEP, AP, and IB and their equivalencies are available from the Testing Center and in the catalog.

#### **1P4d. Selecting, implementing and maintaining specialized accreditation(s) (4.A.5)**

The College process for selecting, implementing and maintaining specialized accreditation relies on the needs of its stakeholders, students and regional employers. Most programs in the School of Health Sciences and Wellness have acquired special accreditation with the institution's support for this reason.

The College supports successful program implementation and maintenance of special accreditation that often includes (1) ensuring personnel align with accreditation requirements; (2) ensuring program content, rigor, assessment and outcomes align; and (3) aligning delivery location and modalities with accreditation standards. LCCC sustains program accreditation by providing infrastructure, technology, funding required equipment needs through methods like course/program fees, staffing to meet accreditation criteria, and continuous improvement resources such as assessment processes. The College communicates its accreditations to future

students and the public through its [website](#) and its [catalog](#). The College facilitates annual reporting and regular accreditation reviews to ensure continuous improvement. The Institutional Effectiveness Department monitors special accreditation activity and maintains a [documentation of accreditation statuses](#) (4.A.5).

#### **1P4e. Assessing the level of outcomes attainment by graduates at all levels (3.A.2, 4.A.6)**

The College uses its continuous improvement process (common course assessment, annual assessment planning, and academic program review) to assess competency and outcomes attainment at all levels. See 1P1h, assessing common learning outcomes, and 1P2g, assessing program learning outcomes, for details on assessment of competencies/outcomes attainment.

The College offers transfer-oriented associate degrees and career/technical education (CTE) degrees and certificates. The [College's General Education Procedure](#) (pg. 3) articulates the general education learning competency requirements for transfer degrees (27-28 credits for A.A. and A.S.) and for CTE degrees and certificates (15 credits). Additionally, the continuous improvement processes (annual assessment and program review) require programs to align their learning competencies with the applicable LCCC mission components (3.A.2).

Program-specific operational outcomes are assessed in the online Campus Labs planning module where programs report student achievement of learning competencies and display achievement of operational outcomes, which often include completion rates, matriculation rates and employment monitoring using program-specific employee surveys. Health and Wellness programs report job placement rates in these assessment plans (see 1R4a) and on their program websites. Overall institutional student outcomes such as course success rates, completion rates, and transfer matriculation rates are reported as KPI scores (see [2017-18 Report Card](#), parts B, C and D) (4.A.6).

#### **1P4f. Selecting the tools, methods and instruments used to assess program rigor across all modalities**

The College assesses academic program rigor using its quality assurance tools and processes. These include the MCOR process, annual assessment planning, program review, alumni surveys, and individual program stakeholder surveys, often sent to advisory committee members. The College established its MCOR process through feedback from faculty and leadership and research of other institutions. The MCOR, which must be approved by the predominately faculty Academic Standards Committee, establishes academic rigor levels for course additions or modifications; all faculty must follow MCOR rigor guidelines regardless of modality or location. The faculty-developed program review self-study template has sections devoted specifically to [evaluating rigor](#) equally across all modalities. Many academic programs use advisory committees where members and clinical supervisors are surveyed for feedback on sustaining rigor across all modalities. (See sections 1P1h and 1P2g for tool selection to assess learning competencies.)

#### **1R4a. Summary results of assessments (include tables and figures when possible)**

The College provides the following data results for the Academic Program Quality processes. The College administers a Graduation Exit Survey to gather student perceptions on items such as preparation (see [Q-15](#)), which displays a strong positive rating. A 2018 IR study confirmed the success of the College's new placement procedure (see 1P4a for study). The program review process includes internal peer-review rubric ratings of self-studies sections that include evaluating rigor for programming across all modalities and locations (see Academic Program Review Rubric, [II.B.3a](#) (pg. 2)). Institutional Effectiveness maintains a [Special Accreditation Report](#) that displays accreditation activity.

Results of the [Graduation Exit Survey](#) (pg. 17-19) show the majority of respondents are very confident of their abilities related to institutional learning competencies. Health science, programs have high [Licensure/Certification Pass Rates](#). KPI measures for degrees awarded, transfer performance, matriculation, and job placement display in its [2017-18 Report Card](#) (see parts B, C and D. Some programs report data on employment of graduates in their operational outcomes in assessment plans and in their program review self-studies. For example, the Auto Body program included the following statements in its program review: "Feedback from advisory members who have hired graduates has been positive. Results from phone surveys of employers of Auto Body graduates done by the NATEF evaluation team have ranked high."

#### **1R4b. Comparison of results with internal targets and external benchmarks**

The College rated above the institutional target of 3.0 (four-point scale) for course rigor across all modalities and locations (self-study item-II.B.3a) listed on the [Academic Program Review Rubric](#) (scores are averages for all programs completing program review in 2016-17). The National Community College Benchmark Project (NCCBP) shows the College performing at 62% of its peers for student transfer and completion (see [Transfer and Completion data](#)). The College's [2017-18 KPI Report Card](#) contains benchmarks and internal targets for transfer (B.1.c, B.2.b) and after transfer (C.4.a, C.4.b) performance. The College matches the FY 18-19 targets for all items except B.1.c. in 2018. For workforce In-field Job Placement Rate D.3, the College trails behind its FY 18-19 target by only 3 percentage points, but has made significant gains recently. However, the D.3 job placement data rely on the College' alumni survey, which has a low response rate. The NCCBP does not offer benchmarks for job placement.

#### **1R4c. Interpretation of results and insights gained**

After some years of mixed results on the College's placement procedure, recent adjustments in placement methods, especially for English, have resulted in higher course success rates. Math success rates have remained level over time (see [Developmental Course Success Rates](#)). Program review evaluation confirms that the institution's processes are meeting performance targets on sustaining rigor across modalities and locations. The College has sustained its special program accreditations without interruption over the review period. Program outcomes for graduates continue to be a challenge for the College as reliable data for job placement remain elusive. Although the College developed an MOU with the Wyoming Department of Employment to access wage record data, privacy requirements limit the usefulness of these data. The College is unsatisfied with performance on completion rates and transfer rates, which, in part, motivated the

College to participate in AACC Guided Pathways 2.0; improvement strategies will be implemented by 2020. (See 1I4 below for more about this project.)

**1I4. Based on 1R4, what process improvements have been implemented or will be implemented in the next one to three years?**

In 2016-17, the English program switched to a co-requisite model for student placement to a developmental education pathway. Most students placing into developmental reading/writing are encouraged to take a developmental-level concurrently with the college-level composition course; course success rates confirm that this has improved student success. The College improved its administration of the math placement testing, obtaining higher student participation.

In spring 2016, faculty redesigned the program review self-study template, which streamlined and improved that process. Some health and wellness programs have begun using the College's annual assessment process to reinforce their compliance with special accreditation assessment standards.

Communication of preparation requirements has evolved over the four years with technology advances so that students can now register online for courses. Information is now more accessible for students, including prerequisites listed in course schedules and course sequencing displaying in the online catalog. The College has reviewed two vendors (Education Advisory Board-EAB and Civitas) and is considering purchasing a student-facing platform offering scalable guidance to each student with online advising that offers real time interactions involving preparation information and tracking of student degree obtainment activity as they move through their pathways.

Major process overhauls are anticipated because of the Pathways 2.0 initiative. Pathways is addressing planning, implementation and evaluation with the "goal to improve rates of college completion, transfer, and attainment of jobs with value in the labor market — and to achieve equity in those outcomes." Pathways is focusing resources and planning towards aligning degree pathways and certificates with career/educational goals early during students' enrollment at LCCC to improve completion, including resources (internships) that enable students to make successful transitions from college to employment. Data resources, including graduates' outcomes, will be strengthened to inform success of the pathways.