

	Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC)	Higher Learning Commission (HLC)	Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)
Accepting new candidates and willing to accept NC institutions?	Open to long-term relationships; do not believe a single-cycle approach provides value to membership and/or NC institutions.	Welcomes eligible institutions, including NC institutions, to apply. Indicated preference for long-term relationships.	Welcomes eligible institutions, including NC institutions, to apply. Indicated preference for long-term relationships.
Interest in accrediting single institutions vs. entire systems?	Open to primarily associate degree-granting institutions that can commit to more than a single accreditation cycle.	All degree-granting NC institutions that meet eligibility requirements are invited to apply.	All degree-granting NC institutions that meet eligibility requirements are invited to apply.
Requirements for application and associated timelines? Note: actual timelines are institution-specific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate all eligibility requirements are met. (<1 month) • Achieve candidacy and/or initial accreditation. (~6 months) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Institutions able to meet all Accreditation Standards and Commission policies may achieve accredited status. (Completion of the initial Candidacy Visit) ○ Institutions that meet all Eligibility Requirements but do not substantially meet all Accreditation Standards may be granted Candidacy and required to complete a follow-up report. (Must be completed within two years) 	<p><u>Accelerated Process (~18 months)</u> Possible option for institutions currently accredited by a historically regional accreditor.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve initial accreditation through application, asynchronous peer review, on-site visit. <p><u>Traditional Process</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate all eligibility requirements are met via application (~2 months), interview (~4 months), letter of intent (within 2 years), eligibility filing (within 12 months), initial determination (~2 months), submission of follow up documents (within 12 months) • Achieve candidacy (typically takes 12 months) • Maintain candidacy via biennial evaluation (2 years) • Achieve initial accreditation (~ 4 years) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Early initial accreditation may be requested to expedite this process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate all eligibility requirements are met via pre-application (~4-5 months) • Achieve candidacy (~15-18 months) • Achieve initial accreditation (~7 months)
Mid-term review?	After 4 years.	After 4 years.	Annual review.
Estimated start-up cost?	\$8,000*	\$23,650 (accelerated); \$54,350 (trad)	\$43,000

*Includes fees for eligibility applications and candidacy and/or initial accreditation. Site visit fees are listed as "TBD."

Additional Information

- U.S. Department of Education (USED) recognizes two levels of educational accreditation: 1) institutional accreditation, which applies to an entire institution and includes the former regional accreditors, and 2) specialized or programmatic accreditation, which typically applies to programs, departments, or schools that are parts of an institution.
- In 2020, USED regulatory changes eliminated distinctions between regional and national accreditors. Consequently, agencies that were formerly known as “regional accreditors” were permitted to serve institutions outside their traditional boundaries. There are six (6) total former regional accreditors.
 - Higher Learning Commission (HLC)
 - Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)
 - Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU)
 - New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE)
 - Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC)
 - Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC)
- Several national accreditors recognized by USED include secondary or adult schools; private postsecondary institutions; career and technical education/vocational institutions; artistic units, dance units, musical units, etc.; or religious-affiliated institutions—the accreditors falling into these categories are likely not appropriate for NC community colleges.
- Regional accreditors generally share comparable standards relative to integrity; mission; eligibility; governance; administration & organization; faculty; planning & effectiveness; student achievement; academic programs; academic & student support services; financial & physical resources; library & learning/information resources; transparency & institutional representation; educational policies, procedures, & practices.

	HLC	MSCHE	NECHE	NWCCU	ACCJC**
Responded to RFI	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Member Institutions	~1,000	~500	~200	~150	~200
Accelerated Process	Yes	***	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pace of Expansion Capability	High	Moderate-high	Low-moderate	Low-moderate	Low-moderate
Accreditation Cycle	10 Years	8 Years	10 Years	7 Years	8 Years
Mid-Cycle Review	4th Year*	Annual review	5 th Year	3 rd Year	4th Year
Reduced Fees for Currently Accredited Institutions	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

*HLC offers two pathways to accreditation: Standard Pathway & Open Pathway. The Standard Pathway includes a comprehensive evaluation in year 4. The Open Pathway includes an assurance review in year 4 & a quality initiative in years 5-9.

** Universities are accredited by a separate unit under WASC; they are not eligible for ACCJC.

***Confirming if an accelerated process is being considered.