



Comprehensive Evaluation Plan

COTC'S PLAN FOR REAFFIRMATION OF ACCREDITATION

In 2018-2019, a peer review team from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) will conduct a site visit as part of COTC's reaffirmation of accreditation. Prior to this visit, the college will complete a comprehensive evaluation to evaluate the extent to which it is meeting the [five criteria established by the HLC](#).

COTC is required to complete the comprehensive evaluation to maintain regional accreditation. Just as important, the reaffirmation process provides an opportunity for COTC to document the strengths of our educational programs, continue our commitment to educational improvement, and enhance our understanding of institutional effectiveness.

In partnership, the Office of Strategic Planning and the Office of Academic Affairs are responsible for coordinating COTC's efforts to prepare for the comprehensive evaluation and the HLC site visit. COTC last underwent a 10-year comprehensive evaluation and site visit in May 2008. For the 2018-2019 reaffirmation of accreditation, COTC will participate in the Standard Pathway model. This model was debuted by HLC in 2013 and is significantly different from the 2008 reaffirmation process. However, the college successfully participated in a mid-cycle evaluation in December 2014 using the Standard Pathway model.

This plan describes the reaffirmation process and the college's plan for conducting the comprehensive evaluation, including stating the goals for the process, defining the committee structure that will guide the process, proposing the work plan and timeline, engaging COTC stakeholders, and, finally, strategies for "closing the loop." Additionally, guidelines for preparing the Assurance Argument and Key Milestones are provided as appendices.

COTC's Goals for Reaffirmation Process

Through the reaffirmation process, the Central Ohio Technical College community will have a clearer picture of where we are presently and of what needs to be done to better position the college for the future. The reaffirmation process and Assurance Argument report will provide a foundation upon which we can continually build and improve over the next decade.

The theme or focus of the reaccreditation process is **REAFFIRM 2018-19**. By fulfilling our mission and planning effectively, we will secure not only the future of the college, but also the future of the students and communities we serve. Through our reaffirmation efforts, the college will improve educational opportunities for our students, enhance the quality of technical education and learning, continue to build financial stability, improve organizational effectiveness, stimulate economic development, and secure its place in the global economy.

The following goals have been established for the reaffirmation process:

ENGAGEMENT

Soliciting broad participation by representative and diverse constituencies in gathering evidence for the comprehensive review, analyzing institutional performance, and reviewing conclusions and recommendations.

TRANSPARENCY

Keeping the campus community and other stakeholders informed about the HLC accreditation process.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Recognizing programs and practices that contribute to COTC's success and identifying those programs and practices that can be created and/or nurtured in support of COTC's overall mission to meet the technical education and training needs of students and employers in the area.

REAFFIRMATION

Achieving continued institutional accreditation by meeting all [HLC Criteria for Accreditation](#) and achieving all Federal Compliance requirements.

About Accreditation

What is Accreditation?

Accreditation is a process of external quality review created and used by higher education to scrutinize colleges, universities, and education programs for quality assurance and quality improvement*. Through institutional self-evaluation, peer review, and institutional response, formal educational activities as well as other activities essential to the effectiveness of an institution, such as governance and financial stability are evaluated.

Central Ohio Technical College is a member of the [Higher Learning Commission](#) (HLC). The Higher Learning Commission accredits degree-granting post-secondary education institutions in the North Central region. COTC's most recent 10-year reaccreditation evaluation was in 2008. In 2018-2019, a peer review team from the HLC will conduct an onsite visit as part of COTC's reaffirmation of accreditation.

*J. Eaton, 2011, ["An Overview of U.S. Accreditation, Council for Higher Education Accreditation"](#), p.1

Why is it Important?

Accreditation provides assurances that the institution meets nationally endorsed standards, that it is engaged in continuous improvement, and that it is accountable for achieving its role and mission. Reaffirmation of COTC's accreditation is important

because it affirms that COTC is providing a quality education; provides valuable feedback on how well COTC is meeting its goals for student learning; and creates an opportunity to assess, evaluate, and improve our programs and practices.

The Reaffirmation Process

Higher Learning Commission Criteria

The Criteria for Accreditation are the standards of quality by which the Commission determines whether an institution merits accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation. They are as follows:

1. [Mission](#)
The institution’s mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution’s operations.
2. [Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct](#)
The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.
3. [Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support](#)
The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.
4. [Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement](#)
The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.
5. [Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness](#)
The institution’s resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

The Standard Pathway

The Standard Pathway model separates the reaffirmation of accreditation process into two components:

- A comprehensive evaluation (Assurance Review)
- The peer-review team report and recommendations



they naturally occur over time. With this in mind, we will use a committee structure to complete the Assurance Review, ensuring broad participation across the college.

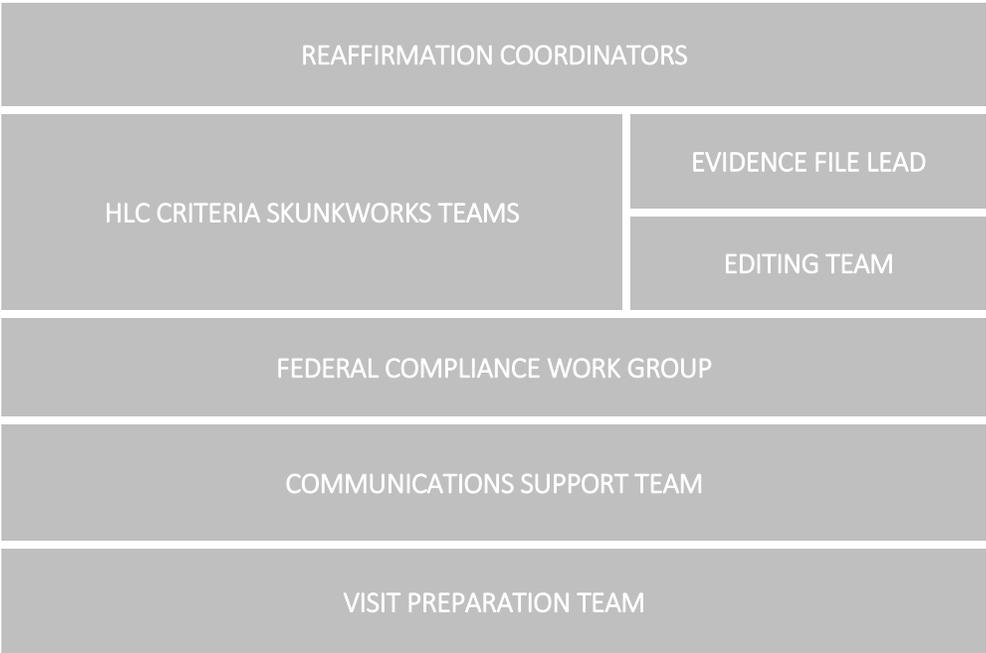
The Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) and the President will serve as the “policy” body of the reaffirmation process.

The President of the college provides active leadership to the reaffirmation process to ensure the successful development of the Assurance Argument. The president has demonstrated that commitment by:

- Appointing the leadership team for the Assurance Review
- Ensuring the provision of adequate resources to support the reaffirmation process
- Reviewing progress reports during the development of the Assurance Argument and providing support and commentary where appropriate
- Maintaining communication with the Commission staff liaison regarding matters such as selecting the visiting team committee chair and scheduling the team visit
- Appraising the COTC board of trustees on a periodic basis of matters related to the reaccreditation process and the visit

The key leadership positions of the comprehensive evaluation and visit are the Reaffirmation Coordinators. They are responsible for organizing and promoting the comprehensive evaluation and visit. These position reports directly to the president.

A number of subcommittees will be established to conduct the work necessary to prepare the Assurance Argument and prepare for the site visit:



Roles and responsibilities for the primary committees are described below.

REAFFIRMATION COORDINATORS

The Reaffirmation Coordinators are responsible for organizing and promoting the comprehensive evaluation. The Coordinators are **Jacqueline H. Parrill**, Ed.D., Vice President for Institutional Planning & Human Resources, and **Lauri White**, Ed.D., Vice President for Academic Affairs

The Reaffirmation Coordinators are responsible for the overall direction and execution of the reaffirmation process and the preparation of the Assurance Argument report to include:

- Provide on-going leadership and coordination of all reaffirmation efforts and activities; oversees the work of all of the work groups and teams
- Ensure that college leadership is informed of the resources required to conduct the Assurance Review and seeks appropriate support
- Serve as the liaison between the HLC staff representative and college leadership
- Oversee the development of the Assurance Argument including the Federal Compliance section and the Multi-Campus Report and including a master calendar
- Maintain the schedule of the Assurance Argument and ensures appropriate progress toward the completion of the Assurance Argument
- Provide regular updates to the President on the progress of the Assurance Argument
- Ensure that the institutional community is informed of the purpose and progress of the Assurance Review
- Ensure appropriate institutional review of preliminary working drafts and approval of the final draft of the Assurance Argument
- Ensure the timely publication of the Assurance Argument
- Oversee all arrangements related to the visiting team
- Ensure that appropriate follow-up activities are in place to consider the recommendations generated by the Assurance Review and site visit.

MULTI-CAMPUS REPORT

Jackie Parrill will be charged with the coordination and development of the Multi-Campus Report required for the evaluation of the college's extended campuses.

HLC CRITERIA SKUNKWORKS TEAMS

These teams will be charged with developing the Assurance Argument and identifying and collecting evidentiary materials for the Evidence File. The Reaffirmation Coordinators will serve as the Criteria leads and will establish different skunkworks teams to address the various core components and subcomponents of each of the Criteria. *The designation "skunkworks" is widely used in business, engineering, and technical fields to describe a small, loosely structured group of people within an organization given a high degree of autonomy and unhampered by bureaucracy, tasked with working on advanced projects.*

Criterion One, Two & Five

Lead: **Jacqueline H. Parrill**, Ed.D.

Vice President for Institutional Planning & Human Resources

Criterion Three & Four

Lead: **Lauri White**, Ed.D.

Vice President for Academic Affairs

The following guidelines should be followed in the development of the Assurance Argument:

1. The use of questionnaires or other data gathering mechanisms will be coordinated and approved by the Accreditation Liaison and the Director of Institutional Research & Effectiveness.
2. College records, including those of students and personnel used to prepare the Assurance Argument will be kept in confidence.
3. Duplication through the Services Center and other reaccreditation budget-related requests will be approved by the Reaffirmation Coordinators.
4. The procedures and guidelines in the Reaccreditation Assurance Review & Site Visit Work Plan will be followed by all leads and skunkworks participants.
5. All Assurance Review reports prepared by the skunkworks teams will be approved by the Reaffirmation Coordinators.
6. Periodic progress reports will be submitted by the leads to the Reaffirmation Coordinators for review and response.
7. A schedule of all skunkwork team meetings will be maintained to ensure full participation of appropriate members of the college community.
8. Identified resource persons will meet with the respective leads and skunkworks teams.
9. Concerns, issues, and/or non-compliances discovered by the leads and/or skunkworks teams will be submitted to the Reaffirmation Coordinators as they occur. They will be reviewed by the Reaffirmation Coordinators and referred appropriately for consideration and changes.
10. Changes and/or exceptions to the Assurance Argument must be made through the Reaffirmation Coordinators with approval by the President, where appropriate.

Specific responsibilities include:

- Become thoroughly knowledgeable about the Criteria section or area for which responsible
- Organize and direct the work of the assigned area
- Identify and invite colleagues to serve on one or more skunkworks
- Develop a plan of action identifying timelines, areas of responsibility, meetings, methods of operation
- Establish a calendar of activities within the scope of the overall compliance audit
- Provide regular progress updates to the president
- Gather information and analyze surveys necessary for accurate, complete coverage of the assigned criteria
- Formulate recommendations based on sound analyses of current conditions and of data collected as part of the Assurance Argument

- Ensure that the research and writing duties are assigned
- Ensure that the work is in-depth and analytical
- Determine the degree to which the college is in compliance with the criteria for accreditation
- Ensure that sufficient documentation is identified to support the findings for the assigned area
- Report to the lead any suggestions/recommendations for improvement in the assigned area
- Ensure that status reports, the preliminary report, and final report are submitted by the dates specified
- Submit a written report that follows the established format and that address all Criteria sections assigned
- Work with the lead in revising the written report (compiling additional information, rewriting for clarity, reorganizing the report, correcting errors of fact, improving style, etc.)

EVIDENCE FILE LEAD

The Evidence File lead will work under the direction of the Reaffirmation Coordinators and is responsible for preparing the electronic document repository in support of the Assurance Review.

Lead: **Joe Argiro**, Resource Planning Analyst

Specific responsibilities include:

- Works with the Reaffirmation Coordinators to determine an appropriate file format for the Evidence File
- Loads HLC required documents into the Evidence File
- Works with Reaffirmation Coordinators to load and link necessary documents and reports into the Evidence File

EDITING TEAM

The work team charged with editing and proofing the Assurance Argument that we are developing in preparation for our HLC reaffirmation visit.

Leads: **Kim Barton**, Assistant Director of Development & **Kim Sibert**, Director of Purchasing & Auxiliary Services

Specific responsibilities include:

- Develops editorial guidelines for approval by the Reaffirmation Coordinators for use by the Skunkworks teams in drafting the Assurance Argument.
- Editing and proofing the Assurance Argument and the Federal Compliance submission to ensure consistency, appropriate grammar and punctuation, “one voice”,

FEDERAL COMPLIANCE WORK GROUP

Work group members will be asked to evaluate the college’s compliance with federal guidelines and provide brief narrative responses and supporting documentation where necessary. They will work with the Reaffirmation Coordinators to inform campus leadership of any issues related to compliance and make recommendations for addressing these issues.

Lead: **Misty McKee**, *Director of Institutional Research & Effectiveness*

COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT TEAM

Team members will assist the Reaffirmation Coordinators with all communications related to comprehensive evaluation (web site updates, COTC Profiles, social media, etc.). This committee is responsible for developing, implementing, and coordinating communications strategies and activities to ensure that the reaffirmation process is as open and transparent as possible. They will work on website development and maintenance, logo and slogan development, and other venues to promote the reaffirmation process.

Lead: **Cheri Russo**, *Director of Marketing & Public Relations*

Specific responsibilities include:

- Establishing a Reaffirmation 2018 website for use during the process to be used to update the college community on the process and progress.
- Develop a logo and slogan to be used throughout the process.
- Develop a PowerPoint template for use by the Reaffirmation Coordinators for presentations to the Board, faculty and other constituent groups during the reaffirmation process.
- Work with the Reaffirmation Coordinators in drafting communications throughout the process.
- Coordinate the Third Party Comment process required by the Commission.
- Prepare articles and updates on the reaffirmation process for periodic inclusion in the President's monthly newsletter.
- Assist in purchasing shirts, giveaways, and other promotional items as identified by the reaffirmation coordinators.

VISIT PREPARATION TEAM

The Visit Preparation team will ensure that all COTC campuses are prepared for the site visit team. This committee will ensure that all four campuses are “company ready”—fully prepared for the site visit team, including repairs, structural arrangements of key facilities and cleaning (building and grounds). The Committee will plan and arrange for meals, refreshments (in hotel and in meeting room), mementoes (small gifts), packets, name tags, etc. and student guides for the visiting team.

Lead: **Brian Boehmer**, *Superintendent of Facilities*

Specific responsibilities include:

- Assemble a small team to identify and conduct the work necessary to ensure the campus is ready for the visiting team
- Ensure necessary repairs, structural arrangements of key facilities and cleaning (building and grounds) are completed in preparation for the visit
- Make necessary hotel reservations for the visiting team; plans and arranges for meals, refreshments (in hotel and in meeting room), mementoes (small gifts), packets, name tags, etc. and student guides are available for the visiting team members
- In collaboration with the Reaffirmation Coordinators, arranges meeting spaces on campus for the visiting team with different constituent groups to conduct their on-site review
- Coordinates the campus tour for the visiting team

Reaffirmation Work Flow & Timeline

Preliminary planning of the HLC comprehensive evaluation began in the fall of 2015. In 2015-2016, the reaffirmation process was defined, and planning continued with presentations to the Executive Leadership Team.

By spring 2016, the reaffirmation plan was finalized and the process launched with a college-wide communication being distributed from the President in January. Work group and Skunkworks teams were defined.

At the start of the fall 2016 semester, work groups and Skunkworks teams will convene begin the review and analyses of the criteria for accreditation and Federal Compliance requirements and to develop a work agenda, with the goal of completing the Assurance Argument and Evidence File by summer 2017. During the summer and fall of 2017, these drafts will be reviewed, revised and submitted to the work teams and the Executive Leadership Team for review and revision.

In spring 2018, we will make the revised drafts available for campus and community review and public comment.

The Assurance Review will be completed by August 2018, with the expected site visit soon to follow (anticipated for December 2018).

Timeline Highlights

Year 2015-16		Year 2016-17		Year 2017-18		Year 2018-19	
Fall 2015	Planning begins	Fall 2016	Criterion Skunkworks Teams convene & work begins on Assurance Arguments	Summer/ Fall 2017	Assurance Arguments reviewed and revised	July 2018	Final version of Assurance Arguments
Spring 2016	Reaffirmation Plan drafted Leads defined	Spring 2017	Assurance Arguments drafted	Spring 2018	Campus review and comment on Assurance Arguments	Fall 2018	Site Visit

Proposed Timeline

Planning for the 2018-2019 HLC Reaffirmation of Accreditation has begun. The following general timeline will be followed. However, the Reaffirmation Coordinators may adjust, as appropriate. More specific dates and times may be provided throughout the reaffirmation process.

YEAR 2015-16	
NOVEMBER 2015	President provides charge to Reaffirmation Coordinators; Reaffirmation Coordinators retreat; planning begins

DEC 2015 – FEB 2016	Reaffirmation Coordinators reviews previous COTC accreditation reports; drafts reaffirmation plan
FEBRUARLY 2016	Reaffirmation Plan submitted to President for review
MAR – APRIL 2016	Work group leads identified; President provide charge to leads
MARCH 2016	Reaffirmation Plan submitted to HLC Liaison
MAR - APRIL 2016	Forum with Executive Leadership Team and Academic Leadership Team to introduce Reaffirmation Plan Reaffirmation Plan revised as necessary
APRIL 2016	COTC team attend HLC annual meeting
SPRING/SUMMER 2016	Editorial guidelines developed for Assurance Argument
YEAR 2016-17	
SUMMER 2016	Skunkworks teams identified
AUGUST 2016	Faculty Development Days Presentation; departmental and committee presentations begin Web site launched for COTC Reaffirmation of Accreditation; regularly updated with information about accreditation process
FALL 2016	Criterion Skunkworks Teams Convene/Retreat
OCT 2016 -APRIL 2017	Criterion Skunkworks Teams work on Assurance Arguments, identifying evidence, developing early drafts Work on Federal Compliance section begins
SPRING 2017	HLC notification of dates of site visit. Alert administrators, teams of site visit time to reserve space on calendars; outline time frame for reserving hotel space, meetings rooms, and other arrangements for the site visit.
APRIL 2017	COTC representatives attend HLC annual meeting
APRIL 2017	Leadership Team/Steering Committee reviews draft reports from Criterion Teams; provide feedback
MAY 2017	Criterion Skunkworks Teams complete review and analyses of criterion/core component, produce final drafts of assurance arguments claims Any gaps in Federal Compliance identified
YEAR 2017-18	

JUNE 2017	Reaffirmation Coordinators finalize drafts of assurance arguments claims and submit to Editors.
JULY –AUG 2017	Assurance Argument edited and reviewed by Editors
SUMMER/FALL 2017	Federal Compliance gaps addressed
FALL 2017	Reaffirmation Coordinators work to fill gaps, address issues, and finalize Assurance Argument Evidence file is built and links are added to Assurance Argument
JAN - APR 2018	Campus reviews Assurance Argument, provides comments. Provide opportunity for public comments Editors review Federal Compliance section
APRIL 2018	COTC team attend HLC annual meeting
MAY 2018	Complete Assurance Review with comments from campus
YEAR 2018-19	
MAY-JUNE 2018	Final review of Assurance Review by college administration
JUNE-JULY 2018	Reaffirmation Coordinators revise Assurance Argument following review
JULY 2018	Final version of Assurance Argument ready for review team
SUMMER 2018	Site visit arrangements completed
FALL 2018	Distribute HLC online student opinion survey
DECEMBER 2018	HLC site visit (anticipated)
SPRING 2019	Reaffirmation Coordinators and President review Peer Reviewers report and recommendations President receives draft of Peer Reviewers report from HLC, shares with Reaffirmation Coordinators to review draft report for correction of errors of fact Final report reviewed and institutional response provided HLC action(s) communicated to campus stakeholders; celebrate achievements, recognize students, staff, faculty and administrators who participated and

contributed to the process; review/discuss final report; set goals for continuous improvement

Engaging COTC Stakeholders

One of the goals of the comprehensive evaluation is to solicit broad participation by representative and diverse constituencies in gathering evidence for the assurance review, analyzing institutional performance, and reviewing conclusions and recommendations. We will accomplish this goal using the following strategies:

Focused group discussions during academic years 2016-17 and 2017-18

The site visit will involve open discussions with COTC stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, alumni, community leaders, and Trustees; therefore, it's important to engage the campus early and often to prepare them for such conversations.

Survey of Student Opinion

HLC will conduct a student opinions survey to inform the peer review team and help them identify possible questions for meetings with faculty, staff, and students during the visit. The survey supports the Commissions efforts to make the accreditation process more open and transparent.

Forums for public comment

Opportunities for input, feedback, and public comment on the Assurance Filing will be solicited through small group discussions with key stakeholders and through periodic opportunities to review drafts of the Assurance Argument.

Responding to the Report

Reaffirmation of accreditation is an iterative process. Responding to the report closes the loop.

Celebrate

Recognize achievement of reaffirmation of accreditation and thank all those who contributed to the process.

Take stock

Review Commission's report; share with stakeholders; evaluate information; discuss and use results to develop, nurture, and improve key initiatives.

Set goals for continuous improvement

Closing the accreditation loop

