



June 27, 2022

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Dr. Marianne Mount, President
Catholic Distance University
300 S. George Street
Charles Town, WV 25414

Dear President Mount:

This letter is formal notification of action taken by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Board of Trustees (“the Board”) concerning Catholic Distance University (“the Institution”). This action is effective as of the date the Board acted, June 23, 2022. In taking this action, the Board considered materials from the most recent comprehensive evaluation, including, but not limited to: the Assurance Filing the Institution submitted, the report from the comprehensive evaluation team, the report of the Institutional Actions Council (IAC) Hearing Committee, and the institutional responses to these reports.

Summary of the Action: The Institution has been granted initial accreditation. The Institution is approved at the following program levels: Associate’s, Bachelor’s, and Master’s, and is limited to the following programs within the approved program levels: Associate of Arts in Liberal Studies, Bachelor of Arts in Theology, Master of Arts in Theology, and Master of Arts in Theology and Educational Ministry. The Institution is required to submit an Interim Report no later than July 1, 2024, on Core Component 4.B related to assessment of undergraduate programs, and a second report on Core Component 4.B related to assessment of graduate programs embedded with its next Assurance Filing.

Board Rationale

The Board based its action on the following findings made with regard to the Institution as well as the entire record before the Board:

Catholic Distance University (“the Institution”) meets the Eligibility Requirements and the Assumed Practices without any concerns.

The Institution meets, but with concerns, Criterion Four, Core Component 4.B, “the institution engages in ongoing assessment of student learning as part of its commitment to the educational outcomes of its students,” for the following reasons:

- The institution demonstrates an accurate understanding of what constitutes good learning assessment and has the skilled personnel and software tools needed to conduct assessment.
- The institution recently implemented a revised assessment process for general education that serves as the model for current efforts to update assessment in the degree programs.
- The institution needs to continue to demonstrate follow through and continued progress on its recent efforts with respect to assessment.

The Board of Trustees of the Higher Learning Commission has determined based on the preceding findings and evidence in the record that the Institution is otherwise in compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation, Eligibility Requirements, Assumed Practices, and Federal Compliance Requirements and meets the requirements for Initial Accreditation.

Next Steps in the HLC Review Process

Interim Report: The Institution is required to submit an Interim Report no later than July 1, 2024, on Core Component 4.B related to assessment of undergraduate programs.

Embedded Report: The Institution is required to submit an embedded report on Core Component 4.B related to assessment of graduate programs with its next Assurance Filing

Comprehensive Evaluation: The Institution is assigned to the Standard Pathway for its initial ten-year cycle. An institution in its first cycle of accreditation undergoes a comprehensive evaluation and is considered for reaffirmation of accreditation in Year 4 of the ten-year cycle. If reaffirmation of accreditation is granted in Year 4, the institution moves to Year 5 and continues on the Standard Pathway until it completes the ten-year cycle.¹ The Institution will host its next comprehensive evaluation for reaffirmation of accreditation (Year 4) in 2025-26.

HLC Disclosure Obligations

The Board action resulted in changes that will be reflected in the institution's Statement of Accreditation Status as well as the Institutional Status and Requirements Report. The Statement of Accreditation Status, including the dates of the last and next comprehensive evaluation visits, will be posted to the HLC website.

HLC policy² requires that a summary of Board actions be sent to appropriate state and federal agencies and accrediting associations. It also will be published on HLC's website. The summary will include this HLC action regarding the institution.

¹ INST.C.10.010, Substantive Requirements for Reaffirmation of Accreditation

² COMM.A.10.010, Notice of Accreditation Actions, HLC Public Notices and Public Statements

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, thank you in advance for your cooperation. If you have questions about any of the information in this letter, please contact your HLC Staff Liaison, Dr. Andrew Lootens-White.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara Gellman-Danley".

Barbara Gellman-Danley
President

Cc: Chair of the Board of Trustees, Catholic Distance University
Elizabeth Shaw, Associate Dean for Accreditation, Catholic Distance University
Evaluation Team Chair
IAC Hearing Committee Evaluation Team Chair
Andrew Lootens-White, Vice President of Accreditation Relations, Higher Learning
Commission
Anthea Sweeney, Vice President of Legal and Regulatory Affairs, Higher Learning
Commission
Sheree Bryant, Compliance Officer for Authorization and Proprietary School Programs,
West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission
Herman Bounds, Accreditation and State Liaison, Office of Postsecondary Education, U.S.
Department of Education