



THE COUNCIL OF
INDEPENDENT COLLEGES

CIC Degree Qualifications Profile Consortium

Invitation for Applications

THE COUNCIL OF INDEPENDENT COLLEGES (CIC) INVITES MEMBER colleges and universities to apply to participate in the CIC Degree Qualifications Profile Consortium. CIC has long been a strong advocate of institutional autonomy and a national leader of voluntary efforts to improve the quality of student learning. Consistent with this position and with its encouragement of evidence-based decision making and curricular reform, and with generous support from the Lumina Foundation, CIC has agreed to test the Lumina Foundation's concept of "Degree Qualifications Profile."

The Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) attempts to define what students should learn, understand, and know how to do at each degree level, no matter what the student's major. It is also an ambitious effort to provide a useful way for institutions to demonstrate the quality of their academic programs and student learning outcomes without the intrusion of state or federally mandated standards or narrow prescriptions of content. A description of the DQP may be found in the Lumina Foundation report, **The Degree Qualifications Profile**, which is available along with additional information at www.degreeprofile.org.

One Dupont Circle, Suite 320 ♦ Washington, DC 20036-1142
Phone (202) 466.7230 ♦ Fax (202) 466.7238 ♦ www.cic.edu

Goals

With the support of the Lumina Foundation, CIC will form a Consortium of 25 member colleges and universities to explore the extent to which the Degree Qualifications Profile has applicability in the independent, liberal arts-oriented college context. The project seeks to determine whether using a common framework for the meaning of the bachelor's degree across a wide variety of U.S. colleges and universities—specifically, the DQP—will lead to improved student learning and higher graduation rates.

CIC's long experience with the Collegiate Learning Assessment Consortium suggests an organizational model for a national, voluntary, and collaborative framework for common degree expectations that acknowledges the diversity among private colleges and universities as well as the non-federalized system of higher education that has served the country so well. CIC member institutions span the variety of missions, values, and educational approaches of independent colleges and universities.

Because CIC institutions enroll and graduate impressive numbers of first-generation, low-income, racial and ethnic minority, and other underserved students whose success is imperative to achieve our national goals, this project also may help to determine whether the application of the DQP framework will better serve these students in multiple institutional settings.

CIC hopes that this project will help both CIC and the Lumina Foundation to answer the following questions:

- Will the adoption of Degree Qualifications lead to an increase in the country's degree production?
- Will the adoption of Degree Qualifications lead to real improvement in student learning?
- To what extent is the alignment of subject-specific learning outcomes and transferable skills feasible in independent higher education, given the diversity of approaches at different institutions?
- How might the DQP framework be made acceptable to skeptical faculty members and administrators?
- Can the DQP facilitate better public understanding of the value of a college degree?
- How can students move from one institution to another with the assurance that the qualifications for earning a degree from one are "harmonized" with qualifications at other institutions?
- Can degrees be harmonized using the DQP without being standardized?
- How would the DQP framework be applied in liberal arts degree programs in comparison with professional or career-related programs?
- Would the use of the DQP help independent colleges educate underserved students, such as students of color, first-generation and low-income students, adults, and those not well prepared for college learning?

The DQP Consortium

CIC invites member colleges and universities to apply to participate in a “CIC/DQP Consortium” that will explore ways in which Lumina’s Degree Qualifications Profile might ensure consistent quality in the academic programs of liberal arts-oriented independent colleges and universities and clarify student learning outcomes at the undergraduate level. Each institution will be engaged in an individual project that is consistent with its mission and strategic plan and that tests the applicability of the DQP. Examples of the kinds of projects in which the usefulness of the DQP might be considered are:

- Revising the general education curriculum;
- Applying specific learning outcomes across schools or departments;
- Developing or modifying student learning goals for the institution;
- Aligning shared learning expectations for liberal arts and professional programs;
- Aligning shared learning expectations for the sciences and the humanities;
- Determining differences among the sciences, social sciences, and the humanities;
- Exploring how clearer articulation of student learning outcomes will help students choose a major;
- Studying whether students’ understanding of what the institution expects them to learn leads to higher retention and graduation rates;
- Strengthening particular major programs;
- Creating minors or concentrations within academic programs;
- Improving career planning and placement;
- Improving the process for transfer and articulation;
- Exploring the potential relationship between degree frameworks and improvements in advising for the major or for general education requirements;
- Examining the comparability of courses across study abroad programs; and
- Developing consistent criteria for course syllabi.

For CIC institutions, the Consortium has great potential to bring together several strands of the contemporary discussion of higher education issues—accountability; assessment; achieving smooth transfer from one institution to another; awarding credit for prior learning; equalizing the proportion of students from racial, ethnic, gender, and income groups who earn baccalaureate degrees; and concerns about America’s world leadership in higher education—and could lead to valuable insights about the connections among these different issues.

Consortium Activities

The CIC/DQP Consortium is an unusual opportunity for 25 colleges and universities selected from the CIC membership to provide national leadership in exploring the Degree Qualifications Profile's potential to make significant improvements in American higher education. During the two-year period of the project the participating institutions will be a valuable resource to CIC and the Lumina Foundation in determining whether the degree qualifications concept merits further encouragement or support.

Each selected institution will appoint a team to include the chief academic officer or other senior academic administrator, a faculty leader with a demonstrated commitment to student learning, and the person at the institution who coordinates assessment of student learning. CIC will convene the teams for three two-day meetings that will include participation by two of the four authors of *Qualifications Profile*: Peter Ewell, vice president of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), and Paul Gaston, Trustees Professor and former provost at Kent State University, as well as members of the Lumina and CIC staffs. Significant readings will be mailed to the teams prior to each meeting, and each meeting will include opportunities to share the work of Consortium member institutions. Costs of participation in all three Consortium meetings will be covered by the Lumina Foundation's generous grant to CIC.

On the agenda for the first meeting will be the European inspiration for aspects of the DQP, the thinking that led to the DQP, the nature of the challenges for higher education, and strategies that might lead to the use of DQP to improve student learning. The meeting also will include structured team consultations with facilitators—experts who understand the purpose and use of Degree Qualification Profiles—in order to focus the individual projects and to create alliances with other institutions. The teams will leave the first Consortium meeting with more specific plans of action related to their projects to be taken back to campus and a mechanism to advise and consult with other participants.

The consultants and CIC staff will help teams progress on their projects during the time between meetings, conducting consultations with each campus (in person, through conference calls, by emails, or webinars) to advise team members, various constituencies, and relevant campus committees.

At the completion of the project, CIC will give the Lumina Foundation a report that will provide a list of projects that illustrate how Degree Qualifications Profiles can be applied to independent higher education institutions, derived from the experiences of the 25 participating institutions. The report will be published on the CIC website and will be distributed in other ways.

Benefits of Participation

Institutions selected to participate in the CIC/DQP Consortium will receive the following benefits:

- **Participation in a 25-institution Consortium.** The CIC/DQP Consortium will provide a critical network for institutions to explore practical applications of the DQP framework, develop best practices, and collaborate with peer institutions. Participants will benefit from the guidance of expert consultants as well as from Lumina Foundation and CIC staff members. Institutions will form clusters within the Consortium around similar campus projects for collaboration and support.
- **Consortium Meetings.** The CIC/DQP Consortium will meet three times: an initial meeting March 8–10, 2012, to launch Consortium activities and refine institutional action plans; a mid-point meeting October 18–20, 2012, to review progress and revise action plans as needed; and a final meeting August 1–3, 2013, to summarize project results and lessons learned. The meetings will provide opportunities for face-to-face interaction with colleagues from other campuses and for collaborative work to achieve project objectives. CIC will cover lodging, meals, and meeting materials for three-person campus teams participating in the meetings. In addition, a travel stipend of up to \$400 per team member will help defray some of the college's costs of sending team members to the meetings.
- **Campus Consultations.** Each participating institution will receive at least one campus consultation between Consortium meetings. Consortium consultants Peter Ewell and Paul Gaston are co-authors of the Lumina report, *Qualifications Profile*, and experts in improving institutional quality and educational effectiveness. Depending on timing, location, and need, consultation visits may occur in person, online, or by phone.
- **Periodic Web Conferences.** In conjunction with Consortium consultants, Lumina Foundation staff, and other noted experts, periodic web conferences will be held throughout the year to supplement Consortium meetings. These web-based workshops will be available at no cost to Consortium members.
- **Pioneering Degree Qualifications Profile Frameworks.** The DQP is a new approach to define what students should learn, understand, and know at each degree level. As a result, effective strategies and best practices are still being developed. Institutions participating in the CIC/DQP Consortium will be pioneers in the effort to determine how the DQP framework can best be used to improve the educational quality and student learning outcomes in independent colleges and universities.
- **Technical support.** Staff from CIC and the Lumina Foundation will provide technical support to participating colleges throughout the project.

Eligibility

To be eligible for participation, applicants must be Institutional Members of CIC and must be currently engaged in a project that could be enhanced or improved by use of the Degree Qualifications Profile framework. For example, the institution might be engaged in the revision of

the general education program, examination of the program review process, creation of guidelines for the development of new academic majors, launching an institutional assessment project, or some other process related to improving student learning. While the focus is on undergraduate programs, institutions that also offer higher degrees are eligible.

Selection Criteria

A CIC selection committee will choose institutional participants that:

- Have a proven record of using evidence of student learning to improve teaching and learning;
- Offer plans that are likely to help CIC and the Lumina Foundation determine the possibilities of applying the Degree Qualifications Profile to improve student learning outcomes and increase graduation rates; and
- Reflect the diversity of independent higher education.

Expectations of Participating Institutions

If selected, the institution will agree to:

- Make a good faith effort to apply the Degree Qualification Profile to the ways the institution describes degree requirements and to a significant project described in the application;
- Send the three-person team to participate in the three meetings of the Consortium (transportation up to \$400 per person per meeting, lodging, and meals will be provided by CIC); institutions are welcome to send additional team members to the meetings at their own expense;
- Collect, analyze, and share evidence of student learning with Consortium members;
- Submit written progress reports to CIC every six months;
- Participate in webinars, conference calls, or other activities to share information;
- Provide local arrangements for consultant visits;
- Provide a final report describing the outcome of the project, including a reflection on the successes and disappointments of the experience with possible recommendations for future projects;
- Permit the inclusion of information about its project in publications about best practices, including a report to be released at the conclusion of the project in 2013; and
- Identify the funded activities as supported by CIC and the Lumina Foundation in all project materials and publicity.

Timeline

October 1, 2011	Applications due
November 1, 2011	Selection of participating teams announced
March 8–10, 2012	First meeting of the Consortium
April–July, 2012	Consultations with participating institutions
July 27, 2012	First progress report due to CIC
October 18–20, 2012	Second meeting of the Consortium
February 28, 2013	Second progress report due
June 28, 2013	Draft final report due
August 1–3, 2013	Final meeting of the Consortium
October 31, 2013	Final report due, including reflections on the project
December, 2013	Publication of project results

Application Instructions

Interested CIC member colleges and universities should submit an application with supporting materials to CIC by **October 1, 2011**. Each institution should make its case for participation in the CIC/DQP Consortium based on the challenges and strategic priorities that it faces, the relevance of the degree qualifications concept to those challenges and priorities, and the potential contribution the institution can make to a better understanding of the usefulness of the degree qualifications concept to higher education. The application should explain how the team would apply the Degree Qualifications Profile at the institution, the context in which the DQP would be used, and a proposed timeline for the project.

The application consists of four parts: (a) a cover letter from the president, (b) a completed Application Form that includes a description of the institution's proposed team members, (c) a two-page narrative describing the proposed project and addressing the questions listed below, and (d) a one-page action plan and timeline for implementing the project. The completed application with supporting materials should be submitted by email or printed and sent by fax or mail to CIC at the address listed below by **October 1, 2011**.

A. Cover Letter

A cover letter from the president should indicate the institution's support of the application and commitment to the project goals and implementation.

B. Application Form and Team Description

On the Application Form that follows, please identify the three team members and briefly describe why each person was selected for the team and what contribution each will make to the project. It is

anticipated that teams normally will consist of the chief academic officer, a faculty leader with strong commitment to student learning, and the person who oversees the collection and evaluation of data on student learning.

C. Proposal Narrative

In no more than two pages, please describe the specific project you propose to use to apply the Degree Qualifications Profile at your institution. The description should address the following questions:

1. What institutional initiative already underway will the DQP enhance or supplement?
2. How will the DQP enhance or supplement the initiative?
3. What are the goals for the project?
4. What steps will be taken to implement the project?
5. How will success in meeting the goals be measured?
6. How will the project benefit the institution?
7. What do you anticipate will be the benefits of participation in the CIC/DQP Consortium?

D. Action Plan and Timeline

In no more than one page, please outline the action plan and timeline for implementing the project. Preference will be given to projects that can be completed by June 2013.

Application Submission

Please send the completed Application Form, along with a Cover Letter of support from the president, the Proposal Narrative (no more than two pages), and Action Plan and Timeline (one page) by **October 1, 2011** to:

CIC/DQP Consortium
Council of Independent Colleges
One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 320
Washington, DC 20036-1142
Fax: (202) 466-7238 Email: DQP@cic.nche.edu

Questions?

For questions about the CIC/DQP Consortium and application procedures, please contact Terry Grimes, CIC senior advisor, at tgrimes@cic.nche.edu or (910) 305-9606.

*The Council of Independent Colleges is grateful to the Lumina Foundation
for its generous support of this project.*

CIC Degree Qualifications Profile Consortium

APPLICATION FORM

Application Deadline: October 1, 2011

Name of Institution: _____

Primary Contact Name: _____

Title: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ Email: _____

Please provide the names, titles, and contact information for the three team members from your institution, along with a brief explanation of what each team member will contribute to the project.

1. Chief Academic Officer or Other Senior Academic Leader

Name: _____

Title: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Expected contribution: _____

2. Faculty Leader

Name: _____

Title: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Expected contribution: _____

3. Assessment Officer

Name: _____

Title: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Expected contribution: _____

*Please send (a) the completed Application Form, (b) a Cover Letter of support from the president, (c) the Proposal Narrative (no more than two pages), and (d) an Action Plan and Timeline (one page) by **October 1, 2011** to:*

CIC/DQP Consortium ♦ Council of Independent Colleges
One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 320 ♦ Washington, DC 20036-1142
Fax: (202) 466-7238 ♦ Email: DQP@cic.nche.edu