



Guidelines

Accreditation Activities Guidelines

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I. Purpose

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE or the Commission) seeks to ensure that accreditation activities are fair and consistent processes and that those activities are clearly described. These guidelines describe the range of accreditation activities conducted by the Commission including reviews, reports, and visits.

II. Application for Candidate Status

The Commission will begin the Application for Candidate Status process when an institution submits the application with all required documentation.

Information Session

Applicant institutions are required to attend an Information Session at the Commission offices in Philadelphia, PA. The Information Session is designed to (1) review the procedures for attaining MSCHE accreditation, (2) learn about MSCHE requirements and expectations, (3) establish a timeline for submission of a formal application.

Accreditation Readiness Report (ARR)

If an applicant institution progresses through the Application for Candidate Status process, it will submit one or more Accreditation Readiness Reports (ARR) and compile supporting evidence documenting compliance with the Commission's standards for accreditation, requirements of affiliation, policies and procedures, and federal compliance requirements.

Applicant Commission Liaison Visit

The purpose of the Applicant Commission Liaison Visit is to review and discuss the information in the required application materials and to verify that the institution is ready to continue the application for candidate status process. This visit is conducted by the Commission staff liaison.

Applicant Assessment Team Visit

The purpose of the Applicant Assessment Team visit is to validate the information provided in the ARR and supporting evidence and to determine whether the institution is prepared to be granted Candidate for Accreditation Status by the Commission. This visit

is conducted by a team of peer evaluators selected by the Commission. The Commission staff liaison usually accompanies the team to provide guidance as well as interpretation and clarification of Commission policies and procedures.

Candidate Progress Visit

The purpose of a Candidate Progress Visit is to determine if the Candidate institution is making adequate progress toward meeting Commission standards for accreditation and requirements of affiliation. This visit occurs after the submission of an ARR. This visit is conducted by peer evaluator(s) selected by the Commission.

III. Self-Study Evaluation and On-Site Evaluation Visit

The Self-Study Evaluation is the comprehensive review in the eight-year accreditation review cycle. During self-study, the institution documents compliance with Commission standards for accreditation, requirements of affiliation, policies and procedures, and federal compliance requirements. The self-study process culminates in a written Self-Study Report and Evidence which are reviewed by a team of peer evaluators and verified at the On-Site Evaluation Visit.

Related Visits: Self-Study Preparation Visit, Chair's Preliminary Visit, Self-Study Site Visits, On-Site Evaluation Visit

IV. Mid-Point Peer Review (MPPR)

The Commission will conduct a Mid-Point Peer Review (MPPR) midway through the accreditation review cycle to review accumulated financial data, student achievement data, and responses to Commission recommendations (if requested) submitted by the institution through a series of Annual Institutional Updates (AIU).

V. Monitoring Activities

A. Annual Institutional Update (AIU)

The Annual Institutional Update (AIU) is a mechanism for ongoing monitoring used by the Commission. Institutions submit and verify key data indicators and upload required documents on an annual basis.

B. Recommendations Response

The institution will provide narrative responses to Commission recommendations if requested in a prior accreditation action. The responses will be reviewed by peer evaluators in the MPPR.

C. Follow-Up Reports and Visits

The types of follow-up reports and visits are described below.

Supplemental Information Report (SIR)

A supplemental information report is requested when the institution is in compliance

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but the Commission needs further evidence that the institution is carrying out activities that are being planned or are newly implemented.

Focused Report and Focused Team Visit

A focused report is requested when a serious concern about compliance arises from the Mid-Point Peer Review (MPPR). A focused report is always accompanied by a focused team visit. The purpose of the visit is to verify the information provided in the focused report. The visit is conducted by peer evaluators and the Commission staff liaison may accompany the team.

Monitoring Report and Follow-Up Team Visit

A monitoring report is required with warning or probation actions. A monitoring report is always accompanied by a follow-up team visit. A follow-up team visit may also occur following reaffirmation after warning or probation actions.

Show Cause Report and Show Cause Visit

A show cause report is required when an institution is required to show cause why its candidate status or accreditation should not be withdrawn. The institution is also required to submit a teach-out plan and teach-out agreement(s) as directed. A show cause report is always accompanied by a show cause visit.

Commission Liaison Guidance Visit

A commission liaison guidance visit will occur with all non-compliance actions. The purpose of a Commission Liaison Guidance Visit is to provide information and guidance to the institutional community in understanding and addressing the Commission's expectations for reporting and monitoring activities. Commission liaison guidance visits focus on the Commission's standards for accreditation, requirements of affiliation, policies and procedures, and federal compliance requirements. Other staff and/or Commission representatives may accompany the Commission staff liaison or conduct the visit.

D. Out of Cycle Monitoring

An out of cycle monitoring review will occur if the Commission has concerns about the institution's ongoing compliance with the Commission's standards for accreditation, requirements of affiliation, policies and procedures, or federal compliance requirements. A visit may occur if a determination of compliance requires on-site verification.

E. Appeals Panel Hearing Review

An Appeals Panel Hearing will occur when an institution submits an Intent to Appeal in accordance with the Commission's procedures *Appeals from Adverse Accrediting Actions*.

F. Teach Out Plan and/or Agreement(s)

A review of a teach-out plan and agreement(s) will occur in conjunction with a

substantive change request or as directed in a Commission accreditation action.

VI. Substantive Change Review

A substantive change review will occur when an institution submits a substantive change request form. Certain changes are considered complex and are processed under different procedures as explained in the *Substantive Change Policy* and *Substantive Change Procedures*.

A *Substantive Change Visit* will occur as part of the approval process as required by Commission policy or procedure (*Establishment of Additional Location, Establishment of Branch Campus*). The purpose of the visit is to verify that the location has the personnel, facilities, and resources as stated in the request form. This visit will be conducted by a Commission staff member or by peer evaluator(s) selected by the Commission. A Commission staff member may or may not accompany peer evaluators.

A *Complex Substantive Change Visit* will occur as required by Commission policy or procedure (change of legal status, ownership, etc.) and in federal regulation (*34 CFR §602.24(b)*). This visit will be conducted by peer evaluators selected by the Commission. A Commission staff member may or may not accompany peer evaluators.

A *Substantive Change Follow-Up Visit* will occur if the Commission requests a follow-up report in its accreditation action.

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Federal Regulations: §602.18(e) *Ensuring consistency in decision-making*; §602.19 *Monitoring and reevaluation*; §602.22 *Substantive change*

Related Documents: *Accreditation Actions Policy*; *Accreditation Actions Procedures*; *Accreditation Activities Guidelines*; *Follow-Up Reports Guidelines*; *Follow-Up Visits Procedures*; *Peer Evaluators Policy*; *Peer Evaluators Procedures*; *Substantive Change Policy*; *Substantive Change Procedures*

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