



Middle States Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools  
624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104-2680  
Telephone: (267) 284-5000 www.cess-msa.org

## POLICY 1.10 ETHICS AND INTEGRITY

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The Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools seek to conduct their accreditation activities and services in an ethical manner and with the utmost integrity.

### 1.10.1. Distribution of Institutional Documents to Third Parties.

1.10.1.1. The Commissions consider documents related to the accreditation of accredited and candidate institutions to be privileged information and the rightful property of Commissions and the institution to which the documents apply.

1.10.1.2. Subject to lawful court order, the records of any present, prospective, or former member institution of the Commission on Elementary Schools and/or the Commission on Secondary Schools shall be confidential and shall not be disclosed outside the Commissions and their staff without the prior written consent of the governing authority or the head of the institution concerned or in cases in which the Commission(s) has adopted provisions with respect hereto.

1.10.1.3. As an exception, all information and documents pertaining to postsecondary accredited and candidate institutions that have declared their intent to use their accreditation by the Commission on Secondary Schools to establish eligibility to participate in federal, Title IV financial aid program shall be shared with the United States Secretary of Education, the U.S. Department of Education, state, Commonwealth, and/or or territory within which the institution is located, and other accrediting agencies recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education

### 1.10.2. Public Disclosure of Information About Member Institutions. Certain information pertaining to institutions that are accredited, are a candidate for

accreditation ,or have sought accreditation by the Commission(s) will be made available to the public. This information shall be limited to the following regarding each institution:

- a. The name of the institution and contact information;
- b. The name of the institution's chief administrative officer;
- c. The institution's membership and accreditation status;
- d. The date of the institution's initial accreditation, the date the last accreditation action was taken, and the date on which the institution's accreditation will expire;
- e. A general description of accreditation actions the Commissions may take regarding an institution;
- f. The dates of on which the next accreditation maintenance activities are due; and
- g. The date on which the Commission(s) will conduct the next accreditation review of the institution.

1.10.3. Withholding Information on Member Institutions. Upon advice of legal counsel, the Commissions retain the right to withhold public disclosure of information if potential legal action is involved.

1.10.4. Advertising and Reporting Candidate and Accredited Status. All accredited institutions, or individuals acting on their behalf, are expected to exhibit integrity and responsibility in advertising and presenting an institution's status as an accredited institution or a candidate for accreditation. If an institution accredited by the Commission on Elementary Schools and/or the Commission on Secondary Schools elects to make public disclosure of its status as an accredited institution or candidate for accreditation, it shall make all necessary efforts to ensure the following:

- a. The educational programs and services offered by the institution should be the primary emphasis of all advertisements, publications, promotional literature, and recruitment activities.
- b. All statements and representations are clear, factually accurate, and current.
- c. Official publications are readily available and accurately depict: institutional purposes and objectives; admissions requirements and procedures; basic information on educational programs and services; graduation/completion requirements; rules and regulations for conduct; the

grading system and related policies; tuition, fees, and other program costs; opportunities and requirements for financial assistance; and other institutional policies pertaining to students.

- d. When the institution's status as an accredited institution or candidate for accreditation is announced in institutional publications, it must be accurately stated and include the following: identification of the accrediting agency as 1) the Middle States Commission on Elementary Schools, the Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools, and/or the Middle States Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools; the accrediting Commission(s)' name, address, and telephone number; and the specific instructional programs and grade levels included in the institution's accreditation.
- e. No statement is made about possible future accreditation or any other status not yet conferred by the Commission(s).
- f. The phrase "fully accredited" is not used, since no partial accreditation is possible.

#### 1.10.5. Announcements Regarding Accreditation Status.

1.10.5.1. Announcements by Elementary and Secondary Institutions. Any elementary or secondary institution that has been granted a term of accreditation is authorized to use the phrase "Accredited for Grades \_\_\_\_ by either:

- The Middle States Commission on Elementary Schools;
- The Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools; or
- The Middle States Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools,

3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104, (267) 284-5000," on institutional publications, student transcripts, and institutional advertising until such time as accreditation has either lapsed or been removed.

The following may be used on the institution's letterhead: "Accredited for Grades \_\_\_\_ by either:

- The Middle States Commission on Elementary Schools";
- The Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools"; or
- The Middle States Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools"

1.10.5.2. Announcements by Postsecondary Institutions. Any postsecondary institution that has been granted a term of accreditation will use the phrase "Accredited for postsecondary, non-degree granting, career and technology programs by the Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, 3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104, (267) 284-5000," on institutional publications, student transcripts, and institutional advertising until such time as accreditation has either lapsed or been removed.

The following may be used on letterhead: "Accredited for postsecondary, non-degree granting career and technology programs by the Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools."

1.10.6 Announcements Regarding Candidate Status. Any institution that has been offered and has accepted Candidacy for Accreditation is authorized to use on institutional publications, student transcripts, and institutional advertising until such time as the candidacy period has lapsed or the institution has achieved accredited status the phrase "Candidate for Accreditation by:

- The Middle States Commission on Elementary Schools";
- The Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools"; or
- The Middle States Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools"

1.10.7. Breach of Institutional Integrity.

1.10.7.1. When information is presented to the Commission(s) that an accredited or candidate institution is misrepresenting its status or otherwise engaging in unethical conduct, the Commission(s) shall review the circumstances and provide the institution with the opportunity to respond. If the evidence confirms that the institution is misrepresenting its status or otherwise engaging in unethical conduct, the Commission(s) will direct the institution to make public correction of the incorrect or misleading information via the same vehicle or a vehicle similar to that used to disseminate the misrepresented status information.

1.10.7.2. Should the institution continue to misrepresent its status or engage in unethical conduct, the Commission(s) will direct the institution to "show cause"

why the institution’s accreditation or status as a candidate for accreditation should not be removed. If, after receiving the show cause letter the institution continues to misrepresent its status or otherwise engage in unethical conduct, the Commission(s) shall take an action in accordance with MSCESS Policy 1.3, Accreditation Actions. If the Commission(s) acts to remove the institution’s accreditation, the institution shall be notified of its right to appeal the decision in accordance with MSCESS Policy 1.4, Appeals from Adverse Accrediting Actions.

1.10.7.3. In the case of postsecondary institutions, any institution suspected of being out of compliance with the requirements and responsibilities included in the Commissions' policies, committing fraud, or abusing its accredited status shall be reported immediately to the U.S. Secretary of Education.

1.10.8. Disclosure of Information to the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools. It is the obligation of every accredited institution and candidate for accreditation to provide the Commissions with access to all aspects of its operation, with due regard for the rights of individual privacy. The institution shall provide complete and accurate information with respect to the institution, including reports of other accrediting, licensing, and auditing agencies. Failure to do so, or failure to make complete, accurate, and honest disclosure is sufficient reason to deny or remove the institution’s accreditation or candidacy for accreditation.

1.10.9. Nonmember Institutions Claiming Accreditation Status. The Commission(s) shall exercise all remedies provided by applicable statutes when institutions not accredited or offered candidacy by the Commission(s) inaccurately claim to be accredited by the Commission(s) or a candidate for accreditation by the Commission(s).

| Action           | Date           | Notes  |
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| Initial Adoption | April 15, 2011 | Adoption as a MSA-CESS policy; new policy for MSA-CES and revised policy for MSA-CSS |
| Revisions        |                |  |
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