



POLICY 1.3 ACCREDITATION ACTIONS

The Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools are the sole authorities for determining the accreditation of their member institutions. The Commission on Elementary Schools and the Commission on Secondary Schools, although governed by the same policies and accreditation procedures, take accreditation actions regarding their respective member institutions independently of each other.

1.3.1. General. The accreditation actions of the Commissions are final. However, institutions for which a Commission(s) has taken an adverse accrediting action (denial of Candidate status to an institution, denial of initial Accreditation, Removal of Accreditation, or Removal of Candidate for Accreditation status) have the right to appeal such decision under the provisions of MSCCESS Policy 1.4, Appeals from Adverse Accrediting Actions.

1.3.1.1. Accreditation and candidacy actions shall be based on relevant and documented information and evidence provided to the appropriate Commission(s) by institutions and by the Commissions' accreditation visiting teams, readers, advisory committees, staff, and other verifiable sources of information.

1.3.1.2. For candidacy purposes, this information can include, but is not limited to evidence of the degree to which the institution meets the Standards for Candidacy.

1.3.1.3. For accreditation purposes, this information can include, but is not limited to:

- a. Evidence of the degree to which the institution meets the Standards for Accreditation;
- b. Evidence of the degree to which the institution meets the requirements of the accreditation protocol used for self-study and accreditation; and

- c. Evidence of the degree to which the institution is making progress toward achieving its growth and improvement objectives and implementing its action plans for achieving its objectives.

1.3.2. Accreditation Actions for Previously Accredited Institutions.

1.3.2.1. Accreditation. Accreditation is granted when the Commission(s) have determined that an institution 1) meets all of the Standards for Accreditation of the Commission on Elementary and/or Secondary Schools, 2) adheres to all applicable policies, and 3) meets the requirements of the protocol selected for self-study and accreditation.

1.3.2.2. Accreditation with Stipulation(s). Accreditation with Stipulation(s) is granted when the Commission(s) have determined that an institution meets all of the Standards for Accreditation of the Commissions on Elementary and/or Secondary Schools, but does not meet one or more of the Indicators for the MSCESS Standards for Accreditation, one or more applicable MSCESS policies, and/or one or more requirements of the protocol selected for self-study and accreditation.

1.3.2.3. Probationary Accreditation. Probationary Accreditation is granted when the Commission(s) have determined that an institution does not: 1) meet one or more of the Standards for Accreditation of the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools, 2) adhere to one or more MSCESS policies, and/or 3) meet multiple requirements of the protocol selected for self-study and accreditation.

1.3.2.4. Accreditation Removed

- a. Definition: The Commission(s) may remove the accreditation of a previously accredited institution for failure to:
 - 1) Correct the stipulations and/or issues that led to the granting of Accreditation with Stipulations or Probationary Accreditation;
 - 2) Continue to meet the MSA Standards for Accreditation;
 - 3) Adhere to the Commissions' policies;
 - 4) Adhere to timelines for self-study, accreditation maintenance, and planning expectations;
 - 5) To submit reports or to host special visits required by the Commissions; and/or
 - 6) To pay annual dues and applicable fees in a timely manner.

1.3.3. Accreditation Actions for Candidate Institutions

1.3.3.1. Accreditation. Accreditation is granted when the Commission(s) have determined that an institution 1) meets all of the Standards for Accreditation of the Commission on Elementary and/or Secondary Schools, 2) adheres to all applicable policies, and 3) meets the requirements of the protocol selected for self-study and accreditation.

1.3.3.2. Accreditation with Stipulation(s). Accreditation with Stipulation(s) is granted when the Commission(s) have determined that an institution meets all of the Standards for Accreditation of the Commissions on Elementary and/or Secondary Schools, but does not meet one or more of the Indicators for the MSCESS Standards for Accreditation, one or more applicable MSCESS policies, and/or one or more requirements of the protocol selected for self-study and accreditation.

1.3.3.3. Accreditation by Recognition of Accreditation by another Agency. Accreditation by Recognition is granted when the Commission(s) have determined that an institution that is accredited by another accrediting agency 1) meets all of the Standards for Accreditation of the Commission on Elementary and/or Secondary Schools and 2) the institution meets the requirements for Accreditation by the recognized agency that have been deemed equivalent to the requirements of the Commissions.

a. The Institution's Responsibilities Regarding Accreditation by Recognition. It is the institution's responsibility to understand or seek from the Commissions' staff an understanding of what is required to be granted Accreditation by Recognition.

1) The requirements include submitting the following documents:

- a) An MSA-CESS Registration form;
- b) The most recent Report of a Visiting Team of the other accrediting agency and any follow-up materials related to that team visit;
- c) Any additional documents requested by the Commissions' staff related to the most recent accreditation visit and action by the other accrediting agency;
- d) Checklist of Compliance with the appropriate MSA-CESS Standards for Accreditation;

- e) Documentation of the validity and the expiration of the term of accreditation by the other accrediting agency; and
 - f) The fee for processing the request for Accreditation by Recognition [see current dues and fees schedule].
- 2) Because the granting of MSA-CESS Accreditation by Recognition is based on the accreditation by another accrediting agency, the institution must maintain its accreditation by the other agency, including paying all dues and fees and meeting all requirements for maintaining its accreditation by the other agency.
- 3) If, after being granted MSA-CESS Accreditation by Recognition the institution does not desire to maintain its accreditation by the other agency, the institution must:
- a) Notify the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools in writing within 30 calendar days of its notification to the other accrediting agency of its decision to withdraw from accreditation by the other accrediting agency;
 - b) Comply with all requirements for maintaining its MSA-CESS accreditation [See MSA-CESS Policy 5.4, Accreditation Maintenance Requirements; and
 - c) Complete a self-study and earn reaccreditation by MSA-CESS before the end of its term of accreditation.
- b. The Responsibilities of the Commissions' Staff Regarding Accreditation by Recognition. The Commissions' staff shall:
- 1) Review all documentation submitted for Accreditation by Recognition;
 - 2) Ensure the documentation is complete and accurate;
 - 3) Ensure the institution is in compliance with the appropriate MSA-CESS Standards for Accreditation; and
 - 4) Submit to the appropriate Membership and Accreditation Committee a recommendation regarding an accreditation action to the appropriate Commission(s).
- c. The Responsibilities of the Commissions Regarding Accreditation by Recognition. The Commissions shall either:

- 1) Grant Accreditation by Recognition to the institution for a term of accreditation commensurate with the term granted by the other accrediting agency; or
- 2) Deny Accreditation by Recognition for cause.

1.3.3.4. Accreditation Decision Postponed (MSA-CESS Staff Action).

- a. Accreditation Decision Postponed is a staff action that may be taken in lieu of a recommendation that accreditation is denied because, in the judgment of the Chair of a Visiting Team and the staff of the Commissions determine that a candidate institution does not meet multiple Standards for Accreditation and/or requirements of the protocol selected for self-study and accreditation.
- b. The Chair of the Visiting Team will write and present to the Commissions' staff a report of the Team's visit, including the findings that the institution does not meet multiple Standards for Accreditation and/or requirements of the protocol.
- c. However, if the Chair of the Visiting Team and the Commissions' staff agree that it is reasonable to expect that the institution can correct the noted deficiencies within a period of six to 12 month period and, therefore, making it possible for the Commissions' staff to make an accreditation recommendation.
- d. The institution will be notified in writing the actions it must take to correct the noted deficiencies and the time period in which a report of the corrections must be taken.
- e. Following receipt of the institution's report of actions taken, the President of the Commissions will direct that a mini-onsite visit is conducted to confirm the content of the report. If possible, the Chair of the Visiting Team to the institution will be included in the mini visit.
- f. If the visitors confirm that the required corrective actions have been taken, they will write a report that includes a recommendation for an accreditation action to be taken by the Commission(s). The visitors' report, together with the institution's report of corrective actions taken, will be appended to the

Report of the Visiting Team, and the report and recommendation will undergo the standard review process for an accreditation recommendation.

- g. If the visitors cannot confirm that the institution has taken the corrective actions required and, therefore, still does not meet all of the Standards for Accreditation and/or the requirements of the protocol, the visitors' report will include a recommendation that accreditation of the institution is denied.

1.3.3.5. Accreditation Denied. Accreditation Denied is granted when the Commission(s) has determined that an institution does not meet 1) all of the Standards for Accreditation of the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools, 2) all of the applicable MSCESS policies, 3) and/or multiple requirements of the protocol selected for self-study and accreditation and, 4) in the judgment of the Commission(s) is not likely to be able to meet the requirements for Accreditation or Accreditation with Stipulations within a 12-month period.

1.3.4. Voluntary Withdrawal of Accreditation and Membership

1.3.4.1. Because the decision to become a candidate or an accredited member of the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools is voluntary, an institution may choose to relinquish its accredited status and membership at any time. Institutions wishing to withdraw from membership shall submit this request in writing.

1.3.4.2. If an institution voluntarily relinquishes its accreditation and membership, it shall remove all references in its publications, materials, and website that the institution is accredited or a candidate for accreditation by and a member of Candidate for Accreditation and a member of the Middle States Association's Commission on Elementary and Secondary Schools. Failure to remove all references within 90 days of withdrawal of accreditation and membership may result in legal action by the Commission.

1.3.5. Procedural Actions. Procedural actions the Commissions may take are:

1.3.5.1. Monitoring and Non-Compliance Actions. Monitoring actions require the institution to submit to closer scrutiny by the Commissions including follow-up reports, special visits, shortened terms of accreditation, and probationary status. The two monitoring actions are as follows:

- Accreditation with Stipulations

- Probationary Accreditation

1.3.5.2. Show Cause Actions.

- a. Definition: A show cause action requires an institution to show cause why its accreditation should not be removed. This action offers the institution a final chance to offer evidence or explain reasons why accreditation should be maintained.
- b. A show cause action may be taken when one or more of the Expectations for Accredited Institutions outlined in Policy 1.2. is/are not met. See Policy 3.7.4. for further detail on potential actions on the institution's response to the show cause action.
- c. The Commission(s)' Responsibilities Regarding Show Cause Action. The Commissions(s) shall notify the institution in writing by certified mail, within 30 days of the Commission(s)' action the basis for the show cause action.
 - 1) If, in the judgment of the Commissions' staff, the institution has presented acceptable evidence that it has resolved the issues satisfactorily, the staff shall notify the institution, in writing, that it will recommend to the appropriate Commission(s) at the next meeting that the institution's accreditation be changed to Accreditation.
 - 2) If, in the judgment of the Commissions' staff, the documentation presented by the institution is only partially acceptable evidence that it has resolved the issues satisfactorily, the institution shall be asked to submit further clarification and/or receive a Special Visit. The costs associated with a Special Visit shall be borne by the institution.
 - 3) If, in the judgment of the Commissions' staff the institution has not submitted acceptable documentation and evidence that it has taken action to resolve the issues within the designated time period, the staff may recommend to the Commission(s) that the institution is 1) granted additional time to resolve the issues satisfactorily, or 2) the institution's accreditation is changed to Probationary Accreditation or Accreditation Removed.

d. The Institution's Responsibility Regarding Show Cause Action.

- 1) The institution shall have the burden of proving that it has met the show cause requirements and that it has remedied the conditions that prompted the show cause action.
- 2) It is the responsibility of the institution to seek clarification on what is required, to take advantage of Commissions' resources such as workshops, documents, staff technical support, and/or networking with other member schools, and to take the necessary corrective action.
- 3) The head of the institution may request to appear alone or with counsel or other representative before the Commission(s) to make a personal presentation of the institution's stance prior to final action being taken.

e. Action on the Institution's Response to the Show Cause Action. Upon receipt of the institution's response to the show cause action, the Commission(s) may take one of the following actions:

- 1) If the institution demonstrates that it has satisfied the requirements of the show cause action, the institution shall be moved to Accredited.
- 2) If the response of the institution is insufficient to make a determination of whether the requirements of the show cause action have been met, the institution shall be asked to submit further clarification and/or receive a Special Visit. Costs of any visit shall be borne by the institution.
- 3) If the institution fails to satisfy the requirements set forth in the show cause letter, the Commission shall act to remove the institution's accreditation. If removal of accreditation is recommended, the institution may invoke the appeals procedures established by the Commissions.

f. The Institution's Status While Addressing the Show Cause Action. Institutions that have received a show cause letter shall be considered to be accredited during the time that the show cause action is being addressed. The institution retains the right to advertise itself as an accredited member. However, the Commission shall report the show cause action to public inquiries.

1.3.6. Adverse Accrediting Actions

1.3.6.1. Definition. An adverse accrediting action is an action by the Commission(s) to deny or remove accreditation or to remove an institution from the list of accredited institutions, including:

- Accreditation Denied (for candidate institutions)
- Accreditation Removed (for previously accredited institutions)

1.3.6.2. The Commission's Responsibilities Regarding an Adverse Accrediting Action. The Commission shall, within 30 days of the Commission's action notify the institution in writing by certified mail of the adverse accrediting action taken by the Commission(s), the basis for the adverse action, and the institution's right to request reconsideration or to appeal the action in accordance with MSCESS Policy 1.4., Appeals from Adverse Accrediting Actions.

- a. Where appropriate, copies of the adverse accrediting action notice shall be sent to the head of the institution, the head of a school system or corporation of which the institution is an element, and to the chair of the institution's governing board.
- b. In accordance with MSCESS Policy 6.3.4.1. Notification to the Secretary of the United States Department of Education, State Departments of Education, State Agencies, and Other Appropriate Agencies, the Commission shall comply within 30 days with all notification requirements of the U.S. Secretary of Education when an adverse accrediting action is taken regarding accredited postsecondary, non-degree granting career and technology institutions. Notice shall be provided to the U.S. Secretary of Education, the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agencies, the appropriate state department of education, and other relevant accrediting agencies.
- c. The Commission(s) shall inform the public of the adverse action taken by publishing the action on the Commission(s) website and in its newsletter.
- d. The Commission(s) shall inform the public of the adverse action taken regarding a postsecondary, non-degree granting career and technology institution by publishing on the Commission(s)' website the action taken within 24 hours after notifying the institution of an adverse action taken by the Commission.

- e. The Institution's Responsibility Regarding Show Cause Action. If the institution wishes to request reconsideration or to appeal an adverse accrediting action, the institution shall have the burden of complying with the provisions of MSCSS Policy 1.4, Appeals from Adverse Accrediting Actions, within the times prescribed in that policy.

- f. Action on the Institution's Response to the Show Cause Action. Upon receipt of the institution's notice that it intends to request reconsideration or to appeal the adverse accrediting action, the Commission will comply with all of the provisions and timelines prescribed in MSCSS Policy 1.4, Appeals from Adverse Accrediting Decisions.

- g. The Institution's Status While Appealing an Adverse Accrediting Action. In accordance with MSCSS Policy 1.4.2.3., Accreditation Status during Appeal Process, the accreditation status of an Appellant automatically remains in effect until the expiration of the period within which Appellant may file a Request for Reconsideration, or the completion of the Commission's appeals process, whichever shall later occur.

1.3.7. Terms of Accreditation: '

1.3.7.1. Duration of Terms. Terms of accreditation may be granted for one through ten years.

1.3.7.2. The Commissions shall grant terms of accreditation based on the following criteria:

- a. The term prescribed by the protocol used for self-study and accreditation;
- b. The recommendations of the visiting team, the MSCESS staff, the appropriate reader/advisory committee, and the Membership and Accreditation Committee(s).

(See 6.3.6.--Time Frames for Further Review and Action for Institutions Not in Compliance—for further details on Terms of Accreditation for postsecondary, non-degree granting, career and technology schools.)

1.3.10. Effective Date of Accreditation: An institution's term of accreditation shall be effective on December 1 and end on November 30 of the year designated for

expiration of accreditation (for actions taken at the Commissions' fall meetings) and May 1 and end on April 30 of the year designated for expiration of accreditation (for actions taken at the Commissions' spring meetings).

1.3.11. Status of Institution during Reaccreditation Activities. The accreditation status of an institution seeking reaccreditation shall not change following the visit of a visiting team until the Commission(s) takes an accreditation action and establishes a new term of accreditation for the institution.

1.3.9. Terms of Accreditation: '

1.3.9.1. Duration of Terms. Terms of accreditation may be granted for one through ten years.

1.3.9.2. The Commissions shall grant terms of accreditation based on the following criteria:

- a. The term prescribed by the protocol used for self-study and accreditation;
- b. The recommendations of the visiting team, the MSCESS staff, the appropriate reader/advisory committee, and the Membership and Accreditation Committee(s).

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1.3.11. Status of Institution during Reaccreditation Activities. The accreditation status of an institution seeking reaccreditation shall not change following the visit of a visiting team until the Commission(s) takes an accreditation action and establishes a new term of accreditation for the institution.

1.3.12. Accreditation Actions of Other Agencies. While the Commissions act independently of other organizations in taking accreditation actions, it shall not

knowingly grant candidacy or accreditation to any institution that is on probation or has had its accreditation removed by another recognized accrediting agency or state agency, until such time that the Commission(s) are assured and satisfied that the reasons for suspension, revocation, or probation have either been corrected or the reasons for suspension, revocation, or probation are not requirements of MSCESS's Standards for Accreditation, policies, and/or requirements of the protocol selected for self-study and accreditation .

Action	Date	Notes
Initial Adoption	April 15, 2011	Adoption as a MSA-CESS policy; new policy for MSA-CES and revised policy for MSA-CSS
Revisions	April 5, 2013	Addition of 1.3.4., Accreditation by Recognition of Accreditation by Another Agency. Accreditation
	April 4, 2014	Revision to 1.3.3.4. <u>Accreditation Decision Postponed (MSA-CESS Staff Action).</u>