



Middle States Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools  
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## POLICY 3.1

### SCOPE AND CATEGORIES OF ACCREDITED INSTITUTIONS

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**A**rticle VI, The Commissions and Accreditation, of the Amended and Restated Bylaws of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, adopted and effective January 1, 2011, grant authority to the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools to accredit institutions as follows:

#### ARTICLE VI THE COMMISSIONS AND ACCREDITATION

##### Section 601. General Statement

(a) There shall be three accrediting units: (i) the MSCHE to evaluate and accredit post-secondary institutions and programs; (ii) the MSCSS to evaluate and accredit institutions providing middle and/or secondary education; and (iii) the MSCES to evaluate and accredit institutions providing middle, elementary and/or early age education.

(b) A Commission may delegate to any other agency or entity such Commission's obligations or authority to evaluate and accredit institutions and programs as described in this Article VI only with the approval of the Board of Trustees.

(c) Joint Committees, such as the Committee on Institution-Wide Accreditation, may be formed to act on behalf of Commissions to evaluate and recommend the granting of accreditation to their respective Commissions.

### 3.1.1. Scope of Accredited Institutions.

3.1.1.1. Accreditation by the Commission on Elementary Schools (MSA-CES). Institutions with early age programs through grade 8 are within the Commission on Elementary School's jurisdiction.

3.1.1.2. Accreditation by the Commission on Secondary Schools (MSA-CSS). Institutions with beginning grade levels 5 through grade 12 (or grade 13 where provided) are within the Commission on Secondary Schools' jurisdiction. In addition, the Commission accredits postsecondary, non-degree granting career and technology institutions for adult learners of any age.

3.1.1.3. Accreditation by the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools (MSA-CESS). Institutions with early age programs through grade 12 (or grade 13 where provided) are within the jurisdiction of both the Commission on Elementary Schools and the commission on Secondary Schools. Accreditation of these institutions (PK-12) are managed by a joint committee of the Commissions—The MSA-CESS (PK-12) Membership and Accreditation Committee.

3.1.2. Types of Institutions Accredited by MSA-CESS. The Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools actively support and encourage the accreditation of diverse education institutions. These institutions include public, independent, church-related, and proprietary institutions representing different cultures, religions, admissions processes, educational philosophies, and pedagogical delivery systems within the United States and outside the United States. The types of institutions include but are not limited to:

- a. Early age schools
- b. Elementary schools
- c. Middle schools
- d. Intermediate schools
- e. Secondary/high schools
- f. PK-12 schools
- g. Special education schools
- h. School systems
- i. Educational service agencies
- j. Supplementary education organizations
- k. Learning services providers

- l. Job Corp centers
- m. Schools within correctional institutions
- n. Schools for the gifted and talented
- o. Career and technical institutions for secondary and adult students

### 3.1.3. Definitions of the Types of Institutions Accredited.

#### 3.1.3.1. School.

- a. Public school: For MSA-CESS accreditation purposes, a public school is a school entity that has been assigned its own school number by the state or other civil authority in whose jurisdiction it operates.
- b. Non-public school: For MSA-CESS accreditation purposes, a non-public school is a school entity that 1) is governed directly by its own governing body, or 2) is recognized as a single entity by a civil authority, a system of schools, or a corporation under whose authority it operates.

#### 3.1.3.2. School System. A system of schools is:

- a. A legal entity;
- b. A system with more than one component school;
- c. Governed by a single governing body; and
- d. Led by a chief executive officer or superintendent; or
- e. Faith-based schools that are affiliated with a community, organization, or diocese/archdiocese

#### 3.1.3.3. Supplementary Education Organization (SEO). A supplementary education organization is defined by the following characteristics:

- a. Is not a school or school system;
- b. Does not grant a high school diploma or a degree;
- c. Offers educational programs that meet narrowly focused curricular purposes
- d. Offers programs that are educational (as opposed to recreational or avocational) in nature and that are defined by a curriculum, an instructional methodology, and accepted assessment practices;
- e. Enrolls students generally on a part-time basis;

- f. Generally delivers its educational programs outside of the normal school day and often outside a school;
- g. Often offers diagnostic, remedial, enrichment, or alternative instruction.

3.1.3.5. Educational Service Agency (ESA). An educational service agency is a regional provider of educational programs and services to schools and/or school systems schools/school systems cannot provide as efficiently and effectively on their own.

3.1.3.6. Learning Services Provider (LSP): A learning services provider is an organization that develops and provides various types of educational learning programs and services such as curricula, instructional materials, and management systems to education institutions with or without a fee.

#### 3.1.4. Additional Definitions.

3.1.4.1. Branch Campus. A branch campus is a location of an institution that is geographically apart from the main campus of the institution. A branch campus may be domestic or international. A location is a branch campus if it meets all or most of the following criteria:

- a. A facility other than the main campus of an institution at which all or part of the institution's educational program is delivered to students;
- b. Students at the facility may earn the same diploma, certificate, or other recognized educational credential awarded by the institution or earn credits toward the diploma, certificate, or other recognized educational credential awarded by the institution;
- c. Is included within the institution's legal and/or ownership framework;
- d. Is governed by the governing body of the institution;
- e. Its finances are governed by the institution's governing body and are part of the institution's financial framework and operations;
- f. *For Public Schools Only*—Has not been assigned its own school number by the state or other civil authority in whose jurisdiction it operates;
- g. *For Non-Public Schools Only*—Is not recognized as a single entity by a system of schools, a parent corporation, or a faith-based community, organization, or diocese/archdiocese under whose authority it operates;
- h. The chief executive officer or leader of the institution is responsible to the governing body for overseeing and monitoring the operations of the facility;

- i. Serves essentially the same kinds of students as served by the main campus of the institution;
- j. Is sufficiently accessible to the main campus of the institution and other branch campuses to make possible genuine interchange of personnel, resources, and ideas on a frequent basis;
- k. Employs similar types of staff members as the main campus of the institution and other branch campuses;
- l. Offers to the staff similar professional development opportunities as are provided at the main campus of the institution and other branch campuses;
- m. Provides student services (special needs, ELL, guidance and counseling, health care, etc.) similar to those provided to students at the main campus of the institution and other branch campuses;
- n. Provides resources (food services, security services, transportation, cleaning, physical plant, technology, information resources, etc.) similar to and of the same quality as those provided at the main campus of the institution and other branch campuses; and
- o. Has a similar quality and atmosphere of student and community life (personal and group relationships, communication and dissemination of information to students and parents, traditions, co-curricular activities, etc.) as the main campus of the institution and other branch campuses.

3.1.4.2. There is an additional fee charged to an institution for each branch campus. In addition, there may be additional costs to the institution and a larger visiting team based on the complexity of the institution, the number of branch campuses, and the distance of branch campuses from the main campus of the institution.

3.1.4.3. Additional Location [*Applicable only to postsecondary, non-degree granting career and technology institutions using or intending to use their MSA-CSS accreditation to establish eligibility to participate in federal Title IV financial aid programs*]. An additional location is a location, other than a branch campus, that is geographically apart from the main campus of an institution and at which an institution offers at least 50% of its educational program. Additional locations may be domestic or international. This includes corporate sites and locations for limited, rather than ongoing, provision of programs.

3.1.4.4. Instructional Site [*Applicable only to postsecondary, non-degree granting career and technology institutions using or intending to use their MSA-CSS accreditation to establish eligibility to participate in federal Title IV financial aid programs*]. An

instructional site is a location, other than a branch campus or additional location, at which the institution offers one or more courses for credit. Instructional Sites should be noted on the Annual Profile. Commission approval is not required for an Instructional Site to be included within the scope of accreditation. However, if an Instructional Site changes over time and meets the definition of an Additional Location or Branch Campus, a request for approval of a substantive change must be submitted (see MSA-CESS Policy 5.6, Substantive change). Sites established outside of the U.S. for the sole purpose of offering courses through the study abroad experience are not considered to be instructional sites. If 50% or more of a program is offered, the site will meet the definition of an additional location

### 3.1.5. Categories of MSA-CESS Institutions.

3.1.5.1. Candidate for Accreditation (See MSA-CESS Policy 3.2, *Candidacy for Accreditation*). A Candidate for Accreditation is an education institution that:

- Has been in successful operation for at least one academic year;
  - Has satisfactorily met the MSA-CESS Standards for Candidacy (a subset of the Standards for Accreditation), has been offered and has formally accepted the offer of Candidacy for Accreditation;
  - Has had that acceptance affirmed by the President of the Commissions; and
  - Reflects a willingness and readiness to participate in the self-study and accreditation process;
- a. An institution may be a Candidate for Accreditation for a maximum of three years unless specific approval is requested of and approved by the President.
- b. A Candidate for Accreditation may advertise and include in its publications that it is a Candidate for Accreditation by the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools, Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools.

3.1.6. Accredited Institutions. Accredited institutions have been granted one of the following accreditation actions by the Commission on Elementary Schools and/or the Commission on Secondary Schools (See MSA-CESS Policy 1.3, Accreditation Actions):

- Accreditation
- Accreditation with Stipulations

- Probationary Accreditation

3.1.7. Associate Business Member. An Associate Business Member of the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools is a business, service provider, or professional association that provides education products, programs, and/or services that are deemed by the President to have potential value to MSA-CESS accredited and candidate institutions as they pursue their accreditation and school improvement activities.

3.1.7.1. Criteria for Associate Business Member.

- a. Provides education products, programs, and/or services the President deems to have potential value to MSA-CESS member institutions as they pursue their accreditation and school improvement activities;
- b. A record of value, integrity, and quality in the providing of products, programs, and/or services;
- c. A written agreement approved by the Executive Committees and signed by the President and an authorized representative of the Associate Business Member specifying:
  - 1) Any products, programs, and/or services to be offered to MSA-CESS member institutions;
  - 2) The costs of such products, programs, and/or services to MSA-CESS member institutions;
  - 3) The specific benefits to be provided by MSA-CESS to the Associate Business Member;
  - 4) Revenues to be realized by MSA-CESS from the sale by the Associate Business Member of products, programs, and/or services to member institutions and any conditions related to those revenues; and
  - 5) The date upon which the agreement will expire (agreements may be renewed annually).

3.1.7.2. MSA-CESS Benefits Provided to Associate Business Members. The benefits to be provided by MSA-CESS to Associate Business Members include:

- 1) Inclusion in a membership director and/or resource guide
- 2) One advertisement in the MSA-CESS newsletters per year

- 3) Inclusion of product/program/service information on MSA-CESS mailings
- 4) Link on MSA-CESS website
- 5) Opportunity to sponsor an MSA-CESS workshop

3.1.7.3. Uses for Revenues Realized from Affiliate Members. Revenues realized from Affiliate member dues and any revenues to be realized from agreements with Affiliate Members for the sale of products, programs, and/or services to member institutions may be used for one or more of the following purposes, as determined by the Finance Committees:

- a. Reduce dues increases;
- b. Finance specific research and development projects;
- c. Increase the capacity of the Commission to provide services to its member institutions.

3.1.8. Ethical Criteria for Admission to Accredited and Candidate Institutions. Accredited and Candidate institutions shall not discriminate in their admission of students on the basis of race, ethnic background, gender, sexual preference, or handicapping condition. Nor shall they discriminate on the basis of religion unless the institution is officially church-related and publicly states that it admits students mainly from communicants of that denomination. Institutions that have been designed specifically to serve a single gender or that are supported by a state or federal agency to serve a specialized group of students shall not be considered discriminatory.

3.1.9. Accredited Institutions with Expired Term of Accreditation.

3.1.9.1. When an Accredited institution allows its term of accreditation to expire and the institution wishes to regain its accreditation, the institution will be returned to the status of a Candidate for Accreditation.

3.1.9.2. In the case of postsecondary, non-degree granting career and technology institutions, a return to Candidate status will occur only if an onsite visit verifies that the institution meets the Standards for Candidacy.

Action	Date	Notes
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<b>Action</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Initial Adoption by MSA-CSS	April 15, 2011	
Initial Adoption by MSA-CES	October 28, 2011	
Revisions	April 4, 2014	Revision to 3.1.7. <u>Associate Business Member.</u>