



POLICY 1.1

CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE IN ACCREDITATION

The Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools abide by the following general principles of good practice in accreditation:

1.1.1. The Commissions (MSA-CESS):

- a. Establish Standards for Accreditation that are directly relevant to the quality of an institution and its ability to provide appropriate and meaningful educational experiences for students.
- b. Recognize the right of an institution to be evaluated in light of its own stated purposes (philosophy/mission and beliefs) as long as those purposes adequately reflect the expectations for institutions as defined by the Middle States Standards for Accreditation.
- c. Accredite entire education institutions, including their educational program and all of their systems, operations, and services. Institutions are evaluated for accreditation based on the Middle States Standards for Accreditation as met in relationship to the overall institutional philosophy/mission and beliefs.
- d. Use only relevant qualitative and quantitative information in its decision-making processes.
- e. Foster and validate institutions' efforts to produce continuous growth and improvement in student learning and the institution's capacity to produce the levels of achievement it desires and its community of stakeholders expects.
- f. Encourage sound educational experimentation and innovation.
- g. Arrange accreditation evaluations and other visits in consultation with the leadership of the member institution.
- h. Design self-study and accreditation protocols that motivate an institution to evaluate and improve itself.
- i. Conduct accreditation visits using experienced and qualified evaluators, including staff members from other accredited institutions that are

- knowledgeable about the types of programs offered in the institution to be evaluated and under conditions that ensure impartial and objective judgment.
- j. Cooperate with other accreditation agencies insofar as possible without compromising its own Standards for Accreditation.
 - k. Provide the head of an institution being evaluated for accreditation or his/her designee the opportunity to review a draft of written reports to correct for errors of fact and to append a response from the institution to the visiting team's written report.
 - l. Regard a visiting team's report as a confidential document shared only with the institution, except in the case of postsecondary non-degree granting institutions for which information and documents about the institution's accreditation shall, in all cases, be shared with the United States Secretary of Education, state education departments, other licensing authorities, and other accrediting agencies, upon request of those departments and agencies.
 - m. Permit an institution to disseminate accreditation reports as it desires, provided they are not used to misrepresent the institution's accreditation status.
 - n. Notify an institution in writing within 30 days regarding any accreditation action taken by one or both Commissions.
 - o. Remove an institution's accreditation only after advance notice has been given to the institution that such action is contemplated and the reasons for it, giving the institution sufficient time to pursue established procedures for appeal and review.
 - p. Make information available to the public regarding the Commissions' policies and procedures, including:
 - 1) procedures for applying for candidacy and accreditation;
 - 2) the Standards and other criteria used to determine the appropriate accreditation action to take; and (see Policy 1.3); and
 - 3) the names, academic and professional qualifications, relevant employment, and organizational affiliations of the members of their policy and decision-making bodies as well as their staff.
 - q. Make available to the public information about institutions accredited by the Commissions and Candidates for Accreditation, including:
 - 1) General information about the institution's name, address, and other contact information;
 - 2) The name of the head of the institution;
 - 3) The institution's current accreditation status;

- 4) The expiration date for the current term of accreditation;
- 5) The policies governing submitting complaints about accredited institutions

1.1.2. Code of Good Practice in Accreditation with Regard to Decisions of States, Licensing Authorities, and Other Accrediting Organizations. In accordance with its code of good practice and with regard to decisions of states, licensing authorities, and other accrediting organizations, the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools:

- a. Do not accredit or grant candidacy to institutions that lack legal authorization under applicable federal, state, or host nation laws to provide a program of education at the early age, elementary, secondary, and/or postsecondary, non-degree granting levels.
- b. Investigate and/or review all situations in which an institution is the subject of a pending or final action brought by a State, licensing authority, or recognized accreditor to place the institution on probation or suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution's accreditation or candidacy. The purpose of the investigation is to determine if the Commissions should also take adverse action, place the institution on probation, or ask the institution to show cause why an adverse action should not be taken. If, after the investigation, the Commission may act to grant accreditation or candidacy for accreditation only if it provides to the Secretary, within 30 days of its action, a thorough and reasonable explanation, consistent with the Commission's Standards for Accreditation, why the action of the other body does not preclude the agency's grant of accreditation or preaccreditation.
- c. Does not grant candidacy, accreditation, or reaccreditation to institutions that have filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection.
- d. Following each meeting of the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools at which accreditation actions are taken, provides a report of those activities to:
 - 1) The appropriate State Departments of Education;
 - 2) The U.S. Department of Education for postsecondary-non-degree granting career and technology institutions using their MSA accreditation to establish eligibility to participate in federal Title IV financial aid programs, and

- 3) Recognized accrediting agencies for postsecondary-non-degree granting career and technology institutions using their MSA accreditation to establish eligibility to participate in federal Title IV financial aid programs.

1.1.3. Code of Good Practice with Regard to Reporting Commission Actions to Other Accrediting Agencies and Appropriate Government Agencies. In accordance with its code of good practice and with regard to the need of other accrediting agencies and appropriate government agencies to be informed about accreditation actions taken by the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools, the Commissions will:

- a. Following each meeting of the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools at which accreditation actions are taken, provides a report of those activities to:
 - 1) The appropriate State Departments of Education;
 - 2) The U.S. Department of Education for postsecondary-non-degree granting career and technology institutions using their MSA accreditation to establish eligibility to participate in federal Title IV financial aid programs, and
 - 3) Recognized accrediting agencies education for postsecondary-non-degree granting career and technology institutions using their MSA accreditation to establish eligibility to participate in federal Title IV financial aid programs.

1.1.4. Code of Good Practice with Regard to Making Available to the Public Written Materials. In accordance with its code of good practice and with regard to the need of the public to be informed about the Middle States Commission on Elementary and Secondary Schools and their accreditation and school improvement activities and services, the Commissions will make available to the public, upon request information describing:

- a. Each type of accreditation and preaccreditation it grants;
- b. The procedures that institutions or programs must follow in applying for accreditation or preaccreditation;
- c. The standards and procedures it uses to determine whether to grant, reaffirm, reinstate, restrict, deny, revoke, terminate, or take any other action related to each type of accreditation and preaccreditation that the agency grants;

- d. The institutions and programs that the agency currently accredits or are candidates for accreditation and, for each institution and program, the year the agency will next review or reconsider it for accreditation or preaccreditation; and
- e. The names, academic and professional qualifications, and relevant employment and organizational affiliations of—
 - 1) The members of the agency's policy and decision-making bodies; and
 - 2) The agency's principal administrative staff.

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		