



COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS

Other accrediting agencies provide accreditation and institutional improvement services to particular types of institutions in the Middle States Association region. Since a number of these institutions seek to be accredited by the Commission on Elementary Schools and/or the Commission on Secondary Schools while working with an agency that specializes in a particular type of institution, the Commissions may enter into cooperative accreditation agreements with other accreditation agencies. Such agreements must be based on assurances that an agreement:

- a. Is based on the needs of and enhance the quality of education of MSA-CESS candidate or accredited institutions;
- b. Assures that accreditation by the Commissions will be based on institutions' meeting the Commissions' Standards for Accreditation;
- c. Assures that authority to accredit institutions resides solely with each party to the agreement without regard to actions taken by the other party to the agreement; and
- d. Assures that all dues and fees are paid by institutions separately to the cooperating agencies.

Section 1: Elements of Cooperative Agreements. Cooperative accreditation agreements must include the following elements:

- a. Purpose of the agreement;
- b. The cooperating agencies;
- c. Description of the institutions eligible to participate in the cooperative accreditation process;
- d. The process of establishing candidacy for cooperative accreditation;
- e. Descriptions of the accreditation protocols available to institutions through the agreement;
- f. Terms of accreditation through the agreement;
- g. Statements regarding the payment of dues and fees;
- h. Responsibilities of institutions accredited through the agreement;
- i. Procedures for communications between the cooperating agencies; and
- j. Limits to the agreement;
- k. Provisions for periodic review of the agreement; and
- l. Date for expiration of the agreement.

Section 2: Establishing New Cooperative Agreements. Proposals to establish new cooperative agreements shall be reviewed and acted upon according to the following procedures:

- a. A cooperative accreditation agreement may be proposed by either potential party to the agreement;
- b. Proposed cooperative agreements will be reviewed first by the Commissions' Membership and Accreditation Committees, which will make a recommendation to the full Commissions;
- c. The Commissions shall take action on proposed cooperative agreements;
- d. If adopted by the Commissions, a copy of the adopted agreement will be signed by the President of the Commissions and forwarded to the chief executive officer of the cooperating agency for signature. A copy of the signed original agreement will be maintained in the Commissions' files.

Section 3: Periodic Review of Cooperative Accreditation Agreements. The term of cooperative accreditation agreements shall not exceed five years without a review and re-approval by the Commissions.

- a. Cooperative agreements are subject to review and discussion at any time.

- b. Either organization may withdraw from the agreement if the conditions of the agreement are found to be untenable and an appropriate resolution cannot be reached.
- c. Prior to the expiration of a cooperative agreement, the Commissions' staff will use the following criteria to review the agreement:
 - 1) Does the agreement continue to serve the interests of the Commissions and their institutions accredited through the agreement?
 - 2) Does the agreement include provisions for and permit visiting teams to determine that institution to be accredited through the agreement meet the Commissions' Standards for Accreditation;
 - 3) Are the intent and purposes of the agreement carried out in the implementation of the agreement?
 - 4) Are there are any major problems in implementing the agreement that would give the Commissions cause to reconsider the agreement?
- d. At the conclusion of the review, the Commissions' staff will make a recommendation to the Commissions' Membership and Accreditation Committee, which will review the review and make a recommendation to the full Commissions.
- e. The Commissions shall take action on recommendations of their Membership and Accreditation Committees.
 - 1) If the Commissions approve renewal of the agreement, a copy of the adopted agreement will be signed by the President of the Commissions and forwarded to the chief executive officer of the cooperating agency for signature. A copy of the signed original agreement will be maintained in the Commissions' files.
 - 2) If the Commissions do not approve renewal of the agreement:
 - a. The President of the Commissions will notify the chief executive officer of the cooperating agency of the Commissions' action and the reasons for that action;
 - b. The President of the Commissions will notify all institutions accredited through the cooperative agreement of the Commissions' action and that those institutions may not seek reaccreditation through the agreement when their accreditation term expires.

Section 4: General Guidelines for Accreditation through Cooperative Agreements. When an institution seeks accreditation by two agencies through a cooperative accreditation agreement, the following guidelines will apply:

- When taking an accreditation action, each agency shall apply its own Standards for Accreditation, take its own accreditation action, and inform the institution and the other accrediting agency accordingly.
- Consultation between the staffs of the cooperating agencies is encouraged and expected.
- Neither agency shall be responsible for the candidacy or accreditation actions of the other agency.
- All dues and fees are established separately and paid directly to both agencies.
- Each agency's self-study and accreditation protocol must be approved by the cooperating agency.
- The chair, assistant chair, and composition of the visiting team shall be agreed upon by both agencies.
- All documents including the Self-Study Document, the visiting team's report, and all accreditation maintenance reports shall be provided to both agencies.
- The institution is required to use a protocol (reports, special visits, conferences, etc.) agreed upon mutually for establishing and maintaining its accredited status.
- If either agency takes an action to remove accreditation from an institution that received accreditation through a cooperative process, it will inform the cooperating agency of its action and provide the reasons for it.

Section 5: Institutions Already Accredited by an Agency with whom MSA-CESS has a Cooperative Agreement. Institutions currently accredited by another accrediting agency, but not by the Commission

on Elementary Schools and/or the Commission on Secondary Schools, may petition to become accredited by MSA-CES and/or MSA-CSS if the Commissions have a cooperative agreement with that agency through the Commissions' "Accreditation by Adoption of Accreditation of Another Agency" process.

Accreditation by Adoption of Accreditation by Another Accrediting Agency.

- a. When the Commission(s) accredits an institution through Accreditation by Adoption of Accreditation by Another Agency, the term of accreditation shall not exceed the term of accreditation granted by the other agency.
- b. To maintain its MSA-CES and/ MSA-CSS accreditation, the institution must complete a self-study, host an onsite accreditation visit, and be granted accreditation by MSA-CES and/or MSA-CSS at least six months prior to the expiration of the term of accreditation granted by the Commission(s).
- c. NOTE: This policy is not applicable to postsecondary, non-degree granting career and technical institutions.