



## **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.

**Section 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, or Removal of Candidate for Accreditation status) have the right to appeal such decision under the provisions of MSA-CESS Policy: Appeals from Adverse Accrediting Actions.

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, advisory committees, staff, and other verifiable sources of information.

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.

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.

### **Section 2: Accreditation Actions**

#### Accreditation.

Accreditation is granted when the Commission(s) have determined that an institution 1) meets all of the Standards for Accreditation of the Commissions 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.

#### Accreditation by Recognition of an Existing Accreditation with a Cooperative Partner (for Candidate Institutions Only).

Accreditation by Recognition of an Existing Accreditation with a Cooperative Partner 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) An Application for Recognition which includes an MSA Standards Attestation, 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 the remaining term of accreditation is more than 2.5 years, the institution must host an onsite Recognition Visit. MSA staff may waive this requirement in certain circumstances.
- 4) 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: Accreditation Maintenance Requirements; and
  - c) Complete a self-study and earn re-accreditation 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;
    - a. Ensure the documentation is complete and accurate;
    - b. Ensure the institution is in compliance with the appropriate MSA-CESS Standards for Accreditation; and
    - c. Complete a staff analysis and submit all materials to the appropriate Advisory Committee and then Membership and Accreditation Committee who will make 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.

Accreditation by Recognition of an Existing Accreditation.

Accreditation by Recognition of an Existing Accreditation (without a cooperative partner agency) is granted when the Commission(s) have determined that an institution that is currently 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 demonstrates a clear understanding and rationale to change accreditors.

- 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) An Application for Recognition which includes an MSA Standards Attestation, 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 not in conjunction with an approved partner agency, an onsite Recognition Visit is required for all institutions seeking to change their accreditor through Accreditation by Recognition.
- 3) Because the institution has chosen to change accreditors, the term of accreditation will be for 2.5 years and the school must complete a self-study and earn re-accreditation by MSA-CESS before the end of its new term of accreditation.
- b. *The Responsibilities of the Commissions' Staff Regarding Accreditation by Recognition.* The Commissions' staff shall:
- a. Review all documentation submitted for Accreditation by Recognition by the institution and the Visitor's Report;
  - b. Ensure the documentation is complete and accurate;
  - c. Ensure the institution is in compliance with the appropriate MSA-CESS Standards for Accreditation; and
  - d. Complete a staff analysis and submit all materials to the appropriate Advisory Committee and then Membership and Accreditation Committee who will make 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 2.5 year term; or
  - 2) Deny Accreditation by Recognition for cause.

#### Accreditation with Stipulations.

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 MSA-CESS Standards for Accreditation, one or more applicable MSA-CESS policies, and/or one or more requirements of the protocol selected for self-study and accreditation.

Probationary Accreditation (for Previously Accredited Schools Only). 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, 3) meet multiple requirements of the protocol selected for self-study and accreditation, and/or 4) meet the Accreditation Maintenance Requirements as outlined in the Official Notice of Accreditation letter.

#### Accreditation Removed

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.

- After one year delinquency the member will be placed on Probation.
- After two years of non-payment the member will be dropped.

Accreditation Decision Deferred (MSA-CESS Staff Action).

- Accreditation Decision Deferred is a staff action that may be taken when it is the judgment of the Chair of a Visiting Team and the staff of the Commissions that a candidate institution does not meet multiple Standards for Accreditation and/or requirements of the protocol selected for self-study and accreditation.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

**Section 3: Terms of Accreditation**

Duration of Terms. Terms of accreditation may be granted for seven years. This term may be as short as 2 years or as long as 10 years for institutions seeking accreditation with a cooperative partner agency or through Recognition of an Existing Accreditation.

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

- The term prescribed by the protocol used for self-study and accreditation; (See Self-Study and Accreditation Process Policy—for further details on Terms of Accreditation for postsecondary, non-degree granting, career and technology schools.)
- The recommendations of the visiting team, the MSA-CESS staff, the appropriate advisory committee, and the Membership and Accreditation Committee(s).

Terms of Accreditation for Postsecondary Non-Degree Granting Institutions:

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

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

- The term prescribed by the protocol used for self-study and accreditation; (See Self-Study and Accreditation Process Policy—for further details on Terms of Accreditation for postsecondary, non-degree granting, career and technology schools.)
- The recommendations of the visiting team, the MSA-CESS staff, the appropriate reader/advisory committee, and the Membership and Accreditation Committee(s).

Effective Date of Accreditation: An institution's term of accreditation shall be effective on the date the Commission(s) took action and end on January 1 of the year designated for expiration of accreditation (for actions taken at the Commissions' fall meetings) and July 1 of the year designated for expiration of the accreditation (for actions taken at the Commissions' spring meetings).

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.

#### **Section 4: Adverse Accreditation Actions and Monitoring (Show Cause) Actions**

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)

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

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 MSA-CESS Policy: 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 MSA-CESS Policy, 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: 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 MSA-CESS Policy: Appeals from Adverse Accrediting Decisions.
- g. The Institution's Status While Appealing an Adverse Accrediting Action. In accordance with MSA-CESS Policy: 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.

#### 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 is/are not met.
- c. The Commission(s)' Responsibilities Regarding Show Cause Action.
  - 1) Initially, the Commission(s) will notify the institution, through phone or email communication, of the situation and outline what will come next.
  - 2) The Commission(s) shall then notify the institution in writing by certified mail, within 30 days of the Commission(s)' action the basis for the show cause action.
    - a. 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.
    - b. 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.
    - c. 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.

**Section 5: 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 MSA-CESS's Standards for Accreditation, policies, and/or requirements of the protocol selected for self-study and accreditation .

## **Section 6: Accreditation Actions and Term of Accreditation for Postsecondary Institutions**

General. The Commission on Secondary Schools shall:

- a. Adopt research-based and clear Standards for Accreditation reflective of best practices for career and technical institutions to serve as the basis for accreditation actions and institutional improvement efforts. [See MSA-CESS Policy: Standards for Accreditation.]
- b. Consistently apply and enforce its Standards for Accreditation that:
  - 1) Respect the stated mission of an institution, including religious mission, and
  - 2) Ensure that the education or training offered by an institution, including any offered through distance education, is of sufficient quality to achieve its stated objective for the duration of any accreditation or preaccreditation period granted by the Commission;
- c. Have effective controls against the inconsistent application of the Commission's standards; [See MSA-CESS Policy: Self-Study and Accreditation Process]
- d. Base its decisions regarding accreditation and preaccreditation on the Commission's published standards;
- e. Have a reasonable basis for determining that the information the Commission relies on for making accrediting decisions is accurate;
- f. Provide the institution with a detailed written report that clearly identifies any deficiencies in the institution's compliance with the Commission's standards. [See MSA-CESS Policy Self-Study and Accreditation Process]

Authority for Taking Accreditation Actions.

- a. The Commission on Secondary Schools is the sole authority for taking accreditation actions for its member institutions.
- b. The Commission may not authorize the Commission's Executive Committee to take accrediting actions in its stead between regularly scheduled Commission meetings or to take retroactive accreditation actions.
- c. The accreditation actions of the Commission are final and will be recorded in the database of Accredited Postsecondary Institutions and Programs. However, institutions for which the Commission has taken an adverse accrediting action have the right to appeal such decision under the provisions of MSA-CESS Policy: Appeals to Adverse Accrediting Actions. Adverse accrediting actions are:
  - 1) Denial of Candidacy for Accreditation;
  - 2) Denial of initial Accreditation;
  - 3) Removal of Candidate for Accreditation status; and
  - 4) Removal of Accreditation.[See MSA-CESS Policy: Appeals from Adverse Accrediting Actions.]

The Bases for Accreditation Actions.

- a. Accreditation and candidacy actions shall be based on relevant and documented information and evidence provided to the Commission by institutions and by the Commission's accreditation visiting teams, advisory committees, staff, and other verifiable sources of information.
- b. Prior to referring the Report of the Visiting Team and the Team's recommendations for the four-step review process (see MSA-CESS Policy: Self-Study and Accreditation Process), the Commission's staff will review the report of the institution's self-study, the Report of the Visiting Team, and any response by the institution to the Report of the Visiting Team to determine, to the extent possible, that the information that will be forwarded to the Advisory Committee for review and the Commission for action is accurate.
- c. For accreditation purposes, this information can include, but is not limited to:
  - 1) Evidence of the degree to which the institution complies with the Standards for Accreditation for Career and Technical Institutions;
  - 2) Evidence of the degree to which the institution meets the Requirements of the Accreditation Protocol used for self-study and accreditation;
  - 3) Evidence that the institution is in compliance with applicable MSA-CSS policies; and
  - 4) Evidence of the degree to which the institution is in compliance with the Programs.

Accreditation Actions. The Commission may grant the following accreditation actions for postsecondary, non-degree granting career and technical institutions.

- a. Accreditation. Accreditation is granted when the Commission has determined that an institution
  - 1) in compliance with all of the Standards for Accreditation for Career and Technical Institutions
  - 2) the Program Assessment Template, 3) all applicable MSA-CSS policies, and 4) the Requirements of the Protocol for self-study and accreditation.
- b. Accreditation with Stipulation(s). Accreditation with Stipulation(s) is granted when the Commission has determined that an institution is in compliance with all of the Standards for Accreditation for Career and Technical Institutions, but is not in compliance or is partially in compliance with
  - 1) one or more of the Indicators of Quality of the Standards for Accreditation, 2) one or more of the Program Assessment Template, 3) applicable MSA-CSS policies, and 4) one or more of the Requirements of the Protocol for self-study and accreditation.
  - 1) The Commission's Responsibilities Regarding Accreditation with Stipulation(s). The Commission shall:
    - a) Specify the Indicator of a Standard for Accreditation, the Program Assessment Template, the MSA-CSS policy, and/or the Requirement of the Protocol for self-study and accreditation with which the institution is not in compliance or is in partial compliance;
    - b) Provide the specific action(s) the institution must take to resolve the stipulation(s) including the evidence the institution must submit to the Commission;
    - c) Provide the timeline within which the stipulation(s) must be resolved [Stipulations must be corrected in accordance with the timeline stated in MSA-CSS Policy 6.3.14, Enforcement of the Standards for Accreditation]; and
    - d) Provide appropriate technical support to help the institution come into compliance with the accreditation requirement(s) that are the subject of the Stipulation(s).
  - 2) The Institution's Responsibilities Regarding Accreditation with Stipulation(s). It is the institution's responsibility to understand or seek from the Commission's staff an understanding of what is required to resolve a Stipulation. In its efforts to resolve a Stipulation, the institution is encouraged to take advantage of the technical assistance and resources offered by the Commission.
  - 3) Action on the Institution's Response to the Stipulation(s). When the Commission's staff receives the required evidence of the action(s) taken to resolve a Stipulation(s), the staff shall take one of the following actions:



- a) If, in the judgment of the Commission's staff, the institution has presented acceptable evidence that it has resolved the issues addressed by the stipulation satisfactorily and is now in compliance with the requirement(s), the staff shall notify the institution, in writing, that it will recommend to the Commission that the institution's accreditation be changed from Accreditation with Stipulations to Accreditation.
  - b) If, in the judgment of the Commission's staff the documentation presented by the institution is only partially acceptable evidence that it has resolved the issues addressed by the Stipulation satisfactorily, the institution shall be required to submit further clarification and/or receive a Special Visit. The costs associated with a Special Visit shall be borne by the institution.
  - c) If, in the judgment of the Commission's staff the institution has not submitted acceptable documentation and evidence that it has taken action to resolve a Stipulation within the designated time period and is unable to show good cause for the delay in coming into compliance, the staff may recommend to the Commission that the institution is 1) granted additional time to resolve the issues satisfactorily. Good cause is the institution's making significant progress toward coming into compliance with the requirement(s) that are the subject of the Stipulation(s) and the expectation that the institution will be in compliance within six months.
- 4) The Institution's Status While Addressing Stipulations. The institution's accreditation status during the period provided for coming into compliance with the requirement(s) that is the subject of the Stipulation(s) shall be Accreditation with Stipulation(s).
- c. Probationary Accreditation.
- 1) Probationary Accreditation is granted when the Commission has determined that an institution is not in compliance with: 1) one or more of the Standards for Accreditation for Career and Technical Institutions, 2) two or more of the Program Assessment Template, 3) one or more applicable MSA-CSS policies, and/or 4) multiple requirements of the Protocol used for self-study and accreditation.
  - 2) The Commission's Responsibilities Regarding Probationary Accreditation. The Commission shall:
    - a) Specify the Standard(s) for Accreditation, the Standard(s) for Student and Organizational Performance, 3) MSA-CSS policy(ies), and/or the Requirement(s) of the Protocol used for self-study and accreditation within which the institution is not in compliance;
    - b) Provide the specific action(s) the institution must take to resolve the he issues that led to the granting of Probationary Accreditation, including the evidence the institution must submit to the Commission;
    - c) Provide the timeline within which the issues that led to the granting of Probationary Accreditation must be resolved (see MSA-CSS Policy 6.3, Section 6.3.14, Enforcement of the Standards for Accreditation); and
    - d) Provide appropriate technical support to help the institution come into compliance with the requirements with which the institution is not in compliance.
  - 3) The Institution's Responsibilities Regarding Probationary Accreditation. It is the institution's responsibility to understand or seek from the Commission's staff an understanding of what is required to resolve the issues that led to the granting of Probationary Accreditation. In its efforts to resolve the issues, the institution is encouraged to take advantage of the technical assistance and resources offered by the Commissions.
  - 4) Action on the Institution's Response to the Probationary Accreditation. When the MSA-CSS staff receives the required evidence of the action(s) taken to resolve the issues that led to the granting of Probationary Accreditation, the staff shall take one of the following actions:
    - a) If, in the judgment of the Commission's staff, the institution has presented acceptable evidence that it has resolved the issues that led to Probationary Accreditation satisfactorily, the staff shall notify the institution, in writing, that it will recommend to the Commission at its next regularly scheduled meeting that the institution's accreditation is

- changed from Probationary Accreditation to Accreditation with Stipulation(s) or Accreditation.
- b) If, in the judgment of the Commission's staff, the documentation presented by the institution is evidence that the institution has resolved the issues only partially, the staff shall notify the institution, in writing, that it will recommend to the Commission at the next meeting that the institution's accreditation is changed from Probationary Accreditation to Accreditation with Stipulations. In addition, the institution will be asked to submit further clarification and/or receive a Special Visit to examine the actions being taken to resolve the issues. The costs associated with a Special Visit shall be borne by the institution.
  - c) If, in the judgment of the Commission's staff the institution has not submitted acceptable documentation and evidence that it has taken action to resolve that led to the granting of Probationary Accreditation within the designated time period, the staff shall recommend to the Commission that 1) the institution is granted for good cause additional time to resolve the issue(s) satisfactorily, or 2) the institution's accreditation is removed. Good cause is the institution's making significant progress toward coming into compliance with the requirement(s) that are the subject of the requirements that led to the granting of Probationary Accreditation and the expectation that the institution will be in compliance within six months.
  - d) The Institution's Status with Probationary Accreditation. The institution's accreditation status during the period provided for coming into compliance with the requirement(s) that led to the granting of Probationary Accreditation shall be Probationary Accreditation.
- d. Accreditation Removed (for previously accredited institutions).
- 1) Definition: The Commission may remove the accreditation of a previously accredited institution for failure to be in compliance with:
    - a) The requirements for accreditation that led to the granting of Accreditation with Stipulations or Probationary Accreditation;
    - b) All of the MSA-CSS Standards for Accreditation of Career and Technical Institutions;
    - c) All of the Program Assessment Template;
    - d) The requirements in MSA-CSS Policy 6.3, Postsecondary, Non-Degree Granting Career and Technical Institutions and applicable MSA-CESS policies;
    - e) The timeline for self-study for achieving accreditation/reaccreditation prior to the expiration of the institution's current accreditation status;
    - f) Requirements to submit reports or to host special visits required by the Commission; and/or
    - g) The requirement to pay annual dues and applicable fees in a timely manner.
  - 2) The Commission's Responsibilities Regarding Accreditation Removed. The Commissions shall:
    - a) Notify the institution by certified mail within 30 calendar days of the Commission's action;
    - b) Offer the 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 its accreditation should not be removed.
    - c) Inform the institution that it has the right to request reconsideration of the Commission's action or to appeal this adverse accrediting action under the provisions of MSA-CSS Policy 6.3, Section 6.3.13,, Appeals from Adverse Accrediting Actions;
    - d) Notify the institution that it may apply for Candidacy for Accreditation after one calendar year from the Commission's action if the issues that led to the Accreditation Removed have been corrected. An onsite visit will be required to verify that the issues have been corrected satisfactorily. The institution will bear the expenses for an onsite visit; and
    - e) Make all notifications prescribed in MSA-CSS Policy 6.3, Section 6.3.12, Notices and Communications Regarding Accreditation Actions and Activities.
  - 3) The Institution's Responsibilities Regarding Accreditation Removed.

- a) The institution shall remove all references in its public records and all publications of the institution including its website that the institution is an accredited member of the Middle States Association's Commission on Secondary Schools;
  - b) Failure to remove all references that the institution is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools within 90 days of notice that the Commission has removed the institution's accreditation may result in legal action by the Commission.
- e. Accreditation Deferred (for candidate institutions).
- 1) Definition. Accreditation Deferred is a staff action granted when it is the judgement of the Chair of a Visiting Team and the staff of the Commissions that a candidate institution is not in compliance with: 1) multiple Standards for Accreditation for Career and Technical Institutions, 2) two or more elements of the Program Assessment Template, 3) multiple applicable MSA-CSS policies, and/or 4) multiple requirements of the Protocol used for self-study and accreditation.
  - 2) The Commission's Responsibilities Regarding Accreditation Deferred. The Commissions shall:
    - a) Specify the Standard(s) for Accreditation, the element(s) of the Program Assessment Template, the element(s) of MSA-CSS policy(ies), and/or the Requirement(s) of the Protocol used for self-study and accreditation within which the institution is not in compliance;
    - b) Provide the specific action(s) the institution must take to resolve the issues, including the evidence the institution must submit;
    - c) Provide the timeline within which the issues must be resolved; and
    - d) Provide appropriate technical support to help the institution come into compliance with the requirements with which the institution is not in compliance.
  - 3) The Institution's Responsibilities Regarding Accreditation Deferred.
    - a) It is the institution's responsibility to understand or seek from the Commission's staff an understanding of what is required to resolve the issues. In its efforts to resolve the issues, the institution is encouraged to take advantage of the technical assistance and resources offered by the Commissions.
  - 4) Action on the Institution's Response to Accreditation Deferred. When the MSA-CSS staff receives the required evidence of the action(s) taken to resolve the issues, the President of the Commissions will direct that a mini-onsite visit is conducted to confirm the content of the report. Following the visit, the Commissions staff shall take one of the following actions:
    - a. If, in the judgment of the Commission's 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 Commission at its next regularly scheduled meeting that the institution be granted Accreditation with Stipulation(s) or Accreditation.
    - b. If, in the judgment of the Commission's staff, the documentation presented by the institution is evidence that the institution has resolved the issues only partially, the staff shall notify the institution, in writing, that it will recommend to the Commission at the next meeting that the institution be granted Accreditation with Stipulations.
    - c. If, in the judgment of the Commission's 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 shall grant the institution, with good cause, additional time to resolve the issue(s) satisfactorily, or 2) the institution's candidacy status is removed. Good cause is the institution's making significant progress toward coming into compliance with the requirement(s) and the expectation that the institution will be in compliance within six months.
  - 5) The Institution's Status under Accreditation Deferred. The institution's accreditation status during the period provided for coming into compliance with the requirement(s) shall be Candidate.

### Monitoring Issues.

- a. In the course of its review of an institution's self-study and the Report of the Visiting Team, the Commission on Secondary Schools may identify issues of concern that, although not rising to the level of a stipulation to the institution's accreditation, warrant monitoring to ensure that the institution takes the necessary actions to resolve the issues.
- b. A monitoring issue may relate to a Standard for Accreditation, one of a Standard's Indicators of Quality, or a requirement of the self-study and accreditation protocol.
- c. A monitoring issue is declared when, in the judgment of the Commission, the institution is only in partial compliance with an expectation or requirement—it is either a requirement or expectation that has been started and needs to be completed, or it is something that the institution is doing but needs to be improved.
- d. A monitoring issue does not affect the institution's accreditation initially. The institution is expected to resolve the issues noted as soon as possible but not later than the date specified in the Official Notification of Accreditation letter. If the Commission's staff determines that an issue has not been resolved satisfactorily in the time prescribed, the Commission may elect to add it as a stipulation to the institution's accreditation.

### Voluntary Withdrawal of Accreditation and Membership.

- a) Because the decision to become a candidate or an accredited member of the Commission on 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.
- b) Action by the Commission. Make all notifications prescribed in MSA-CESS Policy: Notices and Communications Regarding Accreditation Actions, Activities, and Members.
- c) Required Action by the Institution.
  - 1) If an institution voluntarily relinquishes its accreditation and membership, the institution shall remove all references in its public records and all publications of the institution including its website that the institution is a Candidate for Accreditation or is Accredited by the Middle States Association's Commission on Secondary Schools.
  - 2) Failure to remove all references that the institution is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools within 90 days of notice that the Commission has removed the institution's accreditation may result in legal action by the Commission.

### Show Cause Actions.

- a. Definition: A show cause action requires an institution to show cause why accreditation should not be removed or denied. This action offers the institution a final chance to offer evidence or explain reasons why the Commission should not remove or deny accreditation.
- b. A show cause action may also be taken when one or more of the Expectations for Accredited Institutions outlined in MSA-CESS Policy 1.2., Expectation for Accredited Institutions is/are not met.
- c. The Commission's Responsibilities Regarding Show Cause Action. The Commissions shall notify the institution in writing by certified mail, within 30 calendar days of the Commission's action the basis for the show cause action.
  - 1) If, in the judgment of the Commission's staff the institution presents acceptable evidence that it has resolved the show cause issue(s) satisfactorily, the staff shall notify the institution, in writing, that it will recommend to the Commission at its next regularly scheduled meeting that the show cause action is removed.
  - 2) If, in the judgment of the Commission's staff, the documentation presented by the institution is only partially acceptable evidence that it has resolved the show cause issue(s) 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 Commission's staff the institution has not submitted acceptable documentation and evidence that it has taken action to resolve the show cause issue(s) within the designated time period, the staff may recommend to the Commission 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.

- 4) If the Commission's action is to remove or deny accreditation, the institution shall be informed that it has the right to request reconsideration of the Commission's action or to appeal this adverse accrediting action under the provisions of MSA-CSS Policy 6.3, Section 6.3.13, Appeals from Adverse Accrediting Actions.

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 Commission's 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 to make a personal presentation of the institution's stance prior to final action's being taken by the Commission.

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 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 act to remove the show cause action.
- 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 action, the Commission shall act to remove/deny 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.

Adverse Accrediting Actions.

a. Definition. The following actions by the Commission are adverse accrediting actions:

- 1) Denial of Candidacy for Accreditation;
- 2) Denial of initial Accreditation;
- 3) Removal of Candidate for Accreditation status; and
- 4) Removal of Accreditation.

b. The Commission's Responsibilities Regarding an Adverse Accrediting Action.

- 1) The Commission shall, within 30 days of the Commission's action notify the institution in writing 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 MSA-CSS Policy 6.3, Section 13, Appeals from Adverse Accrediting Actions.
- 2) The Commission shall make all of the required actions when it takes an adverse accrediting action in accordance with MSA-CSS Policy 6.3., Section 6.3.12, Notices and Communications Regarding Accreditation Actions and Activities.

c. The Institution's Responsibility Regarding an Adverse Accrediting 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 MSA-CSS Policy 6.3, Section 6.3.13, Appeals from Adverse Accrediting Actions, within the times prescribed in that policy.

d. Institutions are required to disclose any adverse Accrediting Action within seven days of receipt to all current and prospective students

- d. Action on the Institution's Response to the Adverse Accrediting 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 the provisions and timelines prescribed in MSA-CSS Policy 6.3, Section 6.3.13, Appeals from Adverse Accrediting Actions.
- e. The Institution's Status While Appealing an Adverse Accrediting Action. In accordance with MSA-CSS Policy 6.3, Section 6.3.13, Appeals from Adverse Accrediting Actions, 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.

Term of Accreditation:

- a. Term of Accreditation. The maximum term of accreditation for postsecondary, non-degree granting career and technical institutions that declare their intention to use their MSA-CSS accreditation to establish eligibility to participate in federal Title IV student loan programs is ten years.
- b. Five Year Report. In the fourth year of the term of accreditation, the institution is required to submit a Five-Year Report in which evidence of continued compliance with the Standards for Accreditation and the other requirements for accreditation must be submitted.
  - 1) Following a review of the Five-Year Report by the staff of the Commission, the staff will schedule a mini-visit to the institution to verify continued compliance with the requirements for accreditation.
  - 2) If the Five-Year Visitor determines and reports that the institution continues to be in compliance with the requirements for accreditation, and that determination is confirmed by the Commissions' staff, the institution's accreditation continues for the remainder of the ten-year term.
  - 3) Should it be determined and confirmed that the institution is not in continued compliance with the requirements for accreditation; the institution may be brought before the Commission for an accreditation action of Accreditation with Stipulations or given Monitoring Issues.

Effective Date of Accreditation:

- a. An institution's term of accreditation shall be effective on the date the Commission took action and end on January 1 of the year designated for expiration of accreditation (for actions taken at the Commissions' fall meetings) and July 1 of the year designated for expiration of the accreditation (for actions taken at the Commissions' spring meetings). The Commission does not offer retroactive accreditation for postsecondary, non-degree granting career and technical institutions that declare their intention to use their MSA-CSS accreditation to establish eligibility to participate in federal Title IV student loan programs.
- b. Status of Institution during Reaccreditation Activities. The accreditation status of an institution seeking reaccreditation shall not change following the visit of an Accreditation Visiting Team until the Commission takes an accreditation action for the institution.

Regard for Decisions of States and Other Accrediting Agencies.

- a. The Commission may not accredit or preaccredit institutions that lack legal authorization under applicable State law to provide a program of education beyond the secondary level.
- b. Except as provided in paragraph (c) of this section, the Commission may not grant initial or renewed accreditation or preaccreditation to an institution, if the Commission knows, or has reasonable cause to know, that the institution is the subject of—
  - (1) A pending or final action brought by a State agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution's legal authority to provide postsecondary education in the State;
  - (2) A decision by a recognized agency to deny accreditation or preaccreditation;
  - (3) A pending or final action brought by a recognized accrediting agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution's accreditation or preaccreditation; or
  - (4) Probation or an equivalent status imposed by a recognized agency.

- c. The Commission may grant accreditation or preaccreditation to an institution described in paragraph (b) of this section only if it provides to the Secretary, within 30 days of its action, a thorough and reasonable explanation, consistent with its Standards, why the action of the other body does not preclude the Commission's grant of accreditation or preaccreditation.
- d. If the Commission learns that an institution it accredits or preaccredits, or an institution that offers a program it accredits or preaccredits, is the subject of an adverse action by another recognized accrediting agency or has been placed on probation or an equivalent status by another recognized agency, the Commission must promptly review its accreditation or preaccreditation of the institution or program to determine if it should also take adverse action or place the institution or program on probation or show cause.
- e. The Commission must, upon request, share with other appropriate recognized accrediting agencies and recognized State approval agencies information about the accreditation or preaccreditation status of an institution and any adverse actions it has taken against an accredited or preaccredited institution or program.