



## **RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER ENTITIES**

**Section 1: Relationship with the United States Department of Education.** It shall be the policy of the Commission on Secondary Schools of the Middle States Association (MSA-CSS) to comply with all requirements of the United States Department of Education for recognition as a Nationally Recognized Accrediting Agency.

Notice of Commission Accreditation Actions for Postsecondary, Non-Degree Granting Institutions:

The U.S. Secretary of Education and postsecondary, non-degree granting career and technical institutions accredited and candidates for accreditation by the Commission on Secondary Schools shall be notified, in writing, at the same time and within 30 days of any of the following Commission actions on postsecondary, non-degree granting career and technical institutions:

- a. the award of initial accreditation or candidacy
- b. the award of continued accreditation
- c. final decisions to withdraw, deny, suspend, or terminate accredited or candidate status or to otherwise take adverse action
- d. decisions to place an institution on probation
- e. decisions by the accredited or candidate institution to voluntarily withdraw from membership
- f. decisions by an accredited or candidate institution to allow its accreditation or candidacy status to lapse

The notification to the Secretary, in the case of final decisions to take adverse action or to put an institution on probation, shall include a statement summarizing the Commission's decision, the reasons for it, and the comments, if any, made by the affected institution.

Notice of Changes to Commission Accreditation Standards, Policies, or Procedures. The U.S. Secretary of Education shall be notified within 30 days of any proposed changes in policy, procedures, or Standards for Accreditation that might alter the scope of recognition or compliance with its petition for national recognition.

Positive Action on Previously Denied Postsecondary Institutions. In the event that the Commission grants candidacy or accreditation to an institution previously denied accreditation by the Commission or by any other recognized accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education, the Commission shall provide full information to the Secretary within 30 days of the action. This information shall include a thorough explanation, consistent with its Standards for Accreditation, why the previous action by an accrediting agency or state agency does not preclude the Commission from granting of candidacy or accreditation.

Additional Reporting to the U.S. Department of Education. The Commission on Secondary Schools shall provide additional reports to the U.S. Department of Education as follows:

- a. a copy of any annual report the Commission prepares
- b. a copy of any printed directory of accredited and candidate institutions or access to the directory on the Commission's website
- c. a summary of major accrediting activities during the previous year, if requested by the Secretary to carry out the Secretary's responsibilities
- d. the name of any institution accredited by the Commission on Secondary Schools that MSA-CSS has reason to believe is failing to meet its Title IV responsibilities or is engaged in fraud

or abuse, along with MSA-CSS's reasons for concern about the program or institution. In this instance, there will be a case-by-case review of the circumstances surrounding the contact, and the need for the confidentiality of that contact. If the U.S. Department of Education determines a compelling need for confidentiality, MSA-CSS will also consider that contact confidential upon specific request of the Department.

- e. information that may bear upon an accredited or candidate institution's compliance with Title IV, if the Secretary requests it

## **Section 2: Relationships with State Departments of Education, Other State Agencies, and/or Accrediting Agencies**

The Commission on Secondary Schools shall maintain relationships and cooperate closely with State Departments of Education, other state agencies, and accrediting agencies, as appropriate. The purposes of such cooperation include protecting the integrity of each institution, diminishing or eliminating unnecessary or duplicative reporting, planning, or evaluation, and furthering educational quality in all institutions. As a non-governmental body, the Commission on Secondary Schools does not, and cannot, assume the statutory responsibilities of any state agency.

Notice of Commission Actions for Postsecondary Institutions. The Commission on Secondary Schools shall notify appropriate state departments of education and other relevant state agencies within 30 days of any of the following Commission actions on postsecondary institutions, or shared upon request:

- a. the award of initial accreditation or candidate status
- b. final decisions to withdraw, deny, suspend, or terminate accredited or candidate status or to otherwise take adverse action
- c. decisions to place an institution on probation
- d. decisions by the accredited or candidate institution to voluntarily withdraw from membership
- e. decisions by the accredited or candidate institution to allow its accreditation or candidacy status to lapse.

The notification to these agencies, in the case of final decisions to take adverse action shall include a statement summarizing the Commission's decision, the reasons for it, and the comments, if any, made by the affected institution.

**Section 3: Relationships with Other Regional Accrediting Agencies.** The Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools shall cooperate with other accrediting agencies whose accreditation procedures and activities align well with those of the Commissions. Examples of such cooperation include:

- a. Acceptance of transfer students in the same manner as they are accepted by institutions within their own association and the exchange of information such as evaluation materials,
- b. Standards for Accreditation, and
- c. Best practices in accreditation

**Section 4: Review of Adverse Actions by Other Accrediting Agencies.** When an agency with which the Commissions have a cooperative agreement takes an adverse action against an institution accredited cooperatively through the agreement, the Commissions will review the institution's MSA-CES/MSA-CSS accreditation at their next regularly scheduled meeting. The review will be based on:

- a. Information and evidence provided by the cooperating agency as the basis for its adverse accreditation action;
- b. A written statement from the institution explaining from the institution's perspective the circumstances that led to the adverse accreditation action;

- c. Evidence provided by the institution demonstrating that it is still in compliance with the Commissions' Standards for Accreditation.
- d. The Commissions shall notify the institution of the results of its review and its own accreditation action within 30 days after taking the action.

If, as the result of its review of an adverse action taken against an institution by a cooperating agency the Commission(s) takes an adverse accreditation action against the institution, the institution may appeal the decision in accordance with the procedures in Commission Policy: Appeals from Adverse Accrediting Actions.

**Section 5: Sharing Information with Other Agencies.** The Commission shall routinely share information, as outlined in the policy, with other accrediting agencies.