



STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION

The Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools shall adopt research-based Standards for Accreditation reflective of best practices for education institutions to serve as the basis for accreditation actions and for institutional improvement efforts.

Section 1: General

Unique Standards for Accreditation. The Commissions may adopt different Standards for Accreditation that address the uniqueness of categories of the Commissions' accredited institutions with the proviso that all accredited and candidate institutions shall be required to meet high standards of quality appropriate to the type and nature of the institutions.

Institutional Participation in the Development of Standards for Accreditation. The Commissions shall provide advance notice to accredited and candidate institutions of proposed new or revised Standards for Accreditation and provide adequate opportunity to comment on the proposed Standards prior to their adoption.

Notice of New or Revised Standards for Accreditation. The Commissions shall provide notice of the effective date for new or revised Standards for Accreditation to permit affected institutions adequate opportunity to prepare to meet the new/revised Standards. Notice shall be at six months prior to the date on which the new/revised Standards will go into effect.

Comprehensive Reviews of the Standards for Accreditation. The Commissions shall conduct a comprehensive review of their Standards for Accreditation at every five years unless other factors warrant a more frequent review. [See Section 3 for further detail on standards review processes for postsecondary institutions.]

Section 2: Acceptance of the Standards for Accreditation of Other Accrediting Agencies.

- a. The Commissions may permit accredited and/or candidate institutions to seek accreditation or reaccreditation on the basis of Standards for Accreditation of organizations with which the commissions have a cooperative agreement and that have been approved by the Commissions for use by its accredited/candidate institutions..
- b. Prior to permitting the use of the Standards of another organization, the Commissions' staff will undertake an examination of those Standards to ensure they are closely aligned with the Commissions' Standards for Accreditation.
- c. Upon determination that the cooperating organization's Standards are closely aligned with the Commissions' Standards, the cooperating agency's Standards shall be submitted to the Commissions for their approval.

Section 3: Standards for Accreditation for Career and Technical Institutions

General. The Commission on Secondary Schools shall 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.

Standards and Indicators of Quality for Career and Technical Institutions.

- a. The Commission shall adopt Standards for Accreditation and Indicators of Quality for Career and Technical Institutions that are sufficiently rigorous to ensure the Commission is a reliable authority regarding the quality of the education and training provided by the institutions it accredits.
- b. The Standards for Accreditation for Career and Technical Institutions shall include, as a minimum, the standards required by the U.S. Secretary of Education's Criteria for Recognition of an accrediting agencies as Title IV gatekeepers. They are:
 - 1) Success with respect to student achievement in relation to the institution's mission, which may include different standards for different institutions or programs, as established by the institution, including, as appropriate, consideration of State licensing examinations, course completion, and job placement rates.
 - 2) Curricula.
 - 3) Faculty.
 - 4) Facilities, equipment, and supplies.
 - 5) Fiscal and administrative capacity as appropriate to the specified scale of operations.
 - 6) Student support services.
 - 7) Recruiting and admissions practices, academic calendars, catalogs, publications, grading, and advertising.
 - 8) Measures of program length and the objectives of the degrees or credentials offered.
 - 9) Record of student complaints received by, or available to, the agency.
 - 10) Record of compliance with the institution's program responsibilities under Title IV of the Act, based on the most recent student loan default rate data provided by the Secretary, the results of financial or compliance audits, program reviews, and any other information that the Secretary may provide to the agency;
- c. Accreditation and preaccreditation standards, authorizes the Commission to establish additional accreditation standards it deems appropriate beyond those required in above.
- d. Nothing restricts—
 - 1) An accrediting agency from setting, with the involvement of its members, and applying accreditation standards for or to institutions or programs that seek review by the agency; or
 - 2) An institution from developing and using institutional standards to show its success with respect to student achievement, which achievement may be considered as part of any accreditation review.
- e. To be accredited by the Commission on Secondary Schools, an institution must comply with all of the Commission's Standards for Accreditation for Career and Technical Institutions (see Policy: Self-Study and Accreditation Process).

Reviews of the Standards of Accreditation for Career and Technical Institutions. The Commission on Secondary Schools shall conduct ongoing and comprehensive reviews of its Standards for Accreditation of Career and Technical Institutions to verify that they remain adequate to evaluate educational quality of those institutions and relevant to the educational and training needs of their students.

Constituencies Involved in the Review. Relevant constituencies shall be involved in the review process and shall be given a meaningful opportunity to provide input into the review and to respond to proposed changes. The review process shall include a sample of accredited and candidate institutions, current and past employers of graduates, professional associations, state agencies, licensing bodies, representatives of business and industry, recent and past alumni, and current students, as well as the general public.

Types of Reviews.

- a. Longer-Term, Comprehensive Review. The Commission shall conduct a comprehensive review of its Standards for Accreditation for Career and Technical Institutions at least once every five years, unless ongoing reviews of the Standards indicate a need for a more frequent review. The primary purpose of the long-term, comprehensive review is to determine if the current Standards, when viewed as a

whole and individually, are adequate to evaluate the quality of an institution's educational programs and relevant to the education and training needs of its students.

- b. Ad hoc Reviews. At the end of each meeting of the Commission's advisory committees and Membership and Accreditation Committee at which the accreditation of a career and technical institution is reviewed, a less formal *ad hoc* review of the Standards for Accreditation for Career and Technical Institutions shall be conducted.
 - 1) The purpose of these reviews is to determine if, based on the application of the Standards for Accreditation to the accreditation recommendations for specific institutions being considered at a meeting, there are issues with any of the Standards that require further investigation and possible modification.
 - 2) In addition, the implications of changes in the requirements of the U.S. Secretary of Education for institutions' participation in Title IV student loan programs, in the field of education, in businesses industries whose interests the institutions serve, and the practices of MSA-CSS-accredited institutions on the Standards are routinely considered during ad hoc reviews, as are changes designed either to improve program quality or to update the language of the Standards.
- c. Special Standards Reviews. The quality and effectiveness of the Commission's Standards for Accreditation for Career and Technical Institutions are also discussed during Commission activities conducted routinely during the year. These activities typically include discussions with MSA-CSS-accredited institutions during various workshops conducted for its member institutions, reviews of any complaints received during the year that suggest issues with the Standards, responses on team member evaluation forms, etc. If issues are identified with any of the Standards during these ad hoc reviews, proposals for new and/or revised Standards are developed, distributed for comment to the relevant constituencies, and voted on at a subsequent Commission meeting.
- d. Reviews by Institutions and On-Site Visitors. After each onsite accreditation visit, the Commission requests the institution to complete a survey regarding its perceptions of the clarity, reliability, comprehensiveness, and appropriateness of the Standards for Accreditation for Career and Technical Institutions. MSA-CSS schedules this activity immediately after each site visit because it recognizes that institutions that have recently prepared a self-study and undergone an on-site review have a particularly keen insight into the relevance of the Standards, the effectiveness of their application during the self-study and site visit, etc., and thus can provide useful information for the Commission to consider during its structured review of the Standards.
 - 1) In a similar fashion, the Commission surveys on-site visitors after each site visit to gain any insights they might have about the Standards, their effectiveness in evaluating educational quality, their relevance to the education and training needs of students, etc.
 - 2) The information obtained from both of these activities is provided to the Commission for use during the Commission's structured reviews of the Standards.

Criteria for the Review. The purpose of reviews of the Standards for Accreditation for Career and Technical Institutions shall be to ensure that each Standard and Indicator of Quality meets the following criteria:

- a. Clarity and Reliability: The Standards and their Indicators of Quality are clear and understandable so that they can be applied consistently during accreditation evaluations of career and technical institutions.
- b. Comprehensiveness: The Standards and their Indicators of Quality address *all* of the organizational elements, components of the educational program, and services for students that must be in place for a career and technical institution to provide high quality programs for its students.
- c. Appropriateness: The Standards and their Indicators of Quality require a level of quality in organization, curriculum, instruction, and services that will ensure that graduates are able to perform the job tasks in the career field for which they were trained.

Results of the Review. Should a review indicate that changes to the Standards for Accreditation are needed, those changes must initiate action within 12 months and must be completed within a

reasonable period of time. Before any changes are finalized, notice of changes will be given to all relevant stakeholders and stakeholders will be given adequate opportunity to comment on the proposed changes. Any comments on the proposed changes submitted in a timely manner will be taken into consideration.

Notice of New or Revised Standards for Accreditation. The Commissions shall provide advance notice of proposed new or revised Standards for Accreditation and provide adequate opportunity to comment on the proposed Standards prior to their adoption. The effective date for new or revised Standards for Accreditation shall be at six months prior to the date on which the new/revised Standards will go into effect to permit affected institutions adequate opportunity to prepare to meet the new/revised Standards.

Standards and Indicators of Quality for Career and Technical Institutions. The Commission shall establish and maintain Standards for Accreditation and Indicators of Quality for Career and Technical Institutions.

Reviews of the Standards of Accreditation for Career and Technical Institutions. The Commission on Secondary Schools shall conduct ongoing and comprehensive reviews of its Standards for Accreditation of Career and Technical Institutions to verify that they remain adequate to evaluate the educational quality of those institutions and relevant to the educational and training needs of their students. The Commission uses a combination of longer-term reviews, regular ad hoc reviews, special reviews, and institutional and onsite evaluator reviews to accomplish this task. The various reviews are described below:

Longer-Term, Comprehensive Review. The Commission shall conduct a comprehensive review of its Standards for Accreditation for Career and Technical Institutions at least once every five years, unless ongoing reviews of the Standards indicate a need for a more frequent review. The primary purpose of the long-term, comprehensive review is to determine if the current Standards, when viewed as a whole and individually, are adequate to evaluate the quality of institutions' educational programs and relevant to the education and training needs of their students.

Ad hoc Reviews. At the end of each meeting of the Commission's advisory committees and Membership and Accreditation Committee at which the accreditation of a career and technical institution is reviewed, a less formal *ad hoc* review of the Standards for Accreditation for Career and Technical Institutions shall be conducted.

- a. The purpose of these reviews is to determine if, based on the application of the Standards for Accreditation to the accreditation recommendations for specific institutions being considered at a meeting, there are issues with any of the Standards that require further investigation and possible modification.
- b. In addition, the implications of changes to:
 - 1) The requirements of the U.S. Secretary of Education for 1) the criteria for recognition of the Commission as a Title IV gatekeeper by the U.S. Secretary of Education, 2) The requirements for institutions' participation in Title IV student loan programs,
 - 2) The field of career/technical education, and
 - 3) Business and industries whose interests the institutions serve, and

Special Standards Reviews. The quality and effectiveness of the Commission's Standards for Accreditation for Career and Technical Institutions are also discussed during Commission activities conducted routinely during each year. These activities typically include discussions with MSA-CSS-accredited institutions during various workshops conducted for its member institutions, reviews of any complaints received during the year that suggest issues with the Standards, responses on team member evaluation forms, etc. If issues are identified with any of the Standards during these ad hoc reviews, proposals for new and/or revised Standards are developed, distributed for comment to the relevant constituencies, and voted on at a subsequent Commission meeting.

Reviews by Institutions and On-site Evaluators. After each onsite accreditation visit, the Commission surveys the institution about its perceptions of the adequacy and relevance of the Standards for

Accreditation for Career and Technology Institutions. MSA-CSS schedules this activity immediately after each site visit because it recognizes that institutions that have recently prepared a self-study and undergone an on-site review have a particularly keen insight into the relevance of the Standards, the effectiveness of their application during the self-study and onsite visit, etc., and thus can provide useful information for the Commission to consider during its structured review of the Standards.

- a. In a similar fashion, the Commission surveys on-site evaluators after each site visit to gain any insights they might have about the Standards, their effectiveness in evaluating educational quality, their relevance to the education and training needs of students, etc.
- b. The information obtained from both of these activities is provided to the Commission for use during the Commission's structured reviews of the Standards.

Criteria for the Review. The purpose of reviews of the Standards for Accreditation for Career and Technology Institutions shall be to ensure that each Standard and Indicator of Quality meets the following criteria:

- a. **Clarity and Reliability:** The Standards and their Indicators of Quality are clear and understandable so that they can be applied consistently during accreditation evaluations of career and technology institutions.
- b. **Comprehensiveness:** The Standards and their Indicators of Quality address *all* of the organizational elements, components of the educational program, and services for students that must be in place for a career and technology institution to provide high quality programs for its students.
- c. **Appropriateness:** The Standards and their Indicators of Quality require a level of quality in organization, curriculum, instruction, and services that will ensure that graduates are able perform the job tasks in the career field for which they were trained.

Constituencies Involved in the Review. Relevant constituencies shall be involved in the review process and shall be given a meaningful opportunity to provide input into the review and to respond to proposed changes. The review process shall include a sample of accredited and candidate institutions, current and past employers of graduates, professional associations, state agencies, licensing bodies, representatives of business and industry, recent and past alumni, and current students.

Results of the Review. Should a review indicate that changes to the Standards for Accreditation are warranted, those changes shall be made within 12 months of the review.

Notice of Standards Changes. Institutions shall be notified at least six months in advance of when the proposed revised Standards for Accreditation go into effect.