



## **COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS**

Other accreditation agencies provide accreditation and school improvement services to particular types of schools<sup>1</sup>. Since a number of these schools seek to be accredited by the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools while working with an agency that specializes in a particular type of school, 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 schools;
- b. Assures that accreditation by the Commissions will be based on schools meeting the MSA-CESS Standards for Accreditation;
- c. Assures that authority to accredit schools 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 schools 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 schools 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 schools through the agreement;
- f. Terms of accreditation through the agreement;
- g. Statements regarding the payment of dues and fees;
- h. Responsibilities of schools 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

**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. Any new cooperative accreditation agreements must be reviewed first by an MSA staff member and second by the President or his/her designee before a recommendation is made to the Commissions.
- c. Proposed cooperative agreements will be reviewed first by the Commissions' Membership and Accreditation Committees, which will make a recommendation to the full Commissions;
- d. The Commissions shall take action on proposed cooperative agreements;
- e. If adopted by the Commissions, a copy of the adopted agreement will be signed by the President of the Commissions or his/her designee 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.

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<sup>1</sup> The term "school" is used in this policy but applies to all categories of members including schools, systems, learning services providers, and career and technical institutions.

### **Section 3: Periodic Review of Cooperative Accreditation Agreements..**

- a. Cooperative agreements are subject to review, discussion, and revocation 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. 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 schools accredited through the agreement?
  - 2) Does the agreement include provisions for and permit visiting teams to determine that schools to be accredited through the agreement meet the MSA-CESS Standards for Accreditation;
  - 3) Are the intent and purposes of the agreement carried out in the implementation of the agreement?
  - 4) Are there any major problems in implementing the agreement that would give the Commissions cause to reconsider the agreement?

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

- When taking any accreditation action, each agency shall apply its own Standards for Accreditation, take its own accreditation action, and inform the school and the other accrediting agency accordingly.
- Consultation between the staffs of the cooperating agencies is 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 school is required to use a protocol (reports, special visits, conferences, etc.) agreed upon mutually for establishing and maintaining its accreditation status.
- If either agency takes action to remove accreditation from a school that received accreditation through a cooperative process, it will inform the cooperating agency of its action and provide the reasons for it.

**Section 5: Schools Already Accredited by an Agency with whom MSA-CESS has a Cooperative Agreement.** Schools currently accredited by another accrediting agency, but not by the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools, may petition to become accredited by MSA-CESS if the Commissions have a cooperative agreement with that agency through the Commissions' "Recognition of Existing Accreditation" process found in MSA-CESS Policy: Accreditation Actions.