



Accreditation Policy

Accreditation Actions Policy

Effective Date: September 1, 2018

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I. Purpose

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE or Commission) seeks to ensure consistent actions on accreditation. The purpose of this policy is to establish the types of actions available to the Commission.

II. Statement of Policy

The Commission, an accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education and by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, is organized “to provide educational, accrediting, quality assurance and other services to its member institutions, degree granting post-secondary educational institutions offering higher education and located inside or outside the United States...” (MARCHE Bylaws Article I, Section 1.02). The Commission is authorized to act on the candidate status or accredited status of institutions seeking or maintaining MSCHE accreditation in the Middle States region as well as other geographical areas outside of the United States.

The Executive Committee of the MSCHE holds *ad interim* authority to act on behalf of the Commission as necessary between meetings to take such actions on accreditation and institutional membership as may be necessary (MARCHE Bylaws Article V, Section 5.02(b)).

In accordance with its *Appeals from Adverse Accrediting Actions*, the Commission will establish an Appeal Hearing Panel to review the appeal of an adverse action. The Appeal Hearing Panel is authorized to act on an institution’s candidacy or accreditation under federal regulation 34 CFR §602.25(f)(1).

The Commission staff may take administrative actions that do not alter the candidate or accredited status of an institution to facilitate the work of the Commission.

III. Affirming Actions

The Commission shall take an affirming action to grant candidate for accreditation status, grant accreditation, or reaffirm accreditation. Affirming actions may include a request for further reporting through written reports and/or visits or they may include a commendation.

IV. Non-Compliance Actions

The Commission shall take a non-compliance action of warning, probation, or show cause if it has identified one or more areas in which the institution does not meet Commission standards for accreditation, requirements of affiliation, policies and procedures, or federal compliance requirements. A non-compliance action indicates that an institution's candidate for accreditation status or accreditation may be in jeopardy.

The Commission may require a candidate or accredited institution to show cause why its candidate or accredited status should not be withdrawn. A show cause action is preliminary to an adverse action by the Commission. A show cause action is not an appealable action. The Commission must determine whether compliance has been achieved no later than 24-months after the initial non-compliance action was taken (34 CFR §602.20 (a)). A non-compliance action is not an appealable action. The institution retains its candidate or accredited status during the period of non-compliance.

The Commission may, at its discretion, continue an accredited institution's non-compliance status and extend accreditation for good cause beyond the original 24-month period in accordance with federal regulation 34 CFR §602.20(b). Extension for good cause is a form of exceptional relief and not an institutional right. A decision to grant an extension for good cause is made at the sole discretion of the Commission and is not subject to appeal. Extension for good cause is not available to candidate institutions.

V. Adverse Actions

The Commission shall take an adverse action to deny or withdraw candidate status or deny or withdraw accreditation. An institution has the right to appeal an adverse action on limited grounds pursuant to the *Appeals from Adverse Accrediting Actions Procedures*. The institution retains its candidate or accredited status until the effective date of withdrawal or until completion of the Commission's appeal process, whichever is later.

Membership in the Middle States Commission on Higher Education ceases when withdrawal of candidate status or accreditation becomes effective.

VI. Appeal Action

The Appeal Hearing Panel shall act on all appeals of adverse actions in accordance with its procedures *Appeals from Adverse Accrediting Actions*. The appellant institution's status shall remain in effect until the completion of the Commission's appeal process or until the effective date of the withdrawal, whichever is later.

VII. Mid-Point Peer Review Actions

The Commission shall act to note that the Mid-Point Peer Review has been conducted and may or may not request further reporting as defined in *Accreditation Actions Procedures*.

VIII. Substantive Change Actions

The Commission shall act to include the change within the scope of accreditation, deny the request, decline to review the request, and/or rescind a substantive change action. The Commission will require written evidence of all approvals from licensing, regulatory, or other legal entities as appropriate. The Commission may set other conditions that must be satisfied by the institution based on the Commission's *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*, and/or federal regulation.

IX. Teach Out Actions

The Commission shall act to approve or reject the teach-out plan and any agreements.

X. Procedural and Administrative Actions

The Commission may take such other actions as necessary that reflect procedure or the administration of the accreditation process including but not limited to postpone a decision or direct an accreditation activity. The Commission and its staff, through authority granted by the Commission, may take administrative actions to support and facilitate the work of the Commission including but not limited to acknowledge receipt, reject, rescind, delay, request, note, remind, direct, or amend. The institution maintains candidate for accreditation status or remains accredited during a procedural or administrative action.

XI. Procedures

The Commission staff will develop procedures as are necessary to ensure the consistent implementation of policy. See the Commission's *Accreditation Actions Procedures*.

Number: P.2.3

Version: 2018-09-01

Effective Date: September 1, 2018 (Technical Amendments)

Approved: 111915 (Commission)

Previously issued: 1921, February 1984, January 1990, February 1991, and 1993.

Revisions: February 1997; February 2002; October 2002; November 2003; March 2004; January 2005; February 2007; November 2007; March 2008; January 2010 (changed Progress *Letter* to Progress *Report*); September 16, 2011; October 30, 2012; June 26, 2014; November 19, 2015; March 1, 2016; September 2018 (technical amendment).

Relevant Documents: *Accreditation Actions Procedures*; *Accreditation Review Cycle and Monitoring Policy*; *Accreditation Review Cycle and Monitoring Procedures*; *Accreditation Activities Guidelines*; *Communication in the Accreditation Process*; *Show Cause Appearance before the Commission Prior to Withdrawal of Accreditation*; *Appeals from Adverse Accrediting Actions*; *C-RAC Common Framework (Apr 9, 2014)*; *Substantive Change Policy*; *Substantive Change Procedures*