



Accreditation Policy

**Review of Commission Standards,
Requirements of Affiliation, and Policies**

Effective June 3, 2017

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I. Purpose

This policy defines the types of documents that delineate or support accreditation requirements and directs their review for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (the Commission).

II. Statement of Policy

Accreditation Standards and Requirements of Affiliation:

The Commission establishes accreditation standards and requirements of affiliation for accreditation through an interactive process involving the Commission, member institutions, and to the extent feasible, other relevant constituencies. The Commission maintains a systematic and ongoing program of review to confirm that the standards for accreditation and requirements of affiliation are adequate to evaluate the quality of the education provided by the institutions it accredits and that they are relevant to the educational needs of students.

The Commission conducts a comprehensive review of the standards and requirements of affiliation individually and as a whole at least every ten years. The Commission also receives ongoing feedback from participants in the accreditation process following on-site evaluation. If it determines that substantive changes in the standards may be warranted at any point in the ten-year period, action will be initiated within one year and the revision process will be completed during the following year.

Any substantive changes to standards for accreditation, requirements of affiliation, or accreditation-related policies will not be made without appropriate notification to member institutions. A meaningful opportunity for interested parties to provide input will be provided.

In accordance with MARCHE (dba MSCHE) Bylaws, “Institutional members are entitled to vote on all policies that affect the substance of MSCHE accreditation standards and requirements and on major substantive policy statements (not including statements of good practices or principles), except those mandated under Federal law or regulation, the Commission or the Executive Committee acting on behalf of the Commission” (Article III, Sec. 3.03.) This policy does not preclude the Commission or staff from making technical amendments to clarify the meaning of standards, requirements of affiliation, or policies without necessarily providing a notice and

comment period. Technical amendments include the addition of supplemental information, the deletion of unnecessary, undesirable, or outdated information, or the correction of errors existing in the text.

Policies

The Commission may withdraw, amend, delete, or add to policies with the exception of policies related to the accreditation standards and requirements of affiliation at any time. Approval of policies shall be taken at a Commission meeting subsequent to the first meeting when the policy was presented. Accreditation policies related to the fulfillment of accreditation standards and requirements of affiliation will be provided to member institutions for comment and approval.

III. Definitions:

Several types of Commission publications supplement the accreditation standards and requirements of affiliation.

1. Policy – Policies are issued by the Commission in accordance with applicable federal laws and the Bylaws of the Commission. They establish fundamental principles as a basis and guide for mandating action by Commissioners, staff, and member institutions.
 - a. Policy Statement – Policy Statements are documents established by external organizations (such as C-RAC or CHEA) and endorsed or adopted by the Commission, the body representing member institutions.
 - b. Accreditation Policy: Accreditation policies may be either Commission policies that establish requirements of the Commission including those obligations under federal regulation or Institutional policies that establish requirements for institutions. Except as otherwise determined in Section 3.03 of the MARCHE bylaws, the Commission, the body representing member institutions, approves accreditation policy. Member institutions must be in compliance with accreditation policy.
 - c. Administrative Policy - Corporate or administrative policy is related to the maintenance of the Commission's 501(c)(3) status or Commission operations. Administrative policies are approved by the Commission, the body representing member institutions, or the Executive Committee on its behalf.
2. Guidelines - Guidelines are based on effective practices and may provide advice to member institutions and peer evaluators for implementing the accreditation standards.
3. Procedures - Procedures define a series of steps, method, or course of action taken to implement policies and accreditation standards.
4. Handbooks - Handbooks may reference policy and provide procedure or guidelines to assist member institutions in implementing the accreditation standards and conducting accreditation activities.

5. Templates (Request Forms) – Templates are pre-formatted documents designed to facilitate the submission of consistent information to the Commission or for use by member institutions or teams in the Self-Study process.

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Related Documents: *MARCHE (dba MSCHE) Bylaws; Accreditation Policy Development and Review*

Federal Regulations: 34 CFR Part §602.21 (a) (b) (c) The Secretary's Recognition of Accrediting Agencies

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