

Pre-Application Determination of Eligibility to Apply Procedures

Effective Date: July 1, 2024

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I. Purpose

The Mid-Atlantic Region Commission on Higher Education (MARCHE), doing business as the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE or the Commission), seeks to ensure that the process for institutions of higher education applying for candidate for accreditation status is rigorous, consistent, and equitable. The purpose of these procedures is to implement the Commission's *Application and Candidacy Review Cycle and Monitoring Policy* and describe the procedures and timeline for the determination of an institution's eligibility to apply for MSCHÉ accreditation. The list of minimum requirements and the evidence required to demonstrate compliance are articulated in *Pre-Applicant Minimum Requirements for Eligibility Guidelines*. A simple list of the minimum requirements can be found in Appendix A of this document. Additional information about reviews, reports, and visits can be found in *Accreditation Activities Guidelines*.

II. Procedures for Submission of Pre-Applicant Minimum Requirements Evidence

- A. The institution will complete the Inquiry Contact Form which is available on the Commission's website.
 - 1. The institution will designate a Primary Contact Person, who will serve as the primary key contact and authorized representative from the institution to communicate with the Commission throughout the application and candidacy process.
 - 2. The designated individual should be in regular and direct communication with the institution's Chief Executive Officer (CEO)/President regarding the institution's application and candidacy process.
 - 3. The designated individual should have adequate time, knowledge, and authority to communicate with the Commission and speak on behalf of the institution.
 - 4. The institution will update key contact information in the secure MSCHÉ portal at any time if there are changes to any designated key contact.
- B. The institution will complete the *Pre-Applicant Inquiry Form* which collects basic contact and directory information about the institution.
- C. The Commission staff will communicate with the Primary Contact Person to provide introductory information about the application and candidacy process as well as guidance and advice on the

submission of required evidence to demonstrate compliance with the *Pre-Applicant Minimum Requirements for Eligibility*.

- D. The Commission staff will provide the CEO/President and the Primary Contact Person instructions for submitting the required *Pre-Applicant Institution Data Form*.
 - 1. Section I of the *Pre-Applicant Institution Data Form* collects information about the institution including but not limited to address, locations, credential levels.
 - 2. Section II of the *Pre-Applicant Institution Data Form* collects [Annual Institutional Update \(AIU\) Indicators and Metrics](#).
 - 3. The information is reviewed by Commission representatives as part of the pre-application review.
 - 4. The institution will be required to update the information throughout the application and candidacy process.
- E. The Commission will monitor data submitted by the institution or from publicly available data sources using indicators and metrics in the following categories, as applicable: student achievement, annual enrollment-FTE, financial health, and federal financial responsibility.
 - 1. Commission representatives will use the indicators and metrics as one source of information to inform the multi-level accreditation decision-making process.
 - 2. Institutions should also assess their student achievement, annual enrollment, financial health, and federal financial responsibilities against the indicators and metrics.
- F. The Commission will invoice the institution for the Review I: Pre-Application fee and the institution will remit the payment in accordance with the Commission's *Dues and Fees Policy and Procedures*.
- G. The Commission staff will provide the CEO/President and Primary Contact Person with instructions for submitting the required evidence to demonstrate that the institution meets the *Pre-Applicant Minimum Requirements for Eligibility*.
- H. The institution must submit the required evidence using the Evidence Inventory in the secure MSCHE portal.
 - 1. The institution must submit required evidence in English.
 - 2. The institution will compile required evidence in a secure and confidential manner in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.
 - 3. The institution will submit only those documents which are required for review or as requested by the Commission.
 - 4. The institution will omit personally identifiable and other sensitive personal information in submissions. If documents are considered pertinent and necessary for the review the institution will redact personally identifiable information prior to submission.
 - 5. The institution may designate business information within its submissions that it believes would be exempt from public disclosure under applicable federal and state public records laws and regulations.
- I. The required evidence must be submitted according to the deadlines provided by Commission

staff. To the extent a deadline falls on a weekend or a United States Federal Holiday, the next business day will be the applicable deadline.

Submission deadline

February 1

April 1

June 1

August 1

October 1

- J. The Commission staff will work with an institution that is in the simultaneous process of obtaining degree-granting authority or legal authorization from an authorized state, federal agency, or Congress.
1. The institution is responsible for ascertaining and initiating the process and for direct communication with the authorizing agency.
 2. The institution must upload documentation of a progressive application for review as required evidence in the *Pre-Applicant Minimum Requirements for Eligibility*.
 3. The institution must commit to providing written documentation, which may include correspondence, in subsequent submissions and upon request to update the Commission on this process.
 4. The Commission staff may request additional information regarding this process.
 5. The Commission staff will invite an agency representative to observe the required On-Site Pre-Applicant Site Visit.
- K. Institutions that currently hold accreditation from a USDE recognized accrediting agency (institutional or programmatic) may be able to follow an expedited process for obtaining MSCHE accreditation in accordance with Commission's *Addition or Change of Accreditor to MSCHE Procedures*.
1. An institution seeking to add or change accreditor will follow the *Pre-Applicant Determination of Eligibility to Apply Procedures* in their entirety.
 2. The pre-application review process is required for all applicant institutions.
- L. The Commission will accept, at any time, complaints and third-party comments from interested parties regarding the pre-applicant institution's compliance with the Commission's *Pre-Applicant Minimum Requirements for Eligibility Guidelines* in accordance with the Commission's *Complaints Involving Applicant and Member Institutions Policy and Procedures* and *Third-Party Comments for Institutions Under Review Policy and Procedures*.
1. The Commission will post a list of institutions engaged in the application and candidacy process on its website.
 2. The Commission will provide an online form for the submission of complaints or third-party comments on its website.
 3. All complaints and third-party comments must be submitted directly to the Commission using the official online form except for special process considerations noted on the Commission's website.
- M. Once a pre-applicant institution has submitted the required evidence to demonstrate compliance

with the Commission's minimum requirements it will notify its constituencies, including the general public, that it is in the process of determining its eligibility to apply for candidate for accreditation status with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education and the Commission makes available the opportunity to submit complaints or written third-party comments.

1. The form of this required notice is at the discretion of the institution.
2. Methods of notification might include an announcement on the website or in publications or brochures, email, mail and/or other appropriate means of communication.
3. The pre-applicant institution will use the following statement:

[Institution name] is currently engaged in the process for determining eligibility to apply for candidate for accreditation status (pre-application) with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education's (MSCHE). MSCHE is an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education to conduct accreditation and pre-accreditation (candidacy status) activities for institutions of higher education, including distance education, correspondence education programs, and direct assessment programs offered at those institutions. The Commission's geographic area of accrediting activities is throughout the United States. MSCHE accepts complaints and third-party comments for institutions engaged in the application and candidacy process. Please visit MSCHE's website at www.msche.org for more information. MSCHE provides an online form for the submission of complaints or third-party comments on its website.

4. A pre-applicant institution may not imply that it is a candidate or accredited member of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. The term accreditation is to be used only when candidate for accreditation or accredited status is conferred to an institution of higher education by an accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education.

III. Procedures for Commission Review and Action

- A. The Commission will assign a Commission staff liaison with no known conflicts of interest to serve as liaison for the institution.
 1. The role of the Commission staff liaison is to provide advice and guidance throughout the application process.
 2. An institution's compliance with the liaison's advice and guidance does not guarantee that the Commission will grant candidate for accreditation status to the institution.
 3. The decision to grant candidate for accreditation status is made by the Commission according to the multi-level accreditation decision-making process.
- B. The Commission staff liaison will review the required evidence submitted by the institution to demonstrate compliance with the *Pre-Applicant Minimum Requirements for Eligibility* in a timely manner to ensure that it is materially complete and all required information was submitted.

1. The Commission staff liaison may request additional information to verify compliance and/or clarify information.
 2. If additional evidence is needed, the Commission staff liaison will notify the institution. Such requests may lengthen the time for review.
 3. The institution will submit all requested additional evidence according to established deadlines set by staff.
 4. If additional evidence is not provided, the pre-application will expire six months after the due date.
 - a. The Commission staff will notify the institution in writing that the application has expired.
 - b. The institution may choose to reapply by submitting the required evidence to demonstrate compliance with the *Pre-Applicant Minimum Requirements for Eligibility Guidelines* and the Review I: Pre-Application fee.
- C. The Commission staff will conduct an internal review of the required evidence.
1. The Commission staff liaison will consult publicly available higher education data sources, monitor media outlets, and otherwise consider any other appropriate and substantiated information available to the Commission.
 2. The Commission staff liaison will review past submissions by the institution if it is reapplying.
 3. The Commission staff liaison will identify areas of further inquiry or analysis for the Commission's legal counsel.
 4. The Commission's legal counsel will review the submission to verify compliance with the minimum requirements, Commission policy and procedures, and federal regulations.
 5. Legal counsel may request additional information to verify and/or clarify information.
 6. Legal counsel will prepare a written summary of the review to provide guidance and advice for the Commission staff and peer evaluators.
- D. The Commission staff liaison will provide a written summary of the internal staff review for peer evaluators.
- E. If potential violations of the minimum requirements, Commission policy and procedures, federal regulations, or other legal issues are identified through the legal review, the Commission staff will inform the institution in writing that the institution does not appear to meet the minimum requirements and provide the reasons why.
1. The institution may voluntarily withdraw from the application process pursuant to the procedures provided in Section IV.
 2. If the institution does not voluntarily withdraw, the Commission staff will take an action to decline to review the application and note that the institution may not continue in the application and candidacy process. This is not an adverse action and is therefore, not subject to appeal or arbitration.
 3. For both actions in 1 and 2 above, after waiting one year from the date of the action, the institution may choose to reapply by submitting the required evidence to demonstrate compliance with the *Pre-Applicant Minimum Requirements for Eligibility* and the Review I: Pre-Application Fee.

- F. In accordance with federal regulation 34 CFR § 602.28(b)(1-4), if the institution is subject to any of the conditions provided in 1 a-e below, the Commission will not grant candidate status for accreditation (pre-accreditation) or initial accreditation or reaffirm accreditation.
1. The Commission will not allow an institution to proceed in the application process if it is subject to the following:
 - a. A pending or final action brought by a state agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution's legal authority to provide postsecondary education in the State;
 - b. A decision by a USDE recognized agency to deny accreditation or candidate for accreditation status (pre-accreditation);
 - c. A pending or final (adverse) action brought by a USDE recognized accrediting agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution's accreditation or candidate for accreditation status (pre-accreditation);
 - d. A current non-compliance action (warning, probation, show cause or equivalent) imposed by a USDE recognized accrediting agency; or
 - e. A previous non-compliance action taken by a USDE recognized accreditor within the time periods specified below:
 1. A previous warning (or equivalent) action within the past 5 years; and/or
 2. A previous probation (or equivalent) within the past 8 years; and/or
 3. A previous show cause action within the two most recent accreditation cycles of the USDE recognized accreditor.
 2. The Commission staff, at their discretion, will take an action to rescind an action previously taken at any time upon becoming aware that an institution is subject to such circumstances. This is not an adverse action and is therefore, not subject to appeal or arbitration.
 3. The Commission may, in its sole discretion, grant accreditation or candidate for accreditation status (pre-accreditation) to an institution or program described in F.1. a-d of this section only if it provides to the United States Secretary of education a thorough and reasonable explanation, consistent with its *Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation*, policies and procedures, and applicable regulatory requirements why the action of the other agency does not preclude the Commission's grant of candidate for accreditation status, within 30 days of its action in accordance with federal regulation 34 CFR § 602.28(c).
- G. The Commission will assign Commission representatives in accordance with *Peer Evaluators Policy and Procedures*.
1. The Commission will assign two peer evaluators to conduct the review. At least one peer evaluator will be a member of the Committee on Applicant and Candidate Institutions.
 2. One evaluator will serve as the Team Chair who is responsible for handling logistics, communicating with the institution and the Commission staff, and finalizing and submitting the report by the established deadline.
 3. Each peer evaluator must complete or update an Evaluator Data Form (EDF), disclose any conflicts of interest and verify they have no conflict of interest with the specific assignment, agree to the *Statement of Ethical Conduct*, and complete the *Antitrust Certification of Compliance*, in order to serve.

4. The Commission will make available to the institution the team roster with a list of the peer evaluators.
 5. The institution will affirm that there is no conflict of interest with the proposed team roster within 10 calendar days.
 6. The Commission will reassign a peer evaluator if a conflict of interest is identified in accordance with Commission policy and procedures.
- H. The peer evaluators will review the evidence and conduct an independent review to determine if the institution appears to meet the *Pre-Applicant Minimum Requirements for Eligibility Guidelines*.
- I. The peer evaluators may request additional evidence that is required to clarify and/or verify information.
1. Peer evaluators will formally request specific documents that are required to clarify information or verify compliance.
 2. Peer evaluators will create a list of specific documents and forward the list to the institution according to established deadlines.
 3. All additional information that is requested must be documented by peer evaluators in the *Pre-Applicant Evaluator Report*.
 4. All additional information must be uploaded by the institution into the secure MSCHE portal according to the established deadlines.
- J. If requested additional information is not yet available for peer evaluators, the institution may request a delay not to exceed one year from the due date or the institution may voluntarily withdraw the pre-application pursuant to the procedures in Section IV.
- K. If the institution does not provide requested additional information in response to the peer evaluators and does not request a delay or voluntarily withdraw the pre-application, the pre-application will expire six months after the date of the submission of the required evidence to demonstrate compliance with the *Pre-Applicant Minimum Requirements for Eligibility Guidelines*. The institution may choose to reapply and submit the necessary forms, required evidence, and the Review I: Pre-Application Fee.
- L. The Commission staff liaison will schedule a consultation with peer evaluators to review the findings from their independent reviews.
- M. The institution will host a Pre-Applicant On-Site Team Visit by at least one of the peer evaluators assigned to the review.
1. The Pre-Applicant On-Site Team Visit must be conducted in person to verify the evidence submitted by the institution to demonstrate compliance with the *Pre-Applicant Minimum Requirements for Eligibility Guidelines*.
 2. The visit schedule should include time to interview institutional constituencies (including key administrators, governing board members, faculty, staff, students, and representatives of a related entity, if applicable), and verify the institution's physical plant/presence on the main campus and if applicable, at each branch campus and additional location.
 - a. The locations must be active with students receiving instruction.

- b. If the location is not active at the time of this review, it does not need to be visited.
 3. The Commission staff liaison will accompany the peer evaluators on the visit to the main campus.
- N. The peer evaluators will submit travel expenses in accordance with the Commission's *Travel Policy and Procedures*.
- O. Upon completion of the visit, the Team Chair will complete and submit the *Pre-Applicant Evaluator Report* according to the instructions and established deadlines provided by the Commission staff.
 1. The report will document if, after the completion of the visit, peer evaluators can confirm that the institution appears or does not appear to meet all of the minimum requirements.
 2. The report will document that the on-site visit was conducted to the main campus and if applicable, at each branch campus and additional location, and specify the address of each location visited.
 3. The report will include a proposed accreditation action in accordance with the Commission's *Accreditation Actions Policy and Procedures*.
 4. The proposed action is forwarded for consideration by the next level of accreditation decision-making.
 5. The Team Chair does not share the proposed accreditation action with the institution.
 6. The Team Chair will upload the report directly to the secure MSCHE portal.
 7. The report is not made available to the institution.
- P. The Commission, through its multi-level accreditation decision making process, will analyze all of the accreditation materials related to the review and any other appropriate and substantiated information available to it.
- Q. The Commission will take action in accordance with the *Accreditation Actions Policy and Procedures*. The range of actions the Commission may take on the pre-application include but are not limited to:
 1. To invite the institution to submit a Letter of Intent to Apply for Candidate for Accreditation Status within 60 calendar days of the date of the Commission's action.
 2. The Commission will request a Candidate Assessment Report (CAR) and direct a candidate assessment team visit.
 3. To decline to review the application.
 4. To acknowledge receipt of the institution's intent to voluntarily withdraw its application for candidate for accreditation status.
 5. To note the pre-application has expired.
- R. Institutions invited to submit a Letter of Intent to Apply for candidate for accreditation status must submit it within 60 calendar days of the date of the Commission's action.
 1. The institution will upload the Letter of Intent to Apply in the Candidate Readiness Assessment review in the secure MSCHE portal.
 2. Upon receipt of the Letter of Intent to Apply, the Commission staff will remind the institution of the Commission's request for a written report and the due date.

3. If the institution does not submit within 60 calendar days and does not request a delay or voluntarily withdraw from the application process, the pre-application will expire on the due date.
- S. The Commission staff liaison will provide a written summary of the review to the institution.
- T. The Commission will provide notification of accreditation actions in accordance with *Communication in the Accreditation Process Policy and Procedures* and federal regulation 34 CFR § 602.26.
- U. Changes in an institution's legal status, form of control, ownership, or any other fundamental changes to the structure of the institution are not permitted during the application and candidacy review cycle.
1. The Commission defines a change in legal status, form of control, ownership, or any other fundamental changes to the structure of the institution in the Commission's *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*, *Complex Substantive Change Procedures*, and *Substantive Change Guidelines*.
 2. Institutions that are considering these changes during the application process should consider the Procedures for Voluntarily Withdrawing from the Application Process in section IV of these procedures.
 3. The Commission staff, at their discretion, will take an action to decline to review an application from an institution considering this type of change at any time upon becoming aware of such circumstances. This is not an adverse action and is therefore not subject to appeal or arbitration.
 4. After waiting one year from the date of the action, the institution may choose to reapply and submit the forms, required evidence, and the Review I: Pre-Application Fee.

IV. Procedures for Voluntarily Withdrawing from the Application Process

- A. A pre-applicant institution may withdraw voluntarily from the Commission's application process at any time prior to a grant of candidate for accreditation status.
- B. The pre-applicant institution will submit a formal written Letter of Intent to Voluntarily Withdraw Application, addressed to the President of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.
1. The request should be dated and signed by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO)/President and the Chair of the board/governing body.
 2. The request should briefly describe the rationale for the voluntary withdraw and specify the date that the application is withdrawn.
 3. The request should be submitted in PDF format via email to president@msche.org.
- C. The Commission staff will take an administrative action to acknowledge receipt of the institution's intent to voluntarily withdraw and note the date that the application was withdrawn.
- D. The Commission will provide notification of accreditation actions in accordance with *Communication in the Accreditation Process Policy and Procedures* and federal regulation 34 CFR § 602.26.

- E. A voluntary withdraw is initiated by the institution. This is not an adverse action and is therefore not subject to appeal or arbitration.
- F. The institution must wait at least one year from the date of voluntary withdrawal to initiate a new pre-application. The institution must reapply by submitting the required evidence to demonstrate compliance with the *Pre-Applicant Minimum Requirements for Eligibility Guidelines* and the Review I: Pre-Application Fee.

V. Definitions

The following definitions are used and/or inferred in this policy and/or procedures:

- A. Accreditation activity.** All activities including but not limited to reviews, reports, visits conducted by Commission representatives related to the institution's accreditation phase, accreditation status, or scope of accreditation occurring throughout the accreditation review cycle and during ongoing monitoring activities for a member (accredited or candidate) or applicant institution.
- B. Accreditation materials.** All documentation related to accreditation activities including but not limited to the institution's written reports to the Commission, submitted evidence, team reports, institutional responses, confidential briefs, complaints or third-party comments, action notifications, substantive change requests, transcripts of proceedings, team rosters, and any correspondence of record. Accreditation materials are treated as confidential by Commission representatives, become part of the institutional record, and are retained in accordance with the Commission's *Maintenance and Retention of Commission Records Policy and Procedures*.
- C. Accreditation phase.** The stage of the institution in the accreditation lifecycle (pre-applicant, applicant, candidate, accredited). The phase will also indicate if an institution is a former applicant, candidate, or accredited institution. Accreditation phase is posted on the institution's directory listing on the MSCHE website, with the exception of pre-applicant and applicant institutions which are not displayed publicly in the institution directory.
- D. Accreditation Readiness Report (ARR).** The report an applicant institution will develop and submit to demonstrate that it meets the Commission's standards for accreditation, requirements of affiliation, policies and procedures, and applicable federal regulatory requirements.
- E. Accreditation status.** The member institution's standing with the Commission based on the most recent grant of candidate for accreditation status, grant of accreditation, reaffirmation, non-compliance, or adverse action taken by the Commission. Accreditation status is posted on the institution's directory listing on the MSCHE website.
- F. Additional Location.** A domestic or international physical facility or location that is geographically separate from the main campus and within the same ownership structure of the institution, at which the institution will offer at least 50 percent of an educational

program. A federal, State, or local penitentiary, prison, jail, reformatory, work farm, juvenile justice facility, or other similar correctional institution is considered to be an additional location even if a student receives instruction primarily through distance education or correspondence courses at that location. An additional location participates in Title IV programs only through the certification of the main campus. The Commission utilizes the federal definition of additional location found in 34 CFR § 600.2 and will conform its designation to match the Secretary of Education's if it learns its designations diverge in accordance with federal regulation 34 CFR § 602.24(f)(1-3).

- G. Adverse Action.** An accreditation action taken by the Commission to (1) deny the Candidate for Accreditation status of an institution; (2) withdraw Candidate for Accreditation status of an institution; (3) deny accreditation; or (4) withdraw accreditation. Adverse actions are subject to appeal.
- H. Applicant institution.** An institution of higher education that is in the process of assessing its readiness for candidate for accreditation status with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education and is not a member.
- I. Authorized representatives of member institution.** The institution will designate specific individuals to serve as authorized representatives of the institution when they designate them as key contacts (CEO, ALO, CAO, CFO, Portal Delegate, Primary Contact Person) in the secure MSCHE portal. Authorized representatives act responsibly on behalf of the institution in matters related to accreditation and are individuals with whom the Commission will directly communicate. The Commission may consider the Chair of the Board to be an authorized representative of the institution.
- J. Branch Campus.** A domestic or international physical facility or location of an institution that is geographically separate from the main campus of the institution and within the same ownership structure of the institution, and that is also (1) approved by the Secretary as a branch campus, and (2) independent from the main campus. The branch campus is considered independent of the main campus if it is permanent in nature; offers credit bearing and/or Title IV eligible courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential; has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and has its own budgetary and hiring authority. The Commission utilizes the federal definition of branch campus in 34 CFR § 600.2 and will conform its designation to match the Secretary of Education's if it learns its designations diverge in accordance with federal regulation 34 CFR § 602.24(f)(1-3).
- K. Candidate for accreditation status (pre-accreditation).** An accreditation status granted by the Commission for a period of time, not to exceed five years, while the institution engages in its first comprehensive self-study evaluation. An institution that is granted candidate for accreditation status by the Commission has demonstrated that it appears to meet the Commission's standards for accreditation, requirements of affiliation, policies and procedures, and applicable federal regulatory requirements and is likely to attain accreditation. A candidate institution is a member of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

- L. Commission representative.** Any individual who represents or serves the Commission, including but not limited to peer evaluators, Commission staff, and Commissioners.
- M. Institution of higher education.** A postsecondary educational institution that awards postsecondary degrees and is authorized or licensed from an appropriate jurisdiction in which the institution is physically located (34 CFR § 600.3) and an institution is physically located in a state if it has a campus or other instructional site in that state (34 CFR § 600.5(ii)(b)). Institutions that offer only postsecondary certificates, diplomas, or licenses are not eligible for accreditation by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.
- N. Main campus.** The primary physical facility at which the institution offers eligible programs, is within the same ownership structure of the institution, and is certified as the main campus by the Commission (and the USDE if applicable). The institution's primary administration, classroom buildings, residence halls, library, and other buildings are housed within the same reasonably contiguous geographic area or parcel of land of the main campus. For an institution that only offers distance education programs, the main campus is where the administrative offices are located and approved by the Commission.
- O. Other instructional site (OIS).** Any off-campus site, other than those meeting the definition of a main campus, branch campus, or additional location, at which the institution offers one or more credit-bearing or Title IV eligible courses, including dual enrollment courses at high schools. Sites offering less than 50 percent of an educational program are not defined in federal regulation.
- P. Peer evaluator.** An individual who is selected and assigned to an accreditation activity by the Commission staff. This individual is part of the multi-level accreditation decision-making process and will participate in the proposal of an accreditation action. Peer evaluator is not intended to include a Commissioner serving in an official Commissioner capacity on a committee or the Commission. Peer evaluator is not intended to include an assistant or any other observer of an accreditation activity.
- Q. Pre-applicant institution.** An institution of higher education that is in the process of determining its eligibility to apply for candidate for accreditation status. A pre-applicant institution is not a member of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.
- R. Related entity.** An entity, regardless of form, that is legally distinct from the institution but has a relationship, connection, or interdependency with the institution. Examples include but are not limited to (1) an individual, partnership, corporation, other entity, layer or group of ownership, or institution of higher education that exercises legal authority or control over the institution; (2) a subsidiary, controlled or supporting organization, other entity, or another institution of higher education for which the institution exercises legal authority or control over and thereby assumes liability; (3) an entity that has a voting interest and/or is granted a certain number of seats or representation on the institution's governing body such as a funding or religious sponsor; (4) a public college or university system administration or board which has legislative authority from an individual state, territory, or federal district

over a group of institutions, or (5) a private college or university system administration or board which has legal authority over a group of institutions. Alumni associations, fundraising organizations, and teaching hospitals are not considered related entities. Local, county, and state legislatures, other accreditors, local advisory boards, and government agencies or jurisdictions are not considered related entities. External non-accredited entities with which the institution has a written contract for the provision of limited student services or programs are not considered related entities.

- S. Scope of accreditation.** The candidate or accredited institution's accreditation status covers a defined scope of educational offerings, including but not limited to credential levels, delivery methods, and locations (additional locations, branch campuses, or other instructional sites) which have been reviewed by the Commission during accreditation activities. Any changes proposed by a member institution that are considered substantive must be reviewed through the substantive change review process prior to implementation in order to be included within the institution's scope of accreditation by the Commission.
- T. Statement of Accreditation Status (SAS).** The Commission's official public statement about each institution's current accreditation status. The SAS is a downloadable, printable statement with information about the institution, including but not limited to the institution's accreditation phase, accreditation status, scope of accreditation, and a history of the accreditation actions taken by Commission.
- U. Teach-out.** A process during which an institution, or institutional location that provides 100 percent of at least one program engages in an orderly closure or when, following the closure of an institution or location, another institution provides an opportunity for the students of the closed school to complete their program, regardless of their academic progress at the time of closure. *(federal definition in 34 CFR § 600.2, slightly modified to remove the word "program")*
- V. Teach-out agreement.** A written agreement between two or more institutions that provides for the equitable treatment of students and a reasonable opportunity for students to complete their program of study if an institution, or an institutional location that provides 100 percent of at least one program offered, ceases to operate before all enrolled students have completed their program of study. *(federal definition in 34 CFR § 602.3)*
- W. Teach-out plan.** A written plan developed by the institution that provides for the equitable treatment of students to complete their education, including any teach-out agreements that the institution has entered into or intends to enter into with another institution. *(federal definition in 34 CFR § 602.3)*

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Revisions:

Federal Regulations: 34 CFR § 602.11 Geographic scope of accrediting activities; § 602.16 Accreditation and pre-accreditation standards; § 602.18 Ensuring consistency in decision-making; § 602.19 Monitoring and reevaluation of accredited institutions and programs; § 602.20

Enforcement of standards; § 602.23 Operating procedures all agencies must have; § 602.24 Additional procedures certain institutional agencies must have; § 602.26 Notification of accrediting decisions; § 602.28 Regard for decisions of States and other accrediting agencies; Standards: Standard I Mission and Goals; Standard II Ethics and Integrity; Standard III Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience; Standard IV Support of the Student Experience; Standard V Educational Effectiveness Assessment; Standard VI Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement; Standard VII Governance, Leadership, and Administration.

Related Documents: Accreditation Actions Policy and Procedures; Accreditation Activities Guidelines; Accreditation Review Cycle and Monitoring Policy and Procedures; Complaints Involving Applicant and Member Institutions Policy and Procedures; Communication in the Accreditation Process Policy and Procedures; Dues and Fees Policy and Procedures; Substantive Change Policy and Procedures; Teach-Out Plans and Agreements Policy and Procedures; Third-Party Comments for Institutions Under Review Policy and Procedures; Travel Policy and Procedures;

Pre-Applicant Minimum Requirements for Eligibility

MINIMUM REQUIREMENT 1: PROPER LEGAL AUTHORIZATION OR LICENSING TO OPERATE AS A POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTION

The institution must be legally authorized or licensed to operate as a postsecondary educational institution to provide educational programs beyond secondary education or the equivalent for non-U.S. institutions, or hold proper legal exemption, from the appropriate jurisdiction where the institution is physically located in accordance with federal regulation 34 CFR § 602.28(a), § 600.4, and § 600.9.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENT 2: GOOD STANDING WITH STATE AUTHORIZING AGENCIES OR OTHER USDE RECOGNIZED ACCREDITORS

The institution must be in good standing with the state or other authorizing agency, other accreditors, and quality assurance agencies.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENT 3: INSTITUTION IS OPERATIONAL WITH STUDENTS ENROLLED IN DEGREE PROGRAMS

The institution must be operational, with at least one cohort of students actively enrolled in its degree programs. Institutions that offer only postsecondary certificates, diplomas, or licenses are not eligible for accreditation by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENT 4: INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND GOALS

The institution must have a mission statement and related goals that define its purposes within the context of higher education.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENT 5: INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE

The institution must have a governance and administration structure that allows it to have education as its primary purpose and there are no legal or proprietary ambiguities in the ownership and control of or responsibility for the institution.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENT 6: FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The institution must have documented financial resources, funding base, and plans for financial development, including those from any related entities, adequate to support its educational purposes and programs and to ensure financial stability.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENT 7: REQUIRED DISCLOSURES AND CERTIFICATIONS STATEMENT

The institution must honestly and accurately make the following disclosures and provide sufficient description and documentation to explain the facts and circumstances. The lack of sufficient description and documentation may disqualify the institution.