



Guidelines

The Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO): Role and Responsibilities

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I. Purpose

These guidelines outline the responsibilities of the individual appointed as the Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). See also the policy *Communication in the Accreditation Process*.

II. Statement

The president of each institution shall appoint an Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) to fulfill the responsibilities outlined in these guidelines. The president or the ALO of the institution shall notify the Commission (including updated contact information) when there is a change in the assignment of the designated ALO.

III. Selection of the Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO)

The ALO is carefully selected by the president and is an individual who has the time, knowledge, and authority to engage in regular communication and information-sharing about accreditation-related issues with the institution's president, other offices and individuals on campus, and MSCHE. The ALO shall be in regular and direct communication with the president. In addition, the ALO shall have adequate time and resources to focus on accreditation issues and should have appropriate status, visibility, authority, knowledge, access to data, and support from the senior administration to fulfill the responsibilities of this position.

The president shall *not* assume the role of the ALO; he or she should delegate this important and time-consuming responsibility. Likewise, the ALO shall *not* be a consultant who is hired to assist the institution with accreditation issues or reviews.

IV. Responsibilities of the Institution's Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO)

The institution's ALO is the designated liaison and serves as the primary point of contact with MSCHE staff. The ALO is responsible for:

A. Accreditation Review and Monitoring

The institution's ALO may or may not be directly involved in the leadership of each accreditation review or visit. However, at a minimum, the ALO serves as the primary contact with MSCHE staff and will be copied on all official communication. As such, the ALO should be cognizant of all activities related to accreditation review and monitoring.

- i. Ensuring that the president and institutional community are appropriately informed of MSCHE expectations and updates.
- ii. Maintaining regular contact with the MSCHE staff liaison (i.e. both informal and formal notification and updates); responding promptly when contacted by MSCHE staff.
- iii. Overseeing the submission of the annual data submission and ensuring its timely and accurate completion.
- iv. Ensuring institutional compliance with all Commission requests for written reports and additional information in a timely manner.
- v. Maintaining and updating institutional files of accreditation materials such as reports related to accreditation and reaffirmation and correspondence with MSCHE.
- vi. Serving as a key resource person and ensuring the timely and accurate submission of the Annual Institutional Update (AIU). All communication regarding the AIU will be sent to the ALO.
- vii. Serving as a key resource person and coordinating the details of all accreditation-related visits by MSCHE staff and peer evaluators.
- viii. Maintaining familiarity with the institution's accreditation history by reviewing the Statement of Accreditation Status (SAS) posted on the MSCHE website, past accreditation reports, and correspondence with MSCHE.
- ix. Ensuring the accuracy of institutional data collected by MSCHE and making sure that MSCHE is notified of changes, including changes in the names of key contact persons. The ALO should review the institution's Statement of Accreditation Status (SAS) on a regular basis.
- x. Sharing the availability of training opportunities offered by MSCHE with institutional community and colleagues.

B. Middle States Commission on Higher Education Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines

- i. Maintaining working knowledge of MSCHE standards for accreditation, requirements of affiliation, policies, procedures, and guidelines.
- ii. Ensuring that compliance with MSCHE's requirements of affiliation, standards for accreditation, and policies is incorporated into the ongoing planning and evaluation processes of the institution.
- iii. Regularly reviewing information, including updates to policy documents, available at the MSCHE website (www.msche.org).
- iv. Familiarizing faculty, staff, administrators, board members, students and other stakeholders with MSCHE's policies and procedures, especially when such documents are newly adopted or revised.
- v. Notifying MSCHE *in advance* of substantive changes and major institutional developments and coordinating the submission of all substantive change requests in accordance with the policy on Substantive Change.

C. State and Federal Regulations

- i. Communicating with MSCHE regarding requests to clarify the institution's scope of accreditation or other matters related to accreditation from external regulatory agencies, such as a state agency or the U.S. Department of Education.

- ii. Informing MSCHE of accreditation related inquiries or requests for information from external regulatory agencies.
- iii. Ensuring the institution's timely response to MSCHE requests for information related to state and federal requirements.
- iv. Ensuring consistency between data submitted to MSCHE and external agencies.

V. Increasing the Effectiveness of the Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO)

The effectiveness of the ALO will increase through participation in MSCHE training opportunities including the MSCHE annual conference, town halls, and other events, as appropriate, and active service as a volunteer peer evaluator. To be considered as a potential peer evaluator, complete an Evaluator Data Form through the MSCHE website (www.msche.org).

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