



Middle States Commission on Higher Education

3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104-2680

Phone: 267-284-5000 Fax: 215-662-5501 www.msche.org

Frequently Asked Questions About Cheyney University's Accreditation

November 2017

On November 16, 2017, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education acted to extend the period for demonstrating compliance with the Commission's Standards and Requirements of Affiliation by one year, for good cause, because Cheyney University has demonstrated significant progress towards the resolution of its non-compliance issues, is making a good faith effort to remedy existing deficiencies, and a reasonable expectation exists that such deficiencies will be remedied within the period of the extension. The full text of the Commission's November 16, 2017 action can be viewed at <http://www.msche.org/Documents/SAS/125/Public%20Disclosure%20Statement.htm>

What is the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)?

The Commission is a non-governmental, voluntary membership association that promotes educational excellence across institutions with diverse missions, student populations, and resources. It examines each institution as a whole, rather than focusing only on specific programs of study offered by an institution.

What is the role of the Commission?

The Commission is recognized by the United States Secretary of Education as a reliable authority regarding the quality of education or training offered by the institutions it accredits. The Commission accredits post-secondary degree-granting institutions in Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The Commission also accredits several international institutions that meet specific criteria. Currently the Middle States Commission consists of 526 member colleges and universities, including large public and private universities, numerous community colleges, private liberal arts colleges, church-related seminaries, several federally sponsored institutions, and a number of private, for-profit institutions.

Why would an institution become a member?

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education was founded in 1919 by a group of institutions seeking to create a formal means to work together to ensure the quality of post-secondary instruction and curriculum, and to share best practices. With the advent of Federal financial aid, the Federal Government delegated to the seven regional accreditors the responsibility to act as the gatekeeper for Federal Title IV financial aid eligibility. Thus, for an institution's students to be eligible for Federal financial aid it must be accredited by an agency recognized by the Federal Government as one of its "gatekeepers." MSCHE is federally recognized to fulfill this role.

What is required of an institution to join and remain a member in good standing?

Prior to being considered for accreditation and later to maintain their accreditation, all Middle States institutions must comply with the Commission's Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation. These requirements and standards set criteria pertaining to curriculum, planning, finance, governance, administration, and other institutional and academic support areas.

What does it mean when the Commission extends the period for demonstrating compliance by one year for “good cause”?

Cheyney University received a “show cause” action from the Commission at its June 2017 meeting. This show cause action is still in effect; however, an extension for good cause was granted by the Commission at its November 2017 meeting because the institution has presented evidence of and demonstrated significant progress toward resolving its non-compliance issues, is making a good faith effort to remedy existing deficiencies, and a reasonable expectation exists that such deficiencies will be remedied within the period of the extension, which will conclude in November 2018.

What are the parameters of an extension for good cause?

An extension for good cause, by federal regulation, is a one-time event. The Middle States Commission on Higher Education may grant this extension for a period of one year. At the end of that year, in this case November 2018, only two options will be available to the Commission: (1) reaffirm accreditation; (2) withdraw accreditation.

What does it mean when the Commission issues a Show Cause action?

Show Cause is a non-compliance action requiring an institution to demonstrate why its accreditation should not be withdrawn. The Commission issues a show cause action when it determines that an institution no longer meets one or more of the accreditation standards and requirements of affiliation and cannot do so within the federally mandated time period.

A show cause action requires an institution to present its case to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education as to why its accreditation should be continued by means of a substantive report, and an on-site visit/evaluation, which will occur shortly after the receipt of the report. If an institution fails to provide compelling evidence that it meets the Commission’s requirements and standards the Commission acts to withdraw accreditation. At its June 2017 meeting, the Commission required Cheyney University to submit its report on September 1, 2017. It did so.

What does the Extension for Good Cause action mean for current students?

Cheyney University remains accredited. The November 2017 extension for good cause action requires Cheyney University to complete and submit for approval, no later than September 1, 2018, an update of its September 2017 written plan describing how, if the Commission withdraws accreditation, students will be accommodated to complete their education. In accordance with Commission policy and federal regulations, the plan must provide for the equitable treatment of students to ensure that they can get the courses they need to graduate, and include any agreements that the institution has entered into or intends to enter into with another institution. Approvals from any licensing, regulatory, or other legal entities, as may be necessary, must also be provided to the Commission.

What does the Extension for Good Cause action mean for alumni and their degrees?

The extension for good cause action will not affect degrees already earned from Cheyney University. If the University’s accreditation is withdrawn, under federal regulations any credits and degrees earned up until the last effective date of accreditation will be considered as having been earned at an accredited institution. Further, under Middle States standards, another Middle States institution may not base decisions on the acceptance of transfer credit exclusively on the accreditation status of a student’s previous institution.

What are the Requirements of Affiliation and Accreditation Standards?

The Requirements of Affiliation define conditions that must be met in order for institutions of higher education to be eligible for Middle States accreditation. The Accreditation Standards describe what an institution must do to achieve accredited status and remain a member in good standing. Requirements and Standards in effect for Commission actions requiring institutional follow-up through March 1, 2018 can be found at <http://www.msche.org/publications/CHX-2011-WEB.pdf>. The Requirements and Standards pertaining to Commission actions requiring institutional follow-up after March 1, 2018 can be found at <http://www.msche.org/publications/RevisedStandardsFINAL.pdf>

Who developed the Requirements and Standards?

The 15 Requirements of Affiliation and 7 Accreditation Standards were developed and approved by the accredited institutions that comprise the Middle States membership. The current Accreditation Standards were adopted in 2014.

What led the Commission to issue an extension for good cause action to Cheyney University?

The Commission placed Cheyney University on probation in November 2015. It cited insufficient evidence that the University was in compliance with the following Standards under Characteristics of Excellence: Standard 3 (Institutional Resources) and expressed concerns about Standard 4 (Leadership and Governance) and Standard 7 (Institutional Assessment).

In November 2016, the Commission's areas of concern grew to include Standard 2 (Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal), Standard 5 (Administration), and Requirement of Affiliation 8 (documented financial resources).

At its November 2017 meeting the Commission examined evidence submitted by Cheyney University in its show cause report of September 1, 2017, the report of the team that visited Cheyney University in October 2017, the Commission's Committee on Follow-up Reports recommendation, and the institution's response to the team report. It determined that the University had achieved compliance with Standards 2, 4 and 5, and had made substantial progress in coming into compliance with Standard 3 and Requirement of Affiliation 8 (Numbering of Standards and Requirement of Affiliation pertains to actions requiring follow-up prior to March 1, 2018.)

What are the next steps involving Cheyney University's accreditation?

At its November 16, 2017 meeting, the Commission determined that Cheyney University was not in compliance with Requirement of Affiliation 11 *Documented Financial Resources* (formerly 8) and Standard VI *Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement* (formerly Standard 3). The Commission also requested additional evidence of sufficient learning opportunities and resources to support programs of study and students' academic progress (Standard III *Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience*).

The University will submit to the Commission all of the documentation that has been requested no later than September 1, 2018. These materials, along with the results of an evaluation team visit to the Cheyney campus, will be reviewed in Fall 2018 by the Commission's Committee on Follow-up Reports. The Committee will issue its recommendations to the full Commission at its November 2018 meeting. At this time the Commission must either reaccredit the institution or withdraw its accreditation.

How can I see the specific wording of the Middle States Extension for Good Cause action regarding Cheyney University?

Click on <http://www.msche.org/Documents/SAS/125/Public%20Disclosure%20Statement.htm>

How can I learn more about the Middle States Commission on Higher Education?

Visit www.msche.org. This website contains Commission policies, publications, accreditation resources, contact information, and much more. On the main screen there is a link to Frequently Asked Questions about Middle States and Accreditation.

How can I learn more about accreditation in general?

The website of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (www.chea.org) contains resources on accreditation; descriptions of how accreditation works; lists of regional, national, and specialized accreditors; and information about degree mills and accreditation mills.

How can I learn more about federal regulations pertaining to accreditation?

Visit the website of the United States Department of Education: <https://www.ed.gov/>