



## **Middle States Commission on Higher Education**

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### *Administrative Procedures*

## **Committee Meeting Guidelines**

The committees of the Commission designated to review institutional reports are the Committee on Evaluation Reports, Committee on Periodic Review Reports, Committee on Follow-up Activities/Candidate Institutions, and the Substantive Change Committee. The Substantive Change Committee is authorized to act on behalf of the full Commission on all requests for approval of substantive changes at institutions, and the Executive Committee has the authority to act on behalf of the Commission on all matters arising between Commission meetings. All committees except the Substantive Change Committee and the Executive Committee are expected to recommend an action to the Commission.

All committees are chaired by a member of the Commission. Committee members receive numerous institutional documents and instructions which enable them to complete thoroughly their specific review assignments and to participate in the decision-making process for all institutions on the day's agenda. All committee members are encouraged and expected to attend the meeting and participate in discussions on each of the institutions.

### **Confidentiality**

All documents, discussions, and team and committee recommendations related to the accreditation of an institution are considered confidential. Chairs of evaluation teams or any other participant in a committee meeting should not under any circumstances share the team's recommendation, the Chair's brief, or the committee's recommendation with the institution.

## **Committee on Evaluation Reports**

The Committee on Evaluation Reports meets several times each year and is charged to conduct an independent review of institutions that have submitted their decennial self-study documents and hosted a peer review team; to consider the team's recommendations, the institution's response, and any staff comments; and to recommend an accrediting action to the Commission. A commissioner, the Chair of the evaluation team, and the staff liaison are assigned to each institution and serve at the committee meeting as reviewers and presenters.

### *Role of the Evaluation Team Chair*

The Chair presents a brief of the evaluation team report orally, discusses in greater detail any concerns or commendations the team expressed regarding compliance with accreditation standards, and proposes the action that the Committee should recommend to the Commission. The Chair's brief is a succinct reflection of the team's findings and should be no more than two pages in length. It is further described in the Handbook for Conducting and Hosting an Evaluation Visit.

### *Role of the Commissioner*

Prior to the meeting, the commissioner reviews the four major documents involved in the evaluation cycle: (1) the institutional self-study document; (2) the evaluation team report; (3) the Chair's brief of the evaluation report; and (4) the institution's response to the evaluation report. At the meeting, the commissioner will address key issues not discussed by the team Chair, raise relevant questions for response by the team Chair, and propose an action to the Commission.

### *Role of the Staff Liaison*

Staff serve as a resource. As appropriate, the assigned staff person may provide comments and answer questions or address concerns of the Committee regarding the institution.

### *Role of the Chair and Other Members of the Committee*

A commissioner serves as Chair of the Committee and, as Chair, is responsible for assuring that there is appropriate participation and consistency in the decision-making process. The Chair allows general discussion and questions by everyone present to facilitate agreement on the action which the Committee will recommend to the Commission. The Committee decides if the institution should be placed on the agenda for consent or discussion by the Commission.

## **Committee on Periodic Review Reports**

The Committee on Periodic Review Reports is an ad hoc committee charged with reviewing a comprehensive report submitted by each institution five years after its decennial review and visit and recommending an accrediting action to the Commission. Institutions submit their reports in June. After thorough review of the materials, the Committee convenes in the fall.

### *Role of the External Reviewers*

In advance of the meeting, each reviewer receives packets for each institution on the agenda, which include: (1) the executive summary for each PRR; (2) the external reviewer's analysis; (3) the reviewer's brief; (4) the finance associate's report; and (5) the institution's response.

The first reviewer will read orally a brief of the reviewers' report, make additional observations if desired, and propose the action that the Committee should recommend to the Commission.

The second reviewer will make additional comments relative to other key issues in the institution's report and the reviewers' report.

### *Role of the Staff Liaison*

Staff serve as a resource. As appropriate, the assigned staff person may provide comments and answer questions or address concerns of the committee regarding the institution.

### *Role of the Chair and Other Members of the Committee*

A commissioner serves as Chair of the Committee and, as Chair, is responsible for assuring that there is appropriate participation and consistency in the decision-making process. The Chair allows general discussion and questions by everyone present to facilitate agreement on the action which the committee will recommend to the Commission. The Committee decides if the institution should be placed on the agenda for consent or discussion by the Commission.

## **Committee on Follow-up Activities/Candidate Institutions**

The Committee on Follow-up Activities/Candidate Institutions is charged with reviewing reports from: (1) institutions for which the Commission has mandated follow-up reports or activities; and (2) institutions seeking or already in Candidate for Accreditation status, and with recommending an accrediting action to the Commission.

### *Role of the Committee Members*

The Committee is composed of five or more commissioners. Each commissioner is assigned a comparable number of reports. For follow-up activities, the Committee is charged with reviewing all institutional and special visit reports, evaluating them in light of the concerns expressed by the Commission, and recommending appropriate actions to the Commission. The Committee's chief responsibility to applicant and candidate institutions is to recommend to the Commission appropriate action on the invitation of institutions to apply for Candidate status and on the admission of institutions to Candidate status. The Committee also determines if institutions in candidacy are making timely progress toward accreditation.

### *Role of the Staff Liaison*

Staff serve as a resource. As appropriate, the assigned staff person may provide comments and answer questions or address concerns of the Committee regarding the institution. For institutions where written institutional reports are not required, Committee members will review and discuss staff reports.

### *Role of the Chair and Other Members of the Committee*

A commissioner serves as Chair of the Committee and, as Chair, is responsible for assuring that there is appropriate participation and consistency in the decision-making process. The Chair allows general discussion and questions by everyone present to facilitate agreement on the action which the Committee will recommend to the Commission. The Committee decides if the institution should be placed on the agenda for consent or discussion by the Commission.

## **Substantive Change Committee**

The Substantive Change Committee monitors substantive changes that occur between regularly-scheduled periodic evaluations, because changes within institutions are frequent and there is a need to assure educational quality as institutions change. Institutions seeking prior approval of or providing information regarding a substantive change submit a report that provides basic planning information, including the nature and purpose of the proposed activity, its relevance to the institution's current mission, and its impact on the rest of the institution.

The Committee is charged with reviewing all reports requesting approval of a substantive change and with taking a final action on such requests. It is chaired by a commissioner, and a public representative on the Commission serves as a standing member.

### *Role of the Committee Members/Reviewers*

Committee members serve as first and second reviewers for particular substantive change requests. Each of the two reviewers reports orally on the institutional materials sent to them and proposes what action should be taken in response to the substantive change request(s) assigned to them. Committee members participate in a discussion of the action which the committee should take on behalf of the Commission or, alternatively, in the determination that a substantive change request should be forwarded to the full Commission for review at its next meeting.

### *Role of the Staff Liaison*

Staff serve as a resource. As appropriate, the assigned staff person may provide comments and answer questions or address concerns of the committee regarding the institution.

### *Role of the Chair*

A commissioner serves as Chair of the Committee and, as Chair, is responsible for assuring that there is appropriate participation and consistency in the decision-making process. The Chair allows general discussion and questions by everyone present to facilitate agreement on the action which the Committee will take on behalf of the Commission.

The Chair of the Committee reports the actions to the full Commission.

The Committee may, at its discretion, refer a decision to the full Commission for discussion and/or decision.