



Middle States Commission on Higher Education

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Policy

Review of Commission Standards, Policies, and Procedures

The primary document of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education is *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Requirements of Affiliation and Standards for Accreditation*. The Middle States Commission on Higher Education conducts ongoing review of the accreditation standards through post-accreditation feedback from institutions, peer evaluators, Commissioners, and staff and reaffirms the standards at least every ten years. Review Processes involve the colleges and universities that are accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. .

Commission reaffirmation of the standards is based on an assessment of the adequacy of all standards as meaningful measures of quality. If the Commission determines that 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. Proposals will be sent to member institutions and other constituencies for comment or discussion, and the reaffirmation process culminates in a membership vote. (The full approval process is noted below.)

Several types of Commission publications supplement the basic accreditation standards. Policies are elaborations of the accreditation standards in *Characteristics of Excellence*. Guidelines (based on best practices) are advice to members for implementing standards; Administrative Procedures are processes to guide the work of the Commission and its members; and handbooks assist members in implementing the accreditation standards. All of these publications are subject to approval by the Commission, and policies that affect the substance of accreditation standards are also subject to approval by the membership.

Suggestions and recommendations are regularly solicited from the Commission's constituency and other appropriate communities of interest to ensure the relevance and appropriateness of the Commission's policies and procedures. In addition, the experience of institutions and evaluation teams provides continuous commentary on the quality and practicality of Commission documents.

The Commission reviews its policies and procedures in accord with the cycle outlined below:

Following the revision of *Characteristics*, the Commission reviews other policies and procedures which are affected by changes in *Characteristics*.

After first review by the Commission, the text of proposed major new policies or major substantive revisions is made available to the Commission's broad constituency for comment. Methods of soliciting comments from the Commission's constituencies may include the Commission's website, the newsletter, or other special publications. After appropriate changes

are made to initial drafts, as necessary, the document is returned to the Commission for second review and approval. Following Commission approval, member institutions are given the opportunity to vote by mail ballot or at a special meeting convened by the Commission for that purpose.

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