



Middle States Commission on Higher Education

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www.msche.org

ACCREDITATION LIAISON OFFICER

Orientation Packet

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Congratulations on your selection as your institution's Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO). In this role you will serve as the primary contact with the staff of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE or the Commission) and will be an important resource to your institution on accreditation issues.

About the Middle States Commission on Higher Education

The Mid-Atlantic Region Commission on Higher Education, doing business as the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, was legally incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on March 1, 2013. From its origins in 1919 through February 2013, the Commission was a unit of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. Although now an independent (non-profit) corporation, the Commission maintains an ongoing business relationship with the Middle States Association.

MSCHE is a regional accrediting agency recognized by the United States Secretary of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) to accredit institutions of higher education in Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, including distance education and correspondence education programs offered by those institutions. In addition, the Commission accredits a limited number of institutions that are based outside of the United States.

The Commission's Mission, Principles, and Strategic Goals and Objectives are posted on the Commission's website and are available at www.msche.org/about-us/.

MSCHE Staff Liaison (Vice President)

One of the central responsibilities of an ALO is to maintain contact with the MSCHE staff liaison (vice president) who is assigned to your institution. You should communicate with your MSCHE staff liaison (vice president) as needed and respond promptly when contacted by that individual.

MSCHE News

While MSCHE publishes a newsletter multiple times throughout the year, you can always view the latest news on www.msche.org.

Statement of Accreditation Status (SAS)

The Statement of Accreditation Status (SAS) is the Commission's official public statement about each institution's current accreditation status and scope of accreditation. The SAS also provides a brief history of the actions taken by the Commission.

The Commission publishes an SAS for each accredited and candidate institution in the [Institutions](#) section of www.msche.org. Search by your institution's name, and click on Print SAS in the upper right corner to print your SAS. The same information is available in the tabbed section at the bottom of each institution's page.

Recent Commission Actions

The Commission meets three times per year, in March, June, and November. The Commission posts accreditation actions on its website at www.msche.org/recent-commission-actions/

Glossary of Higher Education and Accreditation Terms

The glossary of common higher education and accreditation terminology is helpful to individuals who are new to higher education and/or accreditation.

MSCHE Handbooks

MSCHE has numerous documents to support you in your role as ALO.

- [Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation](#)
The Commission's accreditation standards and requirements were approved by members in fall 2014.
- [Verification of Compliance with Accreditation-Relevant Federal Regulations](#)
The Compliance booklet provides guidelines on the submission of a written report documenting the institution's compliance with certain federal regulations. Also see the [Institutional Report Template](#) and [Reviewer's Report Template](#).
- [Self-Study: Creating a Useful Process and Report](#)
The Self Study handbook provides guidance for institutions undergoing the self-study evaluation.
- [Team Visits: Conducting and Hosting an Evaluation Visit](#)
The Team Visits handbook provides guidelines and procedures on how to plan a successful team visit that follows submission of the institutional self-study.

MSCHE Policies, Guidelines, and Procedures

The Commission's standards, handbooks, publications, policies, guidelines and procedures provide a comprehensive set of documents describing all aspects of the Commission's accreditation review protocol and related activities.

The following Policies are available on the Commission's website at

<https://www.msche.org/policies:>

- **Accreditation Liaison Officer: Roles and Responsibilities**
These guidelines outline the important roles and responsibilities of the ALO.
- **Accreditation Review Cycle and Monitoring**
This policy describes the review cycle and the important components of accreditation review.
- **Accreditation Actions**
This policy outlines the range of accreditation actions the Commission may take.
- **Follow-Up Reports and Visits**
Follow-up reports and visits may be requested by the Commission. These guidelines provide valuable information for an ALO whose institution is preparing a follow-up report or for a follow-up visit.
- **Communication in the Accreditation Process**
This policy outlines how the Commission communicates with various stakeholders in the accreditation process. This policy also describes the proper way for institutions to represent their accreditation status and appropriate use of the MSCHE logo by accredited institutions.
- **Substantive Change Policy and Substantive Change Procedures**
Certain types of institutional changes must be approved by the Commission before they are implemented. Failure to follow this process could impact an institution's federal Title IV student financial aid. The ALO must ensure that all substantive changes are submitted to the Commission for review and approval in accordance with this policy.
- **Complaints and Third-Party Comments**
The Commission has specific policies and procedures to allow for the submission of relevant information about member institutions by the public.
- **Credit Hour Policy**
This policy articulates general requirements and expectations for the assignment of credit hours.

Professional Development Opportunities

Throughout the year, MSCHE offers one and two-day workshops for representatives of member institutions, which are posted on the Commission's website at www.msche.org/events.

The Commission's Annual Conference and pre-conference workshops are held either in late November or in December, also provides many opportunities to enhance your skills in a variety of accreditation-related topics.

The Higher Education Opportunity Act

In August 2008, the United States Congress passed the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA). The HEOA contains requirements for accreditors and the institutions they accredit. For additional details on the HEOA, visit the U.S. Department of Education's website, <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/leg/hea08/index.html>.