



**Middle States Commission on Higher Education**

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# ANNUAL INSTITUTIONAL UPDATE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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## General FAQs

### What is the Annual Institutional Update?

The Annual Institutional Update, or AIU, replaces the Institutional Profile (IP) as the Commission’s primary means of collecting our members’ institutional characteristics (key institutional contacts, locations, Carnegie classification, etc.), enrollment, financial, and “student success” (including graduation, loan repayment, and default rates) information.

It is also the means whereby an institution can opt to provide “contextual” information to clarify what might otherwise appear to be a negative or adverse trend (e.g. single-digit graduation rates over an extended period; shrinking fund balance). An overview of the AIU as presented at recent MSCHE Town Hall meetings can be found [here](#).

### When will the AIU data-gathering process begin?

*For 2018 only*, the AIU will open August 27<sup>th</sup> and remain open through September 28<sup>th</sup>. Beginning in 2019, the AIU will open in the spring and remain open for approximately four weeks.

### Are institutions exempt from the AIU during a Review?

MSCHE collects data annually from institutions regardless of other accreditation processes, with no exceptions.

### Who should be involved in identifying and gathering the AIU information?

**The Commission strongly recommends that this question be considered first by the institution’s senior administration.** This recommendation is based on the fact that a peer review of AIU information, including any optional “contextual elements” will constitute, for the majority of MSCHE institutions, the entire body of “evidence” examined during the Mid-Point Peer Review (MPPR). This information will also be available to peer evaluators during any accreditation review. More information on the MPPR can be found [here](#).

### How will this information be used by the Commission?

The MSCHE staff will review five-year trends annually looking for anomalies that may require outreach to the institution. A formal review of information collected during the AIU will be conducted by peers during the Mid-Point Peer Review (MPPR). The

information collected during the AIU will also be available to peer evaluators assigned to the institution during any accreditation activity.

### **What is the best way to prepare for the AIU?**

Each institution will need to determine its own approach to preparing for the AIU but should consider the following:

1. Engage the Senior Administration to provide guidance as to whether and which optional data elements and uploads will be identified for inclusion and review by peers.
2. Review the AIU Data Dictionary, identifying the individuals/units who will be involved in completing the AIU.
3. Where necessary calculate those data elements that cannot be imported from IPEDS.

### **Will there be additional training and/or information sessions prior to AIU launch?**

Yes. This FAQ will be regularly updated as we receive and review questions from institutions. Training and additional information will be provided for institutional representatives as we get closer to the AIU launch.

## **General Data FAQs**

### **Which year's data should be reported in the Annual Institutional Update?**

Because MSCHE is importing most of the data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), the Annual Institutional Update data will follow the reporting years of the IPEDS data that is publicly available.

For the 2018 AIU collection, institutions will be reporting data according to the following date ranges:

| Section                      | Subsection  | Source Year                             |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>General Information</b>   |   | Academic year 2016-17                   |
| <b>Institutional Context</b> | Fall Enrollment Headcounts                            | Academic year 2016-17                   |
|                              | Fall Enrollment Race-Ethnicity Percentages            | Academic year 2016-17                   |
|                              | Fall Enrollment Age Percentages                       | Academic year 2016-17                   |
|                              | 12-Month Enrollment                                   | July 1, 2015 - June 30, 2016            |
|                              | Distance Education Headcounts <sup>1</sup>            | Academic year 2016-17                   |
|                              | Select metrics for peer reviewers to see <sup>2</sup> | Academic year 2016-17                   |
|                              | Programs Offered                                      | July 1, 2015 - June 30, 2016            |
| <b>Student Achievement</b>   | Retention Rates                                       | Academic year 2016-17                   |
|                              | First-Time Full-Time Enrollment                       | Academic year 2016-17                   |
|                              | Graduation Rates 150%                                 | Status of student as of August 31, 2016 |
|                              | Graduation Rates 200%                                 | Status of student as of August 31, 2016 |
|                              | Graduation Rate Gender                                | Status of student as of August 31, 2016 |
|                              | Graduation Rate Ethnicity                             | Status of student as of August 31, 2016 |
| <b>Financial Results</b>     | General <sup>3</sup>                                  | Academic year 2016-17                   |
|                              | Financial Results                                     | Fiscal year 2015-16                     |
|                              | Education and General Expenses                        | Fiscal year 2015-16                     |
|                              | Most Recent Financial Audit Metrics                   | Most recent fiscal year available       |
|                              | Financial Documents to Upload                         | Most recent fiscal year available       |

<sup>1</sup> With the exception of “Programs Offered via distance education,” for which institutions should report data from July 1, 2015 - June 30, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> With the following exceptions:

- “Percent FT-FT receiving Pell” and “Percent of all undergrads receiving Pell,” for which institutions should report data from July 1, 2015 - June 30, 2016.
- “Percent First Generation” and “Default Rate”, which are being populated by data from NSLDS 2014-15 and 2015-16 pooled cohorts

<sup>3</sup> With the following exceptions, for which institutions should report data from Fiscal Year 2015-16:

- “Is your institution responsible for retirement/pension?”
- “What are the pension or post retirement amount in your audit?”

### **What metrics have criteria that require further comment?**

**Associate Graduation Rate 150%:** The institution will be asked to provide explanatory comments if the value in this field is less than 15% **OR** if the change in the value of this field from last year to this year has decreased more than 4%.

**Bachelor Graduation Rate 150%:** The institution will be asked to provide explanatory comments if the value in this field is less than 25% **OR** if the change in the value of this field from last year to this year has decreased more than 4%.

**Fall Enrollment Headcounts - Total:** The institution will be asked to provide explanatory comments if the absolute value of the change in the value of this field from last year to this year is greater than 8%.

**Fall Enrollment Headcounts - FTE:** The institution will be asked to provide explanatory comments if the absolute value of the change in the value of this field from last year to this year is greater than 5%.

**Default Rate:** The institution will be asked to provide explanatory comments if the value in this field is greater than or equal to 30%.

**Net Assets Change Over Year:** The institution will be asked to provide explanatory comments if the value in this field is less than 0.

### **Do the data collection years from the Annual Institutional Update and Institutional Profile overlap?**

Yes. Both the final Institutional Profile as well as the first Annual Institutional Update both contain data primarily from the 2016-17 academic year.

### **How and when will we be able to see our institution's data?**

The data collected as part of the AIU will be available to institutions through the new MSCHE Institution Portal. The data will be visible year-round, but only the most recent year's data is editable during the review and collection period.

### **Will we be able to compare our institution's performance with that of our peers?**

As of this time, institutions will only have access to their own data, not the data of any other MSCHE member institutions.

### **Which catalog should our institution upload?**

Institutions should upload the most recent catalog available for the institution.

## **Institutional Context FAQs**

### **What's the difference between the Optional Metrics and the Optional Uploads?**

In earlier materials the term “optional” was used for two different sections of the AIU. We have since changed their names to **Context of Performance Uploads** and **Select metrics for peer reviewers to see**.

### **Are the metrics in the “Select metrics for peer reviewers to see” section optional?**

While institutions can choose which of these metrics will be included or excluded from the peer review process, all the fields must still be completed for every collection. Note, however, that if your institution submits data to IPEDS, six of the nine fields in this section will be pre-populated by MSCHE.

### **How should the “Percent Developmental” metric be calculated?**

The purpose of the “Percent Developmental” metric is to give some context to the type of student population that is served by the institution. Ideally, it would indicate the percent of students in the first-time Fall undergraduate incoming class that are required to take some amount of preparatory developmental coursework before they are able to begin their college-level coursework.

Developmental coursework is any formal non-college-level learning activity designed to prepare a student to complete college-level work. These courses or co-curricular requirements are typically in the subjects of Reading, English, or Math. These courses may be credit-bearing but do not contribute to the completion of a degree. These courses are considered below college-level and are taken as a required pre- or co-requisite to enrolling in a college-level course, typically in the subjects of English or Math.

This does not include courses that are not required. This does not include courses taken as part of an ABE program. It may include self-study, developmental labs, co-curriculum classes, modularized course components, or any other coursework that would prepare the student to be successful in college-level work.

(Adapted from *Voluntary Framework of Accountability Metrics Manual*,  
<https://vfa.aacc.nche.edu/Documents/VFAMetricsManual.pdf>)

## How should different degree levels be defined?

Refer to the following table of definitions:

| Term  | Definition   |
|---|--|
| <b>Postsecondary award, certificate, or diploma (less than 1 academic year)</b>                 | An award that requires completion of an organized program of study at the postsecondary level (below the baccalaureate degree) in less than 1 academic year (2 semesters or 3 quarters) or designed for completion in less than 30 semester or trimester credit hours, or in less than 45 quarter credit hours, or in less than 900 contact or clock hours.  |
| <b>Postsecondary award, certificate, or diploma (at least 1 but less than 2 academic years)</b> | An award that requires completion of an organized program of study at the postsecondary level (below the baccalaureate degree) in at least 1 but less than 2 full-time equivalent academic years; or designed for completion in at least 30 but less than 60 semester or trimester credit hours; or in at least 45 but less than 90 quarter credit hours; or in at least 900 but less than 1,800 contact or clock hours.   |
| <b>Postsecondary award, certificate, or diploma (at least 2 but less than 4 academic years)</b> | An award that requires completion of an organized program of study at the postsecondary level (below the baccalaureate degree) in at least 2 but less than 4 full-time equivalent academic years; or designed for completion in at least 60 but less than 120 semester or trimester credit hours; or in at least 90 but less than 180 quarter credit hours; or in at least 1,800 but less than 3,600 contact or clock hours.   |
| <b>Associate's degree</b>   | An award that normally requires at least 2 but less than 4 years of full-time equivalent college work.   |
| <b>Bachelor's degree</b>  | An award (baccalaureate or equivalent degree, as determined by the Secretary, U.S. Department of Education) that normally requires at least 4 but not more than 5 years of full-time equivalent college-level work. This includes all bachelor's degrees conferred in a 5-year cooperative (work-study) program. A cooperative plan provides for alternate class attendance and employment in business, industry, or government; thus, it allows students to combine actual work experience with their college studies. Also includes bachelor's degrees in which the normal 4 years of work are completed in 3 years. |
| <b>Postbaccalaureate certificate</b>  | An award that requires completion of an organized program of study beyond the bachelor's. It is designed for persons who have completed a baccalaureate degree but does not meet the requirements of a master's degree.<br>NOTE: Even though Teacher Preparation certificate programs may require a bachelor's degree for admission, they are considered sub-baccalaureate undergraduate programs, and students in these programs are undergraduate students.  |
| <b>Master's degree</b>  | An award that requires the successful completion of a program of study of at least the full-time equivalent of 1 but not more than 2 academic years of work beyond the bachelor's degree.  |
| <b>Post-master's certificate</b>  | An award that requires completion of an organized program beyond the master's degree but does not meet the requirements of academic degrees at the doctor's level.   |
| <b>Doctor's degree</b>  | The highest award a student can earn for graduate study. The doctor's degree classification includes such degrees as Doctor of Education, Doctor of Juridical Science, Doctor of Public Health, and the Doctor of Philosophy degree in any field such as agronomy, food technology, education, engineering, public administration, ophthalmology, or radiology.  |
| <b>Doctor's degree-professional practice</b>  | A doctor's degree that is conferred upon completion of a program providing the knowledge and skills for the recognition, credential, or license required for professional practice. The degree is awarded after a period of study such that the total time to the degree, including both pre-professional and professional preparation, equals at least six  |

|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | full-time equivalent academic years. Some of these degrees were formerly classified as first-professional and may include: Chiropractic (D.C. or D.C.M.); Dentistry (D.D.S. or D.M.D.); Law (J.D.); Medicine (M.D.); Optometry (O.D.); Osteopathic Medicine (D.O); Pharmacy (Pharm.D.); Podiatry (D.P.M., Pod.D., D.P.); or, Veterinary Medicine (D.V.M.), and others, as designated by the awarding institution.                                 |
| <b>Doctor's degree-research/scholarship</b> | A Ph.D. or other doctor's degree that requires advanced work beyond the master's level, including the preparation and defense of a dissertation based on original research, or the planning and execution of an original project demonstrating substantial artistic or scholarly achievement. Some examples of this type of degree may include Ed.D., D.M.A., D.B.A., D.Sc., D.A., or D.M, and others, as designated by the awarding institution. |
| <b>Doctor's degree-other</b>                | A doctor's degree that does not meet the definition of a doctor's degree - research/scholarship or a doctor's degree - professional practice.   |

## Student Achievement FAQs

### What types of files should be uploaded for the Context of Performance Uploads?

An institution may upload up to three documents containing data to provide additional context for the institution's Student Achievement data. This allows the institution to highlight metrics that are not already in the AIU but which the institution considers important for MSCHE to understand the overall performance of the institution with regards to student achievement.

### Do the Context of Performance Uploads need to be the same every year?

The Context of Performance uploads do not have to be identical every year.