



**Middle States Commission on Higher Education**

**Standardized Recommendations and Requirements**

**For use by Peer Evaluators in the Accreditation Review Cycle and  
Monitoring**

**Effective Fall 2019**

## Directions

Beginning with evaluation visits that occur during the 2019-2020 academic year, teams will offer standardized recommendations and requirements to institutions under review. Please choose from among the options listed on the following pages. Remember, the findings summarized in the narrative component of your team report should provide a justification and appropriate specificity to allow the institution to respond to any Commission requested follow-up.

## Definitions

**Recommendations** – Actions needed to assure that the institution continues to meet the Commission’s Standards, Requirements of Affiliation, policies and procedures, and federal regulations.

**Requirements**- Actions needed to demonstrate that the institution meets the Commission’s Standards, Requirements of Affiliation, policies and procedures, and federal regulations. Requirements indicate non-compliance.

## **Standard I – Mission and Goals**

### **Recommendations – The institution should provide further evidence ...**

- that the mission accurately defines the purpose of the institution and the students it serves.
- of the alignment of the institution’s mission and goals.
- that the mission guides planning and resource allocation.
- that the mission is publicized and well-known by the institution’s internal stakeholders.
- that the institution’s mission and goals are approved and supported by the governing body.
- of the periodic assessment of the relevancy and effectiveness of the institution’s mission and goals.

### **Requirements**

- The institution must develop a mission which accurately defines its purpose within the context of higher education, the students its serves and what it intends to accomplish.
- The institution must document how its mission is linked to institutional goals and how such linkages guide institutional stakeholders in planning and decision making.

## **Standard II – Ethics and Integrity**

### **Recommendations – The institution should provide further evidence ...**

- that institutional policies and procedures are fair and impartial.
- of honesty and truthfulness in all publications and communications, in all formats, for internal and external communities.
- of documented grievance policies and procedures for all constituencies.
- disclosure of information related to affordability, accessibility, funding options and measures of student success.
- of services or programs (as appropriate to mission) to promote affordability, accessibility, and informed decision-making regarding student debt.
- of a campus climate that fosters respect among all constituencies.
- of compliance with all applicable federal, state and Commission policies and regulations.
- of the periodic assessment of the effectiveness of all institutional policies and procedures and the manner in which they are implemented.

### **Requirements**

- The institution must demonstrate adherence to all issues of ethics and integrity as outlined in the Standard.
- The institution must demonstrate that it is faithful to its mission, honors its contracts and commitments, adheres to its policies, and represents itself truthfully.
- The institution must demonstrate compliance with all applicable federal reporting policies and regulations.

### **Standard III – Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience**

#### **Recommendations – The institution should provide further evidence...**

- of coherent student learning experiences appropriate to the credential levels offered.
- that student learning experiences are designed, delivered and assessed by appropriately credentialed professionals, sufficient in number, who are effective and rigorous in their teaching.
- of programs that are of the appropriate length and rigor and foster a coherent learning experience.
- that faculty and/or other appropriate professionals are regularly and equitably reviewed and provided with opportunities, resources and support for professional growth and innovation.
- of accurately described academic programs and outcomes that enable students to understand and follow program requirements and time to completion.
- of sufficient learning opportunities and resources to support students' academic progress.
- that the general education program is sufficient in scope and addresses the identified areas.
- of graduate and professional programs that provide opportunities for research, scholarship, and independent thinking.
- of adequate and appropriate review and approval of learning opportunities designed, delivered, or assessed by third-party vendors.
- of the periodic assessment of the effectiveness of student learning opportunities.

#### **Requirements**

- The institution must provide student learning opportunities that are characterized by rigor and coherence at all program, certificate, and degree levels, regardless of instructional modality.
- The institution must demonstrate that it has an adequate core of faculty (full-time or part-time) and/or other appropriately qualified professionals with sufficient responsibility to the institution to assure the continuity and coherence of the institution's educational programs.
- The institution must demonstrate that it offers an undergraduate general education program, free standing or integrated into academic disciplines, that is consistent with higher education expectations.

## **Standard IV – Support of the Student Experience**

### **Recommendations – The institution should provide further evidence of....**

- clearly stated policies, processes and programs to admit, retain and facilitate the success of all students.
- processes designed to enhance the successful achievement of students' educational goals.
- improvement of key indicators of student success, including retention and graduation rates.
- sufficient qualified professionals to provide effective support systems.
- policies and/or procedures used to ensure student identity verification in distance or correspondence education courses.
- equitable policies to address the acceptance of credits and other alternative learning experiences.
- published information regarding student achievement, including student outcome measures.
- safe and secure maintenance and appropriate release of student information.
- athletic, student life, and other extracurricular activities that are regulated by the same principles and procedures that govern all other programs.
- adequate and appropriate review and approval of student support services designed, delivered, or assessed by third-party vendors.
- the periodic assessment of the effectiveness of student support programs and experiences.

### **Requirements**

- The institution must commit to student retention, persistence, completion and success through a coherent and effective support system.
- The institution must demonstrate improvement of student achievement measures, including steps taken to ensure that institutional planning integrates goals for academic and institutional effectiveness to ensure overall student success.
- The institution must document institutional structures and processes in place to support the student experience, as evidenced by a coherent and effective support system sustained by qualified professionals, which enhances the quality of the learning environment, contributes to the educational experience, and fosters student success.

## **Standard V – Educational Effectiveness Assessment**

### **Recommendations – The institution should provide further evidence of...**

- clearly stated institutional and program-level goals which are aligned with each other and with the institution's mission.
- the development and implementation of organized and systematic assessments that evaluate the extent of student achievement.
- the development and implementation of organized and systematic assessments that evaluate the extent of student achievement in general education.
- sufficient support to sustain the assessment of student achievement and to communicate results of assessment to stakeholders.
- demonstrated and documented use of assessment results to improve educational effectiveness.
- adequate and appropriate review and approval of assessment services designed, delivered, or assessed by third-party vendors.
- periodic assessment of the effectiveness of assessment processes utilized by the institution for the improvement of educational effectiveness.

### **Requirements**

- The institution must demonstrate that it has clearly stated educational goals at the institutional and degree/program levels, which are interrelated with one another, with relevant educational experiences, and with the institution's mission.
- The institution must assess student learning and achievement and demonstrate that students have accomplished educational goals consistent with their programs of study.
- The institution must document that its student learning programs are characterized by coherence and appropriate assessment of student achievement throughout its educational offerings, at both institutional and program levels, with evidence that faculty and appropriate institutional stakeholders have considered and used assessment results to improve teaching and learning.

## **Standard VI – Planning, Resources and Institutional Improvement**

### **Recommendations – The institution should provide further evidence of...**

- clearly stated institutional and unit-level objectives that are linked to mission and reflect conclusions drawn from assessment results.
- clearly documented and communicated planning and improvement processes that provide for constituent participation.
- comprehensive long-range planning processes.
- financial planning and budget processes that are aligned with mission, goals and objectives and are evidence-based.
- adequate fiscal and human resources, including physical and technical infrastructure, to support operations.
- clearly defined decision-making processes, with clear assignment of responsibility and accountability.
- enrollment management planning linked to budget development.
- demonstrated capacity to support enrollment increases.
- strategies to address enrollment decline.
- comprehensive planning for facilities, infrastructure and technology that include consideration of sustainability and deferred maintenance.
- an annual independent audit confirming financial viability with evidence of follow-up on any cited concerns.
- the assessment of the adequacy and efficient utilization of institutional resources required to support the institution's mission and goals.
- sufficient resources to improve student achievement measures.
- the development and implementation of organized and systematic assessment of non-academic units.
- the development and implementation of organized and systematic assessments that evaluate institutional effectiveness.
- periodic assessment of the effectiveness of planning, resource allocation, institutional renewal, and availability of resources.

### **Requirements**

- The institution must demonstrate the sufficiency of resources to fulfill its mission and goals and to support its educational purposes and programs.
- The institution must demonstrate the sufficiency of planning and budgeting processes to fulfill its mission and goals, and to support its educational purposes and programs.
- The institution must continuously assess and improve its programs and services, and respond effectively to opportunities and challenges.
- The institution must document clearly-stated, aligned, and coherent institutional and unit objectives, with evidence of the implementation of a systematic, organized, and sustained assessment process demonstrating that institutional and unit stakeholders have considered

and used assessment results in planning, budgeting, and the improvement of institutional and unit effectiveness.

### **Standard VII – Governance, Leadership and Administration**

#### **Recommendations – The institution should provide further evidence of...**

- a clearly articulated and transparent governance structure that outlines roles, responsibilities, and accountability for decision-making by each constituency.
- a legally constituted governing body that has sufficient independence and expertise and is responsible and accountable for the academic quality, planning and fiscal well-being of the institution.
- a governing body that provides oversight at the policy level and is informed in all its operations by principles of good practice in board governance.
- the establishment and implementation of written conflict of interest policies.
- a governing board that appoints and regularly evaluates the Chief Executive Officer.
- a Chief Executive Officer who has appropriate credentials, professional experience, authority and autonomy required to fulfill the responsibilities of the position.
- qualified administrators, sufficient in number, to enable the Chief Executive Officer to discharge his/her duties effectively.
- a clearly documented administrative structure with members who possess the skills, time, assistance, technology and expertise to perform their duties.
- an administration with regular engagement with faculty and students to advance the institution's goals and objectives.
- systematic procedures for evaluating administrative units and for using assessment data to enhance operations.
- periodic assessment of the effectiveness of governance, leadership and administration.

#### **Requirements**

- The institution's governance structure must allow it to realize its stated mission and goals in a way that benefits the institution, its students and the constituencies it serves.
- The institution must have education as its primary purpose and operate as an academic institution with appropriate autonomy.

**Standardized recommendations from above list that may be used with MPPR:**

The institution should provide further evidence of:

- policies, processes and programs to admit, retain and facilitate the success of **all** students. (Standard IV)
- processes designed to enhance the successful achievement of students' educational goals. (Standard IV)
- improvement of key indicators of student success, including retention and graduation rates. (Standard IV)
- published information regarding student achievement, including student outcome measures. (Standard IV, MSCHE Policy on Published Information)
- adequate fiscal and human resources, including physical and technical infrastructure, to support operations. (Standard VI)
- comprehensive planning for facilities, infrastructure and technology linked to the sustainability of the planning process. (Standard VI)
- an annual independent audit confirming financial viability with evidence of follow-up on any cited concerns. (Standard VI)
- demonstrated strategies to measure and assess the adequacy of institutional resources to support mission and goals. (Standard VI)
- improved financial viability and sustainability. (Standard VI)
- enrollment management planning linked to budget development. (Standard VI)
- demonstrated capacity to support enrollment increases. (Standard VI)
- strategies to address enrollment decline. (Standard VI)
- sufficient resources to improve student achievement measures. (Standard VI)

**Standardized recommendations from above list that may be used with Compliance Verification**

The institution should provide further evidence of:

- policies and/or procedures used to ensure student identity verification in distance or correspondence education courses (Standard IV)
- safe and secure maintenance and appropriate release of student information (Standard IV)
- equitable policies to address the acceptance of credits and other alternative learning experiences (Standard IV)
- documented grievance policies and procedures for all constituencies (Standard II)
- disclosure of information related to affordability, accessibility, funding options and measures of student success (Standard II)
- programs that are of the appropriate length and rigor and foster a coherent learning experience (Standard III)
- compliance with all applicable federal, state and Commission policies and regulations (Standard II) [specify issue – contractual arrangement, credit hour, standing with other accreditor, etc]