



Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104-2680

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Proposed Changes to MSCHE Accreditation Processes and Accreditation Cycle

In 2014 the Commission's member institutions adopted revised Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation (www.msche.org/publications/RevisedStandardsFINAL.pdf).

In June 2015 the Commission adopted a revised mission statement:

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education assures students and the public of the educational quality of higher education. The Commission's accreditation process ensures institutional accountability, self-appraisal, improvement, and innovation through peer review and the rigorous application of standards within the context of institutional mission.

Beginning in December 2015, the Commission's member institutions will be asked to vote on the adoption of a modified accreditation cycle and modified accreditation processes. The current Middle States accreditation cycle and processes have remained essentially the same since the mid-twentieth century. They have served the Commission and its members well, enabling them to support institutional self-appraisal and improvement and to assure the quality of education offered by accredited institutions. But the Commission's standards and mission statement have changed and higher education has changed as well. It is time to update the cycle and processes to realign them with the current nature of higher education and to allow them to be more sensitive to the varying conditions and needs of member institutions.

Key Components

The key components of the proposed cycle and processes are:

1. A Self-Study and Evaluation Team Visit that will include a separate document review to confirm that the institution meets the Standards, freeing the Self-Study Report to focus more directly on institutional initiatives and improvements (*a current Comprehensive Self-Study Report must address compliance with the Standards as well as institutional improvements, making the report lengthy, complicated, and often of limited use for institutional improvement*)

2. An Annual Institutional Update submitted electronically by the institution, about which the institution will receive useful feedback (*the institution does not receive feedback on the current Annual Institutional Profile*)
3. An off-site Mid-Point Peer Review of the accumulated information from the Annual Updates between Self-Studies (*the institution will not produce a separate report—such as the current Periodic Review Report—for this review*)
4. An eight-year cycle for Self-Study Evaluations (*currently there is a Self-Study Evaluation every ten years and a Periodic Review Report (PRR) at the five-year point between Evaluations*)

If approved, the refocused processes could be implemented beginning with institutions currently scheduled for an Evaluation Visit in 2018-2019. An implementation schedule based on multiple factors will be developed.

Included in this newsletter are a [flow-chart](#) with a visual depiction of the proposed cycle and a [table](#) comparing the proposed and current processes. This memo and those documents convey the same information in different formats, and contain links to further information about the components of the cycle, available on the Commission's [website](#).

The member vote on the proposed accreditation processes and cycle will follow the Commission's approval of the proposal at its meeting on November 19, 2015. Prior to that meeting the Commission invites feedback on the proposal from member institutions.

Submitting Questions and Comments

- Questions and comments can be submitted by clicking here : <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Feedbacknwsltr>
- The four town hall meetings this fall will include discussion of the proposal:

Jersey City, NJ	September 18
Harrisburg, PA	September 22
San Juan, PR	October 13
Buffalo, NY	October 30

Information about the town halls is provided elsewhere in this newsletter.

Improvements

1. The institutional Self-Study process will remain an inclusive institution-wide undertaking but is designed to take less time and effort on the part of the institution and will be more focused on assessment and institutional improvement.
2. Enhanced annual updates of institutional information and documentation will allow for better awareness of institutional developments on the part of the Commission and more useful feedback to the institution from the Commission.

3. A mid-point off-site peer review of the institution's accumulated information will provide useful feedback to the institution. Unlike the Periodic Review Report (PRR), this will not require an additional report from the institution and, unless non-compliance is found, will not result in an accreditation event.
4. The Follow-Up Reports currently requested from institutions that are meeting the Standards will be replaced by the responses to Commission recommendations submitted in conjunction with the Annual Institutional Update.
5. Institutions that do not receive Commission recommendations have the option of providing updates on institutional improvements through the Annual Institutional Update, but are not required to do so.
6. Institutions found to not meet the Requirements of Affiliation or Standards for Accreditation will receive more intensive attention from the Commission than is now possible.
7. Together, improvements 4, 5, and 6 make this approach sensitive to the varying conditions and needs of member institutions.
8. The evaluation cycle will be shorter but the Periodic Review Report (PRR) will no longer be required.

To Obtain Additional Information About MSCHE's Proposed Process Changes, [click here.](#)

Fall Town Halls to Address Proposed Changes

During this latest series of Town Hall meetings, members of the Commission staff will discuss plans to refocus MSCHE accreditation processes. The Commission staff will seek your feedback on ideas that have been developed to enable the Commission to continue to make a judgment about the quality of an institution in an efficient, effective, and meaningful manner that is respectful of the resources and efforts expended by member institutions and that directly supports continuous institutional improvement.

The staff will also seek ideas about how MSCHE can best serve member needs and add value to its accreditation. There will be opportunities to ask questions and interact with the MSCHE staff.

Each Town Hall will begin with continental breakfast at 9:00 am, followed by the presentations and open discussion at 10:00 am. We expect to conclude by 12:00 Noon.

There is no charge to attend the Town Hall meetings, but you are required to register. This will enable the Commission to properly plan for adequate seating and refreshments. Please use the appropriate link below to register for the Town Hall of your choice.

Jersey City Town Hall (NYC Area) – September 18 at the Hyatt Regency Jersey City on the Hudson, 2 Exchange Place, Jersey City, NJ
(Registration deadline is September 9)

To register, click here: <https://www.cvent.com/events/msche-town-hall-meeting-jersey-city-nj/registration-f03bb5e4ee244995a09dc89eb96e5c1c.aspx>

Harrisburg Town Hall – September 22 at the Hilton Harrisburg Hotel and Towers, 1 North Second Street, Harrisburg, PA
(Registration deadline is September 9)

To register, click here: <https://www.cvent.com/events/msche-town-hall-meeting-harrisburg-pa/registration-68bdf282fe654762ac6837eadadcbf8d.aspx>

San Juan Town Hall – October 13 at the Sheraton San Juan Convention Center Hotel, 200 Convention Boulevard, San Juan, Puerto Rico
(Registration deadline is October 2)

To register, click here: <https://www.cvent.com/events/msche-town-hall-meeting-san-juan-puerto-rico/registration-fcce2441850e407c859d3e8fab59457a.aspx>

Buffalo Town Hall – October 30 at the Buffalo Marriott Niagara Hotel, 1340 Millersport Highway, Amherst, NY
(Registration Deadline is October 23)

To register, click here: <https://www.cvent.com/events/msche-town-hall-meeting-buffalo-new-york/registration-e42b41aac1d94b368a0834464f3e79d9.aspx>

Space is limited, so please don't delay. ***Registration for each Town Hall will close when the Commission reaches capacity for that location. There will be no wait lists and there will be no on-site registration.***

Should you have any questions regarding the Town Halls, please contact Richard J. Pokrass, MSCHE Director for Communications and Public Relations, at rpokrass@msche.org . ***Please note that you cannot register for the Town Halls by telephone or e-mail. You must click on the appropriate registration link.***