



## **SCOPE AND CATEGORIES OF MEMBERSHIP**

### **Section 1: Scope of Accredited Institutions.**

Accreditation by the Commission on Elementary Schools (MSA-CES). Institutions with early age programs through grade 8 are within the Commission on Elementary School's jurisdiction.

Accreditation by the Commission on Secondary Schools (MSA-CSS). Institutions with beginning grade levels 5 through grade 12 (or grade 13 where provided) are within the Commission on Secondary Schools' jurisdiction. In addition, the Commission accredits postsecondary, non-degree granting career and technology institutions for adult learners of any age.

Accreditation by the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools (MSA-CESS). Institutions with early age programs through grade 12 (or grade 13 where provided) are within the jurisdiction of both the Commission on Elementary Schools and the Commission on Secondary Schools. Accreditation of these institutions (PK-12) are managed by a joint committee of the Commissions—The MSA-CESS (PK-12) Membership and Accreditation Committee.

**Section 2: Types of Institutions Accredited by MSA-CESS.** The Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools actively support and encourage the accreditation of diverse education institutions. These institutions include public, independent, faith-based, and proprietary institutions representing different cultures, religions, admissions processes, educational philosophies, and pedagogical delivery systems within the United States and outside the United States. The types of institutions include but are not limited to:

- a. Early age schools
- b. Elementary schools
- c. Middle schools
- d. Intermediate schools
- e. Secondary/high schools
- f. PK-12 schools
- g. Special education schools
- h. School systems
- i. Learning services providers
- j. Job Corp centers
- k. Schools within correctional institutions
- l. Schools for the gifted and talented
- m. Career and technical institutions for secondary and adult students

### **Section 3: Definitions of the Types of Institutions Accredited.**

#### School.

- a. Public school: For MSA-CESS accreditation purposes, a public school is a school entity that has been assigned its own school number by the state or other civil authority in whose jurisdiction it operates.
- b. Non-public school: For MSA-CESS accreditation purposes, a non-public school is a school entity that 1) is governed directly by its own governing body, or 2) is recognized as a single entity by a civil authority, a system of schools, or a corporation under whose authority it operates.

School System. A system of schools is:

- a. A legal entity;
- b. A system with more than one component school;
- c. Governed by a single governing body; and
- d. Led by a chief executive officer or superintendent; or
- e. Faith-based schools that are affiliated with a community, organization, or diocese/archdiocese

Learning Services Provider (LSP): A learning services provider is defined by the following characteristics:

- a. An organization that develops and provides various types of educational learning programs and services such as curricula, instructional materials, and management systems to education institutions with or without a fee.
- b. Is not a school or school system;
- c. Does not grant a high school diploma or a degree;
- d. Offers educational programs that meet narrowly focused curricular purposes
- e. Offers programs that are educational (as opposed to recreational or avocational) in nature and that are defined by a curriculum, an instructional methodology, and accepted assessment practices;
- f. Enrolls students generally on a part-time basis;
- g. Generally delivers its educational programs outside of the normal school day and often outside a school;
- h. Often offers diagnostic, remedial, enrichment, or alternative instruction; and/or
- i. A regional provider of educational programs and services to schools and/or school systems schools/school systems cannot provide as efficiently and effectively on their own.

Career & Technical Institution: A career & technical institution is:

- a. A legal entity;
- b. Secondary or post-secondary
- c. Non-degree granting
- d. Public or non-public
- e. Offering career and/or technical programs

#### **Section 4: Additional Definitions.**

Branch Campus. A branch campus is a location of an institution that is geographically apart from the main campus of the institution. A branch campus may be domestic or international. A location is a branch campus if it meets all or most of the following criteria:

- a. A facility other than the main campus of an institution at which all or part of the institution's educational program is delivered to students;
- b. Students at the facility may earn the same diploma, certificate, or other recognized educational credential awarded by the institution or earn credits toward the diploma, certificate, or other recognized educational credential awarded by the institution;
- c. Is included within the institution's legal and/or ownership framework;
- d. Is governed by the governing body of the institution;
- e. Its finances are governed by the institution's governing body and are part of the institution's financial framework and operations;
- f. *For Public Schools Only*—Has not been assigned its own school number by the state or other civil authority in whose jurisdiction it operates;
- g. *For Non-Public Schools Only*—Is not recognized as a single entity by a system of schools, a parent corporation, or a faith-based community, organization, or diocese/archdiocese under whose authority it operates;
- h. The chief executive officer or leader of the institution is responsible to the governing body for overseeing and monitoring the operations of the facility;

- i. Serves essentially the same kinds of students as served by the main campus of the institution;
- j. Is sufficiently accessible to the main campus of the institution and other branch campuses to make possible genuine interchange of personnel, resources, and ideas on a frequent basis;
- k. Employs similar types of staff members as the main campus of the institution and other branch campuses;
- l. Offers to the staff similar professional development opportunities as are provided at the main campus of the institution and other branch campuses;
- m. Provides student services (special needs, ELL, guidance and counseling, health care, etc.) similar to those provided to students at the main campus of the institution and other branch campuses;
- n. Provides resources (food services, security services, transportation, cleaning, physical plant, technology, information resources, etc.) similar to and of the same quality as those provided at the main campus of the institution and other branch campuses; and
- o. Has a similar quality and atmosphere of student and community life (personal and group relationships, communication and dissemination of information to students and parents, traditions, co-curricular activities, etc.) as the main campus of the institution and other branch campuses.
- p. For postsecondary, non-degree granting career and technology institutions using or intending to use their MSA-CSS accreditation to establish eligibility to participate in federal Title IV financial aid programs, branch campus must have its own budgetary and hiring authority.

There is an additional fee charged to an institution for each branch campus. In addition, there may be additional costs to the institution and a larger visiting team based on the complexity of the institution, the number of branch campuses, and the distance of branch campuses from the main campus of the institution.

Additional Location [*Applicable only to postsecondary, non-degree granting career and technology institutions using or intending to use their MSA-CSS accreditation to establish eligibility to participate in federal Title IV financial aid programs*]. An additional location is a location, other than a branch campus, that is geographically apart from the main campus of an institution and at which an institution offers at least 50% of its educational program. Additional locations may be domestic or international. This includes corporate sites and locations for limited, rather than ongoing, provision of programs.

Instructional Site [*Applicable only to postsecondary, non-degree granting career and technology institutions using or intending to use their MSA-CSS accreditation to establish eligibility to participate in federal Title IV financial aid programs*]. An instructional site is a location, other than a branch campus or additional location, at which the institution offers one or more courses for credit. Instructional Sites should be noted on the Annual Profile. Commission approval is not required for an Instructional Site to be included within the scope of accreditation. However, if an Instructional Site changes over time and meets the definition of an Additional Location or Branch Campus, a request for approval of a substantive change must be submitted (see MSA-CESS Policy: Substantive Changes). Sites established outside of the U.S. for the sole purpose of offering courses through the study abroad experience are not considered to be instructional sites. If 50% or more of a program is offered, the site will meet the definition of an additional location

## **Section 5: Categories of MSA-CESS Membership.**

Candidate for Accreditation (See *MSA-CESS Policy: Candidacy for Accreditation*). A Candidate for Accreditation is an education institution that:

- Has been in successful operation for at least one academic year;
- Has satisfactorily met the MSA-CESS Standards for Candidacy (a subset of the Standards for Accreditation), has been offered and has formally accepted the offer of Candidacy for Accreditation;
- Has had that acceptance affirmed by the President of the Commissions; and
- Reflects a willingness and readiness to participate in the self-study and accreditation process;

- a. An institution may be a Candidate for Accreditation for a maximum of three years unless specific approval is requested of and approved by the President.
- b. A Candidate for Accreditation may advertise and include in its publications that it is a Candidate for Accreditation by the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools, Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools.

Accredited Institutions. Accredited institutions have been granted one of the following accreditation actions by the Commission on Elementary Schools and/or the Commission on Secondary Schools (See MSA-CESS Policy: Accreditation Actions):

- Accreditation
- Accreditation with Stipulations
- Probationary Accreditation

Associate Business Member. An Associate Business Member of the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools is a business, service provider, or professional association that provides education products, programs, and/or services that are deemed by the President to have potential value to MSA-CESS accredited and candidate institutions as they pursue their accreditation and school improvement activities.

Criteria for Associate Business Member.

- a. Provides education products, programs, and/or services the President deems to have potential value to MSA-CESS member institutions as they pursue their accreditation and school improvement activities;
- b. A record of value, integrity, and quality in the providing of products, programs, and/or services;
- c. A written agreement approved by the Executive Committees and signed by the President and an authorized representative of the Associate Business Member specifying:
  - 1) Any products, programs, and/or services to be offered to MSA-CESS member institutions;
  - 2) The costs of such products, programs, and/or services to MSA-CESS member institutions;
  - 3) The specific benefits to be provided by MSA-CESS to the Associate Business Member;
  - 4) Revenues to be realized by MSA-CESS from the sale by the Associate Business Member of products, programs, and/or services to member institutions and any conditions related to those revenues; and
  - 5) The date upon which the agreement will expire (agreements may be renewed annually).

MSA-CESS Benefits Provided to Associate Business Members. The benefits to be provided by MSA-CESS to Associate Business Members include:

- 1) Inclusion in a membership directory and/or resource guide
- 2) One advertisement in the MSA-CESS newsletters per year
- 3) Inclusion of product/program/service information on MSA-CESS mailings
- 4) Link on MSA-CESS website
- 5) Opportunity to sponsor an MSA-CESS workshop

Uses for Revenues Realized from Affiliate Members. Revenues realized from Affiliate member dues and any revenues to be realized from agreements with Affiliate Members for the sale of products, programs, and/or services to member institutions may be used for one or more of the following purposes, as determined by the Finance Committees:

- a. Reduce dues increases;
- b. Finance specific research and development projects;
- c. Increase the capacity of the Commission to provide services to its member institutions.

## **Section 6: Schools Located Outside of the United States**

World-wide Accreditation. The Commissions on Secondary and Elementary Schools shall, upon proper application, accredit or grant Candidacy for Accreditation to institutions located anywhere in the world.

Definition of Institutions Located Outside the United States Eligible for Accreditation by the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools.

The Middle States Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools accredit and grant Candidacy for Accreditation to institutions located outside the United States that are described as American and/or international in nature. To be considered for Accreditation or Candidacy for Accreditation, an institution must exhibit the following characteristics:

- a. English is the primary language or one of the primary languages of instruction;
- b. The school's governing documents and documents required for accreditation are available in English;
- c. A majority of the teaching and administrative staffs have been educated in colleges and universities where English is among the primary languages of the program. They must have a good understanding of a United States or international curriculum and instructional practices and be proficient in English;
- d. Members of the teaching and administrative staffs must possess the qualifications of education, experience, and commitment consistent with accepted standards for professional educators;
- e. A majority of the elementary and middle school students must be enrolled in a program that is United States oriented or in a program that prepares them for a rigorous United States or international educational program;
- f. At the high school level, a majority of students must be enrolled in a rigorous United States or international educational program;
- g. Participation in the program permits a student to successfully transfer to a school within the United States or to another overseas school that is American and/or international in nature. Upon graduation, students are qualified to enter an American college or university and/or an international institution of higher learning;
- h. The school provides materials, equipment, and supplies that are necessary to support a rigorous United States or international educational program;
- i. The school's process of education is characterized by methods of school governance that provide opportunities for input and communication and are inclusive of the school's constituencies. If the school's governing body is under the auspices of a national government or central ministry, nonetheless, it maintains a local responsiveness to the needs of the school's stakeholders. Essentially, the school must meet the Middle States Association standard for Governance and Leadership;
- j. The predominant style of instruction actively engages students and promotes critical thinking and problem solving; and
- k. The climate of learning celebrates diversity and cultivates the attitudes and behaviors that students will need to succeed in a global community.

NOTE: This definition does not apply to schools located in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

**Section 7: Career and Technical Institutions Eligible for Accreditation by the Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools.** Institutions established to provide career and technical programs to secondary and/or postsecondary students/adult learners are eligible for accreditation by the Commission on Secondary Schools (MSA-CSS) if the following criteria are met:

- The institution delivers career and technical programs to both secondary and adult/postsecondary learners, the institution agrees to seek accreditation for the entire institution including secondary and postsecondary programs;
- For institutions that provide postsecondary, non-degree granting career/technical programs, the institution is established and legally recognized as a postsecondary institution whose programs lead to the granting of training certificate, diploma, or similar document; and

- For institutions that provide postsecondary, non-degree granting career/technical programs, said programs do not lead to the granting of an Associate's or higher academic degree.
- Postsecondary, non-degree granting career and technology institutions using or intending to use their MSA-CSS accreditation to establish eligibility to participate in federal Title IV financial aid programs must be located within the United States or its territories.
- MSA-CSS does not accredit direct assessment programs.