

# The New Standards for Accreditation: Understanding Middle States Expectations for Assessment

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# Overview

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1. Principles behind the new standards
2. Process of developing the new standards
3. The new assessment standards
4. How much is enough?
5. Good practices

# Assessment

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## FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

# Mission Statement of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education

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The Middle States Commission on Higher Education is a voluntary, non-governmental, membership association that is dedicated to **quality assurance and improvement** through accreditation via **peer evaluation**. Middle States accreditation instills **public confidence** in institutional **mission, goals, performance,** and **resources** through its rigorous accreditation standards and their enforcement.

# Important aspects of MSCHE's mission

1. Define, maintain, and promote educational excellence
2. Respect for mission and unique types of institutions that make up its membership
3. Quality assurance via peer evaluation
4. Instills public confidence in institutional mission, goals, performance, and resources

# Foundational Principles

Mission-centric standards that acknowledge the diversity of institutions

**Focus on the student learning experience**

**Emphasis on continuous improvement**

Support of innovation as an essential part of higher education

# Content Principles

1. Shorter
2. Include only necessary criteria
3. Student centered
4. Part of a national conversation on continuous quality improvement
5. Respectful of the diversity of Middle States institutions
6. Attentive to a need to balance regulation/compliance and institutional improvement
7. **Structured so that assessment remains front and center**

# Revision Process

## 1. Assessment Taskforce (2012)

## 2. Revision Committee (2013)

## 3. Surveys of multiple constituents

## 4. Organization of diverse committee

## 5. Listening sessions—ACE, CEA, ACTA, Lumina Foundation, National Student Clearinghouse, representatives of systems, etc.

## 6. Listening sessions—Puerto Rico, Pittsburgh, District of Columbia, Albany, Harrisburg, etc.

## 7. Final revisions

## 8. Vote by member institutions

# Product

1. 11 pages
2. Preamble shows continuity and relevance
3. Requirements of Affiliation expanded
4. Simplicity—1 to 2 sentences followed by criteria
5. Structure—centrality of mission, student-centeredness
6. **Assessment built into every standard**

# Basic Assessment Expectations

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A PLAY IN TWO PARTS...

# Part I : Assessment Expectations Within All Standards

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<u>New Standard</u>	<u>Assessment Expectations</u>
<b>Standard I:</b> Mission and Goals	<b>Criterion 4.</b> “Periodic assessment of mission and goals to ensure they are relevant and achievable.”
<b>Standard II:</b> Ethics and Integrity	<b>Criterion 9:</b> “Periodic assessment of ethics and integrity as evidenced in institutional processes, practices, and the manner in which these are implemented.”
<b>Standard III:</b> Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience	<b>Criterion 8:</b> “Periodic assessment of the effectiveness of programs in providing student learning opportunities.”
<b>Standard IV:</b> Support of the Student Learning Experience	<b>Criterion 6:</b> “Periodic assessment of the effectiveness of programs supporting the student experience.”
<b>Standard V:</b> Educational Effectiveness Assessment	<b>Criterion 5:</b> “Periodic assessment of the effectiveness of assessment processes for the improvement of educational effectiveness.”
<b>Standard VI:</b> Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement	<b>Criterion 9:</b> “Periodic assessment of the effectiveness of planning, resource allocation, institutional renewal processes, and availability of resources.”
<b>Standard VII:</b> Governance, Leadership, and Administration	<b>Criterion 5:</b> “Periodic assessment of the effectiveness of governance, leadership, and administration.”

# Part II : Assessment Expectations Across the Institution

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<u>New Standard</u>	<u>Assessment Expectations</u>
<b>Standard I:</b> Mission and Goals	<b>Criterion 1 (g):</b> “Clearly defined mission and goals that...are periodically evaluated.”
<b>Standard III:</b> Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience	<b>Criterion 2</b> “Student learning experiences that are designed, delivered, and assessed by faculty (full-time or part-time) and/or other appropriate professionals....
<b>Standard VI:</b> Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement	<b>Criterion 1:</b> “Institutional objectives, both institution-wide and for individual units, that are clearly stated, assessed appropriately, linked to mission and goal achievement, reflect conclusions drawn from assessment results, and are used for planning and resource allocation.”
	<b>Criterion 2:</b> “Clearly documented and communicated planning and improvement processes that provide for constituent participation, and incorporate the use of assessment results.”
	<b>Criterion 8:</b> “Strategies to measure and assess the adequacy and efficient utilization of institutional resources required to support the institution’s mission and goals.”

# Enduring Expectations

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EXPECTED ASSESSMENT CHARACTERISTICS

# Meaningful and Useful

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## Meaningful

- Defensible in eyes of internal and external constituents
- Conducted by appropriate individuals
- Direct relate to goals and objectives
- Done in the interest of continuous quality improvement
- Directly related to goals and objectives

## Useful

- Enables conversations to occur about strengths and weaknesses
- Done in the interest of continuous quality improvement

# Collaborative and Supported

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## Collaborative

- Entire aspects of process not done by one office
- Conversations about strength and weaknesses include appropriate stakeholders

## Supported

- Clear institutional support by administrators
- Faculty and staff clearly involved

# Organized and Sustained

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## Organized

- Narrative reveals clear process
- Planned
- Efficient
- Cost effective

## Sustained

Not “once a done”

Periodic—narrative and documents demonstrate full cycle has been implemented over the years

“present perfect tense”

# Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment

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*Standard V:*

*“Assessment of student learning and achievement demonstrates that the institution’s students have accomplished educational goals consistent with their programs of study, degree level, the institution’s mission, and appropriate expectations for institutions of higher learning.”*

1. Clearly Stated Learning Goals

2. Organized and systematic assessments

3. Consideration and use of assessment results

5. Periodic assessment of effectiveness of assessment process

4. Institutional review and approval of assessment services designed, delivered, or assessed by third-party providers



## **1. Clearly Stated Learning Goals**

- 1. Institution and degree/program levels**
  - 2. Inter-related...**
    - **with one another**
    - **with relevant educational experiences**
    - **with institutional mission**
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# Goals and objectives

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<b><u>Mission Statement</u></b>		
Clearly Stated Goal #1	Clearly Stated Objective A	} Assessment
	Clearly Stated Objective B	} Assessment
Clearly Stated Goal #2	Clearly Stated Objective A	} Assessment
	Clearly Stated Objective B	} Assessment

## 1. Clearly Stated Learning Goals

1. Institution and degree/program levels
2. Inter-related...
  - with one another
  - with relevant educational experiences
  - with institutional mission

## 2. Organized and systematic assessments

1. Conducted by faculty and/or appropriate professionals
2. Extent of student achievement of institutional and degree/program goals
3. Institutions should:
  - Define goals with defensible assessments
  - Articulate how to prepare students
  - Support and sustain assessment and communicate results

<u>Student learning goal</u>	<u>Student learning objectives</u>	<u>Assessment(s)</u>	<u>Audience</u>
Students will be effective in written communication	Students will use grammar effectively	AACU Written Communication Rubric (specific element)	Faculty Curriculum Committee and general education faculty receive written communication results in report form every two years as part of written communication student learning program review
	Students will utilize sentence structure effectively	AACU Written Communication Rubric (specific element)	Faculty Curriculum Committee and general education faculty receive written communication results in report form every two years as part of written communication student learning program review
	Students will organize paragraphs effectively	AACU Written Communication Rubric (specific element)	Faculty Curriculum Committee and general education faculty receive written communication results in report form every two years as part of written communication student learning program review

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## 3. Consideration and Use of Assessment Results

1. Consideration of assessment results
2. Use of assessment results
3. "Some combination"

<u>Student learning goal</u>	<u>Student learning objectives</u>	<u>Assessment(s)</u>	<u>Audience</u>	<u>Consideration of Results/Recommendations</u>
Students will be effective in written communication	Students will use grammar effectively	AACU Written Communication Rubric (specific element)	Faculty Curriculum Committee and general education faculty receive written communication results in report form every two years as part of written communication student learning program review	Results: 3.4 out of 4. Faculty Curriculum Committee felt good about the results and recommended continuing current textbook which contains grammar units and exercises
	Students will utilize sentence structure effectively	AACU Written Communication Rubric (specific element)	Faculty Curriculum Committee and general education faculty receive written communication results in report form every two years as part of written communication student learning program review	Results: 2.9 out of 4. Faculty Curriculum Committee were concerned about these results and recommended including a unit on sentence structure in WRIT110 courses, which currently do not contain such units. WRIT110 faculty also agreed to assign more instructional materials on the use of sentence structure.
	Students will organize paragraphs effectively	AACU Written Communication Rubric (specific element)	Faculty Curriculum Committee and general education faculty receive written communication results in report form every two years as part of written communication student learning program review	Results: 2.2 out of 4. Faculty Curriculum Committee expressed concern about these results and will work with faculty on including more instructional units in WRIT110 and capstone courses on giving students more feedback on the organization of written work; WRIT 110 faculty and some capstone faculty agreed to meet to discuss ways to address this finding.

# Use of assessment results

Concept	Meaning (“...in an environment of scarcity...”)
Budgeting	A process in which dollars are assigned to a project or initiative
Planning	A process in which future plans are made and resources assigned to achieve such plans
Resource allocation	A process in which something “someone [an institution] has and can use when it is needed” is allocated in an environment of scarcity.  (Source: Merriam-Webster online dictionary, <a href="http://www.merriam-Webster.com">www.merriam-Webster.com</a> )

	<u>Human</u>	<u>Financial</u>	<u>Physical</u>	<u>Technological</u>	<u>Curricular</u>	<u>Temporal</u>	<u>Instructional</u>
Institutional level actions							
Department, unit, and program actions							
Individual actions							

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2. Use of assessment results
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## 4. Third Party Providers

## 1. Clearly Stated Learning Goals

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## 3. Consideration and Use of Assessment Results

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## 5. Periodic assessment of effectiveness of assessment process

1. Meaningful
2. Useful
3. Cost-effective
4. Efficient

## 4. Third Party Providers

# Assessing assessment

## Key Questions for Assessing the Assessment Process

### Meaningful

To what extent do institutional stakeholders trust assessment results?

How well are assessment results related to goals and objectives?

To what extent do the assessments have potential for revealing “the truth,” no matter how uncomfortable?

### Useful

How engaged are institutional stakeholders in the process?

How collaborative has the assessment process been?

### Cost Effective/Efficient

What has been the “value added” of the assessment process up to now?

Is the current process worthy of the “Goldberg award”

To what extent has assessment become a natural rather than imposed process?

# Things to Consider...

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THE COMMISSION'S ASSESSMENT EXPECTATIONS

# How much is enough? The process...

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**Periodically** occurs

Is **pervasively** implemented

Is conducted in **substantial measure**

# The assessment process periodically occurs

Assessment processes that occur on simple schedules are advisable

Alignment with other evaluation or accreditation events (e.g., program reviews, etc.) is a way to achieve efficiency and cost effectiveness

Remember: the Commission expects an evidence-based self study, not one that contains mere narrative or is primarily descriptive in nature

# Pervasiveness

Assessment should be occurring across campus

- General education and educational offerings
- Institution and individual units
- Administrators, staff and faculty should be participants in the process

# Substantial measure

Majority of academic and non-academic units

Comparability—process should occur across modalities (distance education as well as traditional programs, etc.), across institutional units (branch campuses and main campuses, etc.)

Remember: not just the collection of data—but the entire process should have been clearly implemented.

# Good practices

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CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESS

# Defining goals and objectives

Institutions that exhibit good practices in this area do the following:

- Map out the process to observe gaps or areas of improvement
- For student learning assessment, institutions explicitly map courses to goals and competencies to observe gaps and find opportunities for meaningful and useful assessment

# Assessing institutional effectiveness and student learning

Institutions that exhibit good practices in this area do the following:

- Use both direct and indirect assessments to “paint” a better picture regarding strengths and weaknesses in student learning
- Achieve efficiencies by scheduling their assessment activities appropriately
- Place a premium on meaningfulness, not methodological perfection
- Understand what “defensible assessments” are within the context of their institutional mission and their institutional stakeholders

# Use of assessment

Institutions that exhibit good practices in this area do the following:

- Schedule conversations about student learning and what to do about student learning and institutional effectiveness
- Listen to institutional stakeholders at multiple levels— institutional, department/program/unit, and individual
- Endeavor to share assessment results and draft recommendations in a slim time frame
- Follow-up on recommendations
- Acknowledge the effect of assessment on the prioritization of resources

# Assessing assessment

Institutions that exhibit good practices in this area do the following:

- Used to evaluate already existing assessment processes
- Not conducted to “reinvent the wheel” (in most cases)
- Endeavors to objectively recognize strengths and weaknesses
- Acknowledges the assessment is a community responsibility
- Is scheduled and regularly occurs

Questions/Comments?

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