



**MIDDLE STATES COMMISSION  
ON HIGHER EDUCATION**

# **Middle States Commission on Higher Education Self-Study Design Template**

**Fall 2017**

**Optional Tool for Institutions in Self-Study**

## **I. Institutional Overview**

*This section provides contextual information about the institution, including a brief relevant history, the institution's mission statement and institutional goals, and descriptions of the student populations served by the institution.*

## **II. Institutional Priorities to be Addressed in Self-Study**

*After providing the institutional overview, the institution provides a brief narrative about processes the institution employed to identify 3 to 5 specific institutional priorities. This section should include information about how:*

- Institutional stakeholders were consulted in identifying the priorities*
- Selected priorities align with the institution's mission and goals*
- How Commission Standards align (or map to) the selected priorities.*

## **III. Intended Outcomes of the Self-Study**

*The institution provides a list of outcomes the institution intends to achieve as the result of engaging in the self-study process, considering ways the self-study process can help the institution's meet its mission, can assist it in meeting key institutional goals, and can enhance its overall effectiveness.*

## **IV. Self-Study Approach**

*Identify one of the following self-study approaches to be used to organize the Self-Study Report:*

- ☐ *Standards-Based Approach*
- ☐ *Priorities-Based Approach*

*Provide a brief rationale for using either of the two approaches.*

## **V. Organizational Structure of the Steering Committee and Working Groups**

*This section of the Design provides information about the membership of the Steering Committee and Working Groups.*

*Information in this section should include the following about the **Steering Committee**:*

- Names and titles of chairpersons of the Steering Committee and its members, with their positions of responsibility at the institution;*

### *Self-Study Design Template (MSCHE)*

- *Information about strategies the Steering Committee will use to encourage Working Groups to interact with one another in the interest of engaging in common areas of inquiry and reducing undue duplication of effort; and,*
- *A description of how the Steering Committee will provide oversight to ensure that Working Groups will receive appropriate support for evaluation and assessment of Commission Standards and the priorities selected for analysis in the self-study document.*
- *An initial description for how the Steering Committee will ensure that institutional mission, the 3 to 5 selected priorities, and the Commission's Standards will be analyzed in the Self-Study Report utilizing the institution's existing evaluation and assessment information.*

*For each **Working Group**, this section should include the following:*

- *Names and title of chairperson(s) and members of the Working Group with their positions of responsibility at the institution;*
- *A description of which institutional priorities will be addressed (if it is a standards-based design); or, a description of which Standards will be addressed by each Working Group (if it is a priorities-based design);*
- *Descriptions of the charge and specific lines of inquiry;*
- *A brief discussion about how relevant assessment information that will be gathered, reviewed, summarized, and used by the Working Group to accomplish its work; and,*
- *If not discussed above, initial strategies for how the Working Groups will interact with one another in the interest of engaging in common areas of inquiry and reducing undue duplication of effort.*

## **VI. Guidelines for Reporting**

*To guide the efforts of the Working Groups, this section of the Design includes a description of the processes the Steering Committee will utilize to ensure that they stay on task, such as scheduled discussions and updates within the Working Groups, with the Steering Committee, and among the Working Groups; the form and frequency of such interactions, and the format of interim and final reports. At a minimum, information in this section of the Design should include the following:*

- *A list or description of all products to be completed by the Working Groups and Steering Committee, such as initial outlines, Working Group reports, preliminary drafts, and final reports.*
- *Deadlines for the submission of various draft documents and reports*
- *A template for the preparation of Working Group Reports.*

## **VII. Organization of the Final Self-Study Report**

*This section includes an outline of the organization, format and structure of the final Self-Study Report, including information that will be found in the document's introduction and initial indications of the focus of each chapter. In cases where the institution employs the priorities-based approach, this section contains a description of which Commission Standards will be addressed in a separate chapter of the Self-Study Report.*

## **VIII. Verification of Compliance Strategy**

*Each institution is required to complete a Verification of Compliance process. The Design includes a description of what strategy(ies) the institution will employ to successfully complete this process, including:*

- *What groups, offices or individuals will be responsible for the process. In cases where a separate Working Group has been organized to lead the institution through this process, the Design should contain a listing of these*
- *How those responsible for the Verification of Compliance process will communicate with the Working Groups and Steering Community*

*A template for providing information relating to the Verification of Compliance process is available on the Commission website.*

## **IX. Evidence Inventory**

*This section contains a description of the institution's strategies for populating and managing the Evidence Inventory, from the beginning of the self-study process forward. Strategies might include designating a separate Working Group, assigning the refinement of the Evidence Inventory to members of the Steering Committee, among others. An initial Evidence Inventory, containing appropriate documentation, should be attached to the Design.*

## **X. Self-Study Timetable**

*Institutions include in the Design a timeline for each major step in the process, beginning with early preparation to completion of the process. In this section, institutions indicate whether they prefer a Fall or Spring visit by the Evaluation Team, list major milestones in the self-study process and when they will be achieved.*

## **XI. Communication Plan**

*An initial Communication Plan with a listing of intended audiences, communication methods, and timing. This plan is used to guide the Steering Committee and its Working Groups in gathering feedback from institutional stakeholders and updating them about major developments related to the self-study process. This may be integrated with the Self-Study Timetable (Section X) if desired.*

## **XII. Evaluation Team Profile**

*It is important that the Commission obtain sufficient information about the institution to organize an Evaluation Team that can evaluate the institution's compliance with Commission standards and give meaningful feedback to the institution relating to the institution's selected priorities. Along these lines, provide the following information:*

- *Summary of notable characteristics or demographics of the institution that the Commission should consider when selecting a chairperson and members of the evaluation team;*
- *Institutions that are considered comparable peers, preferably within the Middle States region;*
- *Institutions that are considered aspirational peers, preferable within the Middle States region; and,*
- *If necessary, institutions whose representatives might present conflicts of interest should they serve on the self-study evaluation team.*

*Although the institution's expressed preferences will be given careful consideration, the final decision about team membership remains with the Commission and its staff.*