
Self-Study Design Template

TOOL FOR INSTITUTIONS IN SELF-STUDY WITH VISITS IN 2022-2023

I. Institutional Overview

This section provides contextual information about the institution. Include a brief relevant history, the institution's mission statement and institutional goals, key environmental factors (recent events, developments, challenges, etc.), main programs of study, and descriptions of the student populations served by the institution (including trends in enrollment). Include relevant data that provides a context for the chosen institutional priorities.

II. Institutional Priorities to be Addressed in the Self-Study

Provide a brief narrative about processes the institution employed to identify three to four specific institutional priorities. This section should include information about:

- How institutional stakeholders were consulted in identifying the priorities
- Alignment of the selected institutional priorities with the institution's mission and goals (e.g. strategic plan)
- Alignment of the selected institutional priorities to the Standards for Accreditation.

III. Intended Outcomes of the Self-Study

MSCHE expects that institutions will have at least the following three outcomes:

1. Demonstrate how the institution currently meets the Commission's Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation
2. Focus on continuous improvement in the attainment of the institution's mission and its institutional priorities
3. Engage the institutional community in an inclusive and transparent self-appraisal process that actively and deliberately seeks to involve members from all areas of the institutional community

Identify one or more additional outcomes that the institution intends to achieve as a result of engaging in the self-study process. Consider how the self-study process can help the institution's meet its mission, assist it in meeting key institutional goals, and 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

Provide information about the membership of the Steering Committee and Working Groups, including how the selection process was conducted.

Include the following about the **Steering Committee**:

- Names and job titles of chairpersons of the Steering Committee and its members;

- 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;
- 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; and
- An initial description for how the Steering Committee will ensure that institutional mission, the 3 to 4 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 job titles of chairperson(s) and members of the Working Group. As appropriate, include other areas of responsibility at the institution (e.g. University Assessment Committee);
- 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);
- The Working Group charge and specific lines of inquiry, especially for addressing institutional priorities;
- Expectations for inclusion and analysis of various types of data related to compliance with the standards for accreditation and/or requirements of affiliation;
- A brief discussion about how relevant assessment information will be gathered, reviewed, summarized, and used by the Working Group to accomplish its work; and,
- 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, include a description of the processes the Steering Committee will use 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, inquiry plans, 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

Include 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 conclusion, 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. Include 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, include a listing of the members of this group.

- How those responsible for the Verification of Compliance process will communicate with the Working Groups and Steering Committee.

IX. Self-Study Timetable

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

X. Communication Plan

Include a 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. The plan may be integrated with the Self-Study Timetable (Section IX) if desired.

XI. Evaluation Team Profile

It is important that the Commission obtain sufficient information about the institution to organize an Evaluation Team to evaluate the institution's compliance with the Standards for Accreditation, Requirements of Affiliation, policies and procedures, and federal requirements, and provide meaningful feedback to the institution relating to the institution's compliance. Along these lines, provide the following information (separate lists for Team Chair and Team Members):

- **Team Chair:** Indicate the specific expertise desired in the Team Chair, such as experience at similar institutions, experience with the identified institutional priorities, or expertise in a program or process. The Team Chairs are usually chief executive officers, presidents, or chief academic officers. A preference for any of these will be helpful in identifying the appropriate person.
- **Team Members:** The team usually includes evaluators that have expertise/experience with academic affairs, assessment, student affairs, faculty issues, and financial issues. As with the Team Chair, outlining specific expertise desired in the evaluators, such as expertise in a discipline or process, or a background working with a certain type of institution, will be helpful in identifying appropriate potential team members. If the institution has distance education programs, a team member will be identified with that expertise.
- Institutions that are considered comparable peers, preferably within the Middle States region;
- Institutions that are considered aspirational peers, preferable within the Middle States region;
- Institutions that are primary competitors or that have common student recruitment target areas; and,
- If necessary, institutions whose representatives might present conflicts of interest should they serve on the self-study evaluation team, as outlined in the Commission's policy [Conflict of Interest: Commission Representatives](#).
- A listing of the institution's top programs by enrollment would be helpful as well.

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

XII. Evidence Inventory

Describe 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. Include the types of data points that should/will be analyzed for each standard.