



November 20, 2023

Mr. Alex Clark  
President  
Athabasca University  
1 University Drive  
Athabasca, Alberta, T9S 3A3

### **Notification of Non-Compliance Action**

Dear Mr. Clark:

On behalf of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, I am writing to inform you that on November 16, 2023, the Commission acted as follows:

To acknowledge receipt of the monitoring report requested by the Commission action of June 7, 2023. To note the follow-up team visit by the Commission's representatives to the main campus at 1 University Drive, Athabasca, Alberta, T9S 3A3 Canada on August 13-15, 2023. To place the institution on probation and note that the institution's accreditation is in jeopardy because of insufficient evidence that the institution is currently in compliance with Standard V (Educational Effectiveness Assessment). To note that the institution remains accredited while on probation. To note further that federal regulations limit the period during which an institution may be in non-compliance, which started on November 17, 2022. To request a monitoring report, due March 1, 2024, demonstrating evidence that the institution has achieved and can sustain ongoing compliance with Standard V (Educational Effectiveness Assessment), including but not limited to (1) documentation of the evaluation of general education student learning outcomes with evidence of appropriate levels of rigor and coherence and the regular consideration of results and follow-up on any findings (Standard V) and (2) documentation of an implemented, systematic, and sustained process to assess student learning outcomes at all levels (Standard V) (Fourteenth Edition and Evidence Expectations by Standard Guidelines). To request that the monitoring report also include (1) evidence of consideration and use of appropriate assessment by key institutional and unit stakeholders for identifying opportunities for innovation and/or the improvement of educational effectiveness at division/unit level (Standard VI); (2) evidence of regular reporting on institutional performance on key performance indicators (KPIs), and evidence of analysis of KPIs tied to strategic or institutional effectiveness planning (Standard VI); (3) well-defined decision-making processes and clear assignment of responsibility and accountability for achieving institutional and unit effectiveness (Standard

VI); and (4) periodic assessment of the effectiveness of planning, resource allocation, institutional renewal processes, and availability of resources (Standard VI). To require that the institution complete and submit for approval, by March 1, 2024, a comprehensive, implementable teach-out plan and signed teach-out agreements with appropriate teach-out partner institutions (Teach-Out Plans and Agreements Policy and Procedures). In accordance with Commission policy and federal regulations, the teach-out plan must provide for the equitable treatment of students to complete their education or transfer to another institution if the Commission were to withdraw accreditation. To note the Commission may reject the teach-out and require resubmission if all of the required information is not provided. To direct a follow-up team visit following submission of the monitoring report. To direct a prompt Commission liaison guidance visit to discuss the Commission's expectations. Upon reaffirmation of accreditation, the next evaluation visit is scheduled for 2028-2029.

This action is a non-compliance action. An explanation of this type of action is provided in the Commission's *Accreditation Actions Policy and Procedures*. If any of the information contained within the action appears to be factually incorrect, please send an email within 60 calendar days of the date of the action to [actions@msche.org](mailto:actions@msche.org).

Pursuant to the Commission's *Communication in the Accreditation Process Policy and Procedures*, this letter serves as the Commission's official notification of this action. This accreditation action will be publicly available on the Commission's website within 24 hours of informing the institution. In accordance with policy and federal regulation, the Commission provides notification of non-compliance actions to the United States Secretary of Education, the appropriate state or other licensing or authorizing agency, and the appropriate accrediting agencies at the same time it notifies the institution, but no later than 30 days after it takes the action.

Commission policy and procedures allow for the submission of an optional institutional statement, which will be posted on the Commission's website, in response to the above non-compliance action. Any institutional statement must be on institutional letterhead, signed by an authorized representative of the institution, and submitted as a PDF document. Because the institutional statement will be posted publicly, it is important that the institutional statement address the accreditation issue and avoid issues that are not relevant to the action. Hyperlinks are not permitted to be used. The submission of an optional institutional statement must be sent to [actions@msche.org](mailto:actions@msche.org) within 60 calendar days from the date of the action.

Pursuant to the Commission's *Public Disclosures Policy and Procedures* and federal regulation 34 CFR § 602.26(b), the institution is required to publicly disclose an accurate representation of its current accreditation phase and accreditation status with the Commission, which you will find on the institution's Statement of Accreditation Status (SAS) at the Commission's website. The institution is required to publicly disclose non-compliance and adverse actions. The Commission provides procedures and a sample statement for this disclosure in the *Public Disclosures Policy and Procedures* which must be implemented within seven calendar days of this notification where accreditation is referenced on the institution's website and wherever accreditation is referenced in publications.

It is critical for the institution to review and understand the Commission's policies and procedures which will explain the Commission's actions and the institution's accreditation status:

*[Accreditation Actions Policy and Procedures](#)*

*[Accreditation Review Cycle and Monitoring Policy and Procedures](#)*

*[Communication in the Accreditation Process Policy and Procedures](#)*

*[Public Disclosures Policy and Procedures](#)*

*[Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation](#)*

For questions about the Commission's actions, please contact the institution's assigned Commission staff liaison. Questions from the public about the institution's accreditation phase or accreditation status can be directed to [communications@msche.org](mailto:communications@msche.org). For additional information, visit [www.msche.org](http://www.msche.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Heather F. Perfetti", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Heather F. Perfetti, J.D., Ed.D.  
President