

Entry Requirements for U.S. Accreditation

Hellenic American Union, Athens, Greece
12-14 October, 2007



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Topics

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Types of U.S. Accreditation

- **Types of Accreditors**
 - **7 Regional Accreditors**
 - Middle States, New England, North Central, Northwest, Southern, Western (Community Colleges; Universities)
 - Similar standards
 - Examine entire institution
 - **Specialized and Professional**
 - Specific programs within an institution
 - **National**
 - Degree-granting & non-degree granting institutions across the U.S.

Types of Accreditation cont'd

- **Non-governmental, non-profit**
 - **Accredit public, private non-profit & private for-profit institutions**
 - **Apply same standards to all**
- **Accreditors recognized by U.S. Department of Education**
 - **Enables students to receive federal grants and loans**

Purpose of Regional Accreditation

- **Assures public that an institution meets high standards**
- **Judgment by peers that the institution:**
 - **Has appropriate mission and goals**
 - **Achieves success**
 - **Uses assessment results to improve**
 - **Is appropriately organized and staffed**
 - **Meets MSCHE standards**

Purpose of Regional Accreditation cont'd

- **Accreditation helps:**
 - **Students choose an institution**
 - **Institutions accept transfer of credits**
 - **Employers judge quality of graduates**
- **U.S. accreditation attests to the quality of the education a U.S. institution offers in other countries**

How U.S. Accreditation Works

- **Requires extensive external reviews over a long period of time**
 - Tailored to the unique nature of the institution
- **Candidate institutions:**
 - Receive timely advice about meeting standards
 - Multiple visits from staff, consultants, and evaluators
 - Submit written reports twice each year
- **Newly-accredited institutions:**
 - Undergo a full evaluation after five years

Which Institutions are Eligible to Apply

- **There are 22 eligibility requirements. For example, an institution must demonstrate that it:**
 - **Is licensed by its state or government**
 - **Grants postsecondary degrees**
 - **Has a clear mission**
 - **Is governed by a board of directors**
 - **Publishes catalogues with information for students**
 - **Devotes sufficient resources to its educational activities**

May Institutions Abroad Receive U.S. Accreditation?

- **MSCHE Pilot Project (2002-2007)**
 - To determine whether and how standards applied to institutions chartered abroad
 - Moratorium exists for new applicants, and project is being evaluated
- **Regional accreditors' policies vary:**
 - Some do not accredit institutions abroad
 - Some are experimenting with a few
 - Some do but have significant restrictions
- **MSCHE seeks mutual agreements with quality assurance agencies abroad**

Candidacy Process

- **Application phase → Candidate status**
- **Thorough review ensures public that no accredited institution is a “degree mill”**
- **Supports institution as it improves**
- **Sifts out unqualified applicants early**

Candidacy cont'd

- **Institution submits:**
 - Application and Data Form
 - Written materials (e.g., charter, mission, governing board, etc.)
- **Application and other fees apply**
- **MSCHE vice president assigned as “liaison” and visits institution**

Candidacy cont'd

- **Achieving Candidate Status**
 - ***Self-Analysis Document***
 - Institution analyzes itself with the standards
 - Proposes plan for self-improvement
 - Includes specific operational data
- **Small team of peer evaluators visits the institution**
- **Commission reviews team report, institution's response to team report, and grants/denies "Candidate Status"**

Candidacy cont'd

- **During Candidacy:**
 - Institution files semi-annual reports
 - Consultant visits twice each year
 - Commission authorizes institution to start the “self-study” process
 - Self-Study report produced in 18-24 months
 - Evaluation team visits institution and reports to the Commission
 - Entire candidacy process must be completed within five years
 - If accreditation is granted, institution conducts another self-study in next five years

Conclusion

- **Accredited institutions reviewed:**
 - Comprehensive review every 10 years
 - Interim report in the 5th year
- **Commission may require other interim reports and team visits if issues emerge**
- **Problem areas are addressed early, before warning or loss of accreditation are necessary**
- **Evaluation and support during candidacy assures public confidence in the quality of institutions in the candidacy process**