



CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY INSTITUTIONS

6.2. CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY INSTITUTIONS

6.2.1. Career and Technology Institutions Eligible for Accreditation by the Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools

Institutions established to provide career and technology programs for secondary and/or postsecondary students or adult learners are eligible for accreditation by CSS if the following criteria are met:

- The institution is established and recognized as a secondary and/or postsecondary institution whose programs do not lead to the granting of a higher education degree (Associate Degree or higher);
- If there are both secondary and postsecondary divisions in the institution, the institution agrees to engage both divisions in the accreditation process

If an institution's postsecondary program leads to the granting of a higher education degree (Associate Degree or higher), the institution must seek accreditation for that portion of its program from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

6.2.2. Standards and Indicators for Career and Technology Institutions

The Commission shall maintain as a self-study and evaluation option for career and technology institutions 1) a career and technology self-study protocol and 2) Standards for Accreditation and Indicators of Quality for Career and Technology Institutions and Programs. This shall include an examination of the institution's efforts to maintain equipment, technology, and instructional practices that are reflective of current standards and requirements of business and industry.

6.2.3. Comprehensive Review Process for the Standards of Accreditation for Career and Technology Institutions and Programs

It is CSS policy to conduct ongoing and comprehensive reviews of its accreditation standards to verify that they are adequate to evaluate educational quality and relevant to the educational and training needs of students. CSS uses a combination of longer-term reviews, regular ad hoc reviews, special reviews, and institutional and onsite evaluator reviews to accomplish this task. The various reviews are described below:

6.2.3.1. Frequency of Longer-Term, Comprehensive Review: The Commission shall conduct a comprehensive review of Standards for Accreditation for Career and Technology Institutions and Programs at least once every five years, unless member institution response or other factors warrant a more frequent examination. The primary purpose of the comprehensive review is to determine if the current standards, when viewed as a whole and individually, are adequate to evaluate the quality of educational programs and relevant to the education and training needs of students.

6.2.3.2. Regular Ad hoc Reviews: At the end of each meeting of the Commission's Membership and Accreditation Committee, a less formal *ad hoc* review of the Standards for Accreditation for Career and Technology Institutions and Programs shall take place. The purpose of these reviews is to determine if, based on the application of the standards

to the specific institutions the Commission considered during its meeting, there are problems with any of the standards that require further investigation and possible modification. The implications of changes in the field of education, training, business/industry, and the practices of CSS-accredited programs on the standards are routinely considered during these ad hoc reviews, as are changes designed either to improve program quality or to update the language of the standards.

6.2.3.3. Special Standards Reviews: The quality and effectiveness of CSS Standards for Accreditation for Career and Technology Institutions and Programs are also discussed during other CSS activities that CSS routinely conducts during the year. These activities typically include discussions with CSS-accredited programs during various workshops CSS conducts for its member institutions, reviews of any complaints received during the year that suggest problems with the standards, responses on team evaluation forms, etc. If problems are found with any of the standards during this ad hoc review, proposals for new or revised standards can be developed, sent out for comment to the relevant constituencies, and voted on at a subsequent Commission meeting after the Commission analyzes the comments received.

6.2.3.4. Reviews by Institutions and On-site Evaluators: After each site visit, CSS surveys institutions about their perceptions of the adequacy and relevance of the Standards for Accreditation for Career and Technology Institutions and Programs. CSS schedules this activity immediately after each site visit because it recognizes that institutions that have recently prepared a self-study and undergone an on-site review have a particularly keen insight into the relevance of the standards, the effectiveness of their application during the self-study and site visit, etc., and thus can provide useful information for the Commission to consider during its structured review of the standards.

In a similar fashion, CSS surveys on-site evaluators after each site visit to gain any insights they might have about the standards, their effectiveness in evaluating educational quality, their relevance to the education and training needs of students, etc.

The information obtained from both of these activities is provided to the Commission for use during the Commission's structured reviews of the standards.

6.2.3.5. Criteria for the Review: The Standards for Accreditation for Career and Technology Institutions and Programs shall be to ensure that each standard and indicator of quality meets the following criteria:

- **Clarity and Reliability**: The Standards and their Indicators of Quality are clear and understandable so that they can be applied consistently during accreditation evaluations of career and technology institutions.
- **Comprehensiveness**: The Standards and their Indicators of Quality address *all* of the organizational elements, educational programs, and services for students that must be in place for a career and technology institution to provide a high quality program.
- **Appropriateness**: The Standards and their Indicators of Quality require a level of quality in organization, curriculum, instruction, and services that will ensure that graduates are able perform the job tasks in the career field for which they were trained.

6.2.3.6. Constituencies Involved in the Review: Relevant constituencies shall be involved in the review process and shall be given a meaningful opportunity to provide input into the review and to respond to proposed changes. The review process shall

include a sample of accredited and candidate institutions, current and past employers of graduates, professional associations, state agencies, licensing bodies, representatives of business and industry, recent and past alumni, and current students.

6.2.3.7. Results of the Review: Should the review indicate that changes to the Standards for Accreditation are needed, those changes shall be made within 12 months of the review.

6.2.3.8. Notice of Standards Changes: Institutions shall be notified at least 12 months in advance of when the proposed Standards for Accreditation go into effect.

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