

HCC Middle States FAQs 2023-2025

These FAQs were created as part of HCC's self-study process in advance of its 2025 reaccreditation.

What is Middle States accreditation, and why is it important for HCC?

Middle States accreditation is a formal, peer-based process that ensures institutions of higher education meet rigorous standards of quality and effectiveness. Accreditation demonstrates Hagerstown Community College's commitment to continuous improvement, academic excellence, and institutional accountability.

Who grants Middle States accreditation?

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) grants accreditation to colleges and universities arily in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. It covers states like Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Puerto Rico, along with the U.S. Virgin Islands and certain international locations. MSCHE is a recognized institutional accrediting body by the U.S. Department of Education.

What is the difference between Middle States and other accrediting bodies (e.g. CODA)?

This is a really critical point. Middle States accreditation is institutional, as opposed to discipline-specific, and does not specify course or curriculum content or instructional methods. The [seven standards](#) are interpreted in the context of the institution's mission and goals.

[Other accrediting agencies](#) have a presence at HCC. In each case, the accreditation recognizes that a discipline-based program meets established standards relevant to the discipline. In many cases, the standards include content and pedagogy that discipline practitioners consider essential.

How does Middle States accreditation benefit HCC students?

Middle States accreditation assures students that they are attending an institution that meets high academic standards, offers quality programs, and is committed to their success. It also facilitates credit transfer and provides a framework for ongoing institutional improvement to enhance the student experience.

Accreditation is required for institutions to be eligible to participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs.

The Self-Study can also provide meaningful recommendations for improvement and innovation, both self-identified by the institution and recommended by the visiting peer-review Team.

What is the process for obtaining Middle States accreditation?

The accreditation process involves a comprehensive self-study, followed by a peer review visit from a team of educators from other accredited institutions. This team assesses how well the college meets MSCHE's standards for mission and goals, ethics and integrity, student support, and more.

How long has HCC been accredited?

The College has maintained accreditation by Middle States since its first review in 1968.

How often is the accreditation reaffirmed?

Following a process change in 2017-18, institutions now go through a reaffirmation process approximately 8 years, during which they provide evidence of their ongoing compliance with MSCHE standards. This cycle ensures continuous improvement and accountability.

Won't HCC be accredited automatically? Isn't this just a formality?

No institution is automatically accredited. All institutions must go through the same process and demonstrate compliance with the same standards. It is possible for any

institution, including HCC, to fail to demonstrate compliance with one or more of the standards.

What are the possible outcomes, what happens if the accreditation is not reaffirmed?

If the accreditation is not reaffirmed, Hagerstown Community College would work closely with MSCHE to address any concerns and areas for improvement. The college would have a specified period to demonstrate compliance with the accreditation standards.

An institution can be accredited without any conditions. With increasing frequency, however, Middle States uses outcomes with specific recommendations that engage the institution in a follow-up process. Potential conditional outcomes are "accreditation with a follow-up report" or "accreditation with monitoring and a follow-up visit." If an institution fails to perform the designated follow-up actions, Middle States can withdraw its accreditation.

What does the Middle States accreditation process involve for HCC?

The process involves self-assessment, data collection, and the creation of a comprehensive self-study report. This report is submitted to MSCHE and reviewed by a team of peer evaluators during an on-site visit. Following the visit, the institution receives a written report with commendations and recommendations.

How does HCC involve its stakeholders in the accreditation process?

HCC engages faculty, staff, students, administrators, and community members in various aspects of the self-study process. Input is gathered through surveys, focus groups, and other means to ensure a comprehensive evaluation.

Seven working groups (representing each of the seven standards and compliance) are comprised of both faculty and staff members and headed by two co-chairs. There is also a steering committee, co-chaired by Dr. Heike Soeffker-Culicerto and Kate Benchoff overseeing the progress of the working groups. The steering committee or the various

working groups may contact you in the coming months to ask for information or to ask that you participate in the process.

The various working group reports will become the basis of a self-study report that will be sent to the peer evaluators who will conduct our evaluation. There will be time for the campus community to review the draft report before it is finalized, and you will receive occasional updates about the self-study process throughout the year.

What is a self-study report?

In order to demonstrate compliance with all seven Middle States standards, we are required to produce a self-study report based on models provided by Middle States. HCC has chosen the standards-based approach to allow the college to best present evidence of compliance of the standards while systematically evaluating the institution. Each standard will be addressed by chapter with institutional priorities integrated within chapters as appropriate. Requirements of affiliation and verification of compliance with federal regulations will also be addressed within the chapters as relevant.

What are the qualities of a good self-study?

According to MSCHE, "The Commission's accreditation process ensures institutional accountability, self-appraisal, improvement, and innovation through peer review and the rigorous application of standards within the context of institutional mission."

The Self-Study should be an honest appraisal of the institution, that is evidence-driven, and consistently demonstrates the use of assessment (throughout each standard or chapter). It provides an opportunity to engage multiple stakeholders in an extensive analysis of the college's strengths and areas for improvement and innovation.

The Evidence Inventory, a cataloged and referenced inventory of documents, processes, and procedures, provides an opportunity for the institution to develop sustainable resources that the college should continuously update to document ongoing compliance.

What is Middle States looking for?

HCC must demonstrate compliance with each of Middle State's [seven standards](#), which are interpreted in the context of the institution's mission and goals. Middle States is chiefly looking for evidence that our institutional and educational processes follow from our mission and help us to achieve our goals. In addition, we must demonstrate that our planning processes are sustainable processes for change, informed by data analysis, assessment, and evaluation, and that our resources are allocated in accordance with our priorities. The Middle States process is institution-wide and includes processes like governance, admissions, integrity, and student support.

How does Middle States accreditation contribute to HCC's mission and strategic goals?

Middle States accreditation aligns with HCC's commitment to providing high-quality education, fostering student success, and continuously improving its programs and services. The accreditation process helps ensure that the college's mission is being realized effectively.

What is HCC's Mission?

HCC's [Strategic Plan](#) outlines the institution's mission, vision, values, and strategic commitments.

Where can I find more information about Middle States accreditation at HCC?

For more detailed information about HCC's Middle States accreditation, you can visit the college's [official website](#) or contact the designated accreditation liaison on campus. Additional resources and documents related to the accreditation process are available for review.

Within the Middle States region, the President of the institution is its official member. However, the President must assign an ALO to serve as the official contact for the institution. Among other duties, the ALO is responsible for overseeing accreditation operations and ensuring that compliance with Middle States standards and policies is addressed through necessary channels. The ALO works closely with the institution's assigned Middle States Vice President to navigate matters of relevance to the

institution's accreditation. HCC's ALO is Carlee Ranalli, Ed.D, Dean of the Office of Planning & Institutional Effectiveness (PIE).

What happens during the reaccreditation visit?

Members of the visiting team will hold a series of informational meetings with faculty, staff and students to get their feedback about HCC's performance in a variety of areas. One of HCC's additional sites will also participate.

The MCHE Team evaluates the analysis in the Self-Study Report and draws on insights gained from the visit interviews. Since the Self-Study Report and On-Site Evaluation Visit result from careful analysis that has incorporated feedback from multiple stakeholders, the Report has the potential to influence institutional decision-making for several years.

How should I prepare?

All members of the HCC community, and especially those attending meetings with the visiting team are strongly encouraged to read the final 2025 self-study report once it is posted on the [HCC Middle States website](#).

In addition, the reaccreditation leadership team will be preparing a series of videos, each 5-7 minutes long, to provide summary overviews of the Self-Study Report as a whole and each of the seven main chapters. Watch (or just listen) to the videos to become more familiar with the Self-Study.