

Middle States 2019 Self Study FAQs

What is Accreditation?

Accreditation is process that provides assurance to the public that a college or university meets established quality standards and other requirements.

What is Middle States?

“Middle States” is shorthand for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), one of six regional accreditors recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. MSCHE is a non-governmental membership association that accredits over 500 colleges & universities.

Why is Accreditation Important?

Accreditation is a review process that ensures that we are providing an excellent education in accordance with our mission. In addition to being an indicator of institutional quality, maintaining accreditation is necessary for institutions to gain access to Title IV federal financial aid funding. Title IV is part of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (or HEOA, as amended), the law that regulates many aspects of U.S. higher education activities. Accreditation is also often a baseline criterion for transferring credit from one institution to another. Many employers look for degrees from accredited institutions, and some will only offer educational benefits to employees if they are seeking education through an accredited institution. States government may require that an institution is regionally accredited in order for students to access state funds, and some require that students sitting for certain placement or credentialing examinations are coming from accredited institutions.

What is an institutional self-study, and why is The University of Scranton conducting one at this time?

The University has held accreditation through Middle States since 1928. In order to maintain accreditation, all Middle States member institutions must complete a self-study every ten years. A self-study process typically takes about three years to complete. The accreditation cycle culminates with the submission of our Self-Study Report in winter 2019, and a visit by a Peer Review Team in spring 2019. To prepare this report, the Steering Committee and Working Groups will conduct research and analysis, compile evidence, and prepare reports that document our strengths, our ability to meet Middle States’ [Standards for Accreditation & Requirements for Affiliation](#), and form recommendations for self-improvement. The standards are:

- Standard 1: Mission and Goals
- Standard 2: Ethics and Integrity
- Standard 3: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience
- Standard 4: Support of the Student Experience
- Standard 5: Educational Effectiveness Assessment
- Standard 6: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement
- Standard 7: Governance, Leadership, and Administration

A separate part of the process is the completion of a Compliance Report, which documents our policies and procedures with respect to several Middle States *Requirements for Affiliation* and accreditation-relevant federal legislation (including the HEOA).

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Who is Involved in the Self-Study?

The self-study is being conducted by a Steering Committee from across our campus community. Dr. Rebecca Beal, Professor of English, and Julie Schumacher Cohen, Director of Government and Community Relations co-chair a Steering Committee including faculty and staff representing the members across our campus community. The co-chairs are supported in their efforts by a Coordinating Committee comprised of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost, Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration, Associate Provost, and Assistant Vice Provost for Planning & Institutional Effectiveness, who serves as the University's MSCHE Accreditation Liaison Officer. The members of the Steering Committee in turn lead seven Working Groups, one for each of the seven Middle States Standards. For each Working Group, a faculty and staff member serves as co-chairs. Like the Steering Committee, Working Groups are drawn from across the campus community, with faculty, staff, students, and administrators serving as members. Other members of the University community participate in a variety of important ways, including being interviewed or completing surveys, taking part in various fora, meetings and interviews, providing information from your program or department, and reviewing draft reports. An eighth working group is responsible for the completion of the Compliance Report. In addition to all of those with a formal role, the successful completion of the self-study will engage many other faculty, staff, administrators, and students in providing information, feedback, and support as the process unfolds.

What is the University's Timeline for Self-Study?

The University began preparing for its self-study in the spring of 2016. The 2016-2017 academic year is dedicated to the preparation and planning for the self-study, including the creation of the Steering Committee and our Design for Self-Study. The actual study will occur mainly during the 2017-2018 academic year. We will submit the Self-Study Report to Middle States in January 2019, and the Peer Team site-visit evaluation will likely occur in March or April of that year. After that visit, the Peer Team will share their findings in a report to the University and the Middle States Commission, which will review the Peer report and our own self-study report and compliance reports when it reviews our accreditation status in June 2019.

Where can I get more information?

1. Visit www.scranton.edu/selfstudy for news and information, or email selfstudy@scranton.edu.
2. Watch your email, RoyalNews, my.scranton, and other University publications for news and updates related to the Self-Study process.
3. Contact Dr. Rebecca Beal or Julie Schumacher Cohen, the University's Self-Study Steering Committee co-chairs, or members of the Steering Committee: rebecca.beal@scranton.edu, julie.cohen@scranton.edu
3. Contact Kate Yerkes, a member of the Steering Committee and the University's Middle States Accreditation Liaison Officer: kathryn.yerkes@scranton.edu