

Slippery Rock University Middle States 2020-21 Self Study FAQs



Slippery Rock University is in the midst of the process that reaffirms our accreditation status with Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). This handout explains the process.

What is the Middle States Commission on Higher Education?

MSCHE is a non- governmental membership association that accredits over 500 colleges & universities nationally and internationally. Also known as “Middle States”, MSCHE is an institutional accreditor recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

What is accreditation?

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

Why is accreditation important?

Accreditation is a review process that demonstrates that we are providing an excellent education in accordance with our mission. 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. Since about 85% of our students use some form of financial aid, this recognition is crucial to our identity and mission as an excellent educational institution serving Pennsylvania residents and beyond. Accreditation can also be a factor in transfer of credit between institutions, admission to graduate school, eligibility for certain credentialing exams, and employment decisions.

What is the self-study process?

The University has held accreditation through Middle States since 1943. In order to maintain our accreditation, Middle States requires us, and all member institutions, to complete a self-study every eight years, along with an annual update. The self-study is a major report, addressing the alignment of all areas of the University with our mission, planning and innovation processes. The accreditation cycle culminates with the submission of our self-study in early 2021, and a visit by a Peer Review Team in March 2021.

The seven Middle States 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

The University’s internal Steering Committee and associated Working Groups have been

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studying the University, compiling evidence, and preparing reports that document our strengths and our ability to meet Middle States’ seven Standards for Accreditation & Requirements for Affiliation. Another important component is identifying avenues for self-improvement and innovation.

We are also preparing a Compliance Report that addresses eight accreditation-related federal requirements.

At the beginning of the self-study process, the Steering Committee began consulting institutional stakeholders from a wide variety of constituencies to a series of open forums, surveys, and meetings to seek input on what institutional priorities should be focused on in the Self-Study. This feedback was shared with SRU President William Behre who chose four Institutional Priorities for the 2021 SRU Self-Study process.

2021 SRU Self-Study Institutional Priorities	
Institutional Priority #1	Student success
Institutional Priority #2	Transformation of students through a quality, flexible, agile, and integrated curriculum and co-curriculum using powerful pedagogies and high-impact practices
Institutional Priority #3	Caring community
Institutional Priority #4	Use of resources: financial, facilities, technology, efficiency and effectiveness, and sustainability

Who is involved in the self-study?

The self-study is being conducted by a Steering Committee from across our campus community. Mary Hennessey, Assistant to the Provost and MSCHE Accreditation Liaison Officer, and Rebecca Morrice, faculty and chair of the Department of Theatre, serve as co-chairs of a Steering Committee which includes faculty, staff, and students representing our campus community. The members of the Steering Committee in turn lead seven Working Groups, one for each of the seven Middle States Standards. Other members of the University community participate in a variety of important ways, including being interviewed or completing surveys, taking part in various meetings and interviews, providing information from their program or department, and reviewing draft reports. In addition to all of those with a formal role, the successful completion of the self-study will engage many other faculty, staff, administrators, students, and the Council of Trustees in providing information, feedback, and support throughout the process.

What is the University’s timeline for self-study?

The University began self-study work in 2018. The first full draft has been submitted to our team chair, who will give us feedback for subsequent drafts. We will submit the final self-study to Middle States in February 2021, and a team of seven or eight reviewers from peer institutions will visit campus March 28 to 31. Depending on the continued response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the campus visit may be conducted virtually.

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After that visit, the visiting team will share their findings in a report to the University and the Middle States Commission, which will make its reaffirmation decision in June 2021.

Will I be able to participate in the team visit?

You may have an opportunity to represent your Slippery Rock experiences to the visiting team. You may get invited to join a specific meeting because of your campus role or you may be able to attend an open meeting.

Where can I get more information?

1. Visit www.sru.edu/msche for news and information. You may view our current grant of MSCHE accreditation at <https://www.msche.org/institution/0561/>.
2. Watch your email, SRU Communication, and www.sru.edu/msche for updates related to the self-study process.
3. Contact Mary Hennessey (mary.hennessey@sru.edu) or Rebecca Morrice (rebecca.morrice@sru.edu), the University's Self-Study Steering Committee co-chairs, or members of the Steering Committee (the list of steering committee members can be found at www.sru.edu/msche). Mary Hennessey is also the University's Middle States Accreditation Liaison Officer.

The Slippery Rock University Mission Statement

(<https://www.sru.edu/about/mission-and-vision>)

The fundamental educational mission of Slippery Rock University (SRU) is to transform the intellectual, social, physical, and leadership capacities of students in order to prepare them for life and career success. Complementary missions are to engage in scholarly activity and professional service.

The nine Slippery Rock University Strategic Goals

(<https://www.sru.edu/about/strategic-planning>)

Goal 1	Increase enrollment while enhancing student quality and diversity.
Goal 2	Offer a quality, flexible, agile, and integrated curriculum and co-curriculum to develop the intellectual, social, physical, and leadership capacities of students.
Goal 3	Fuel learning with powerful pedagogies and transformational experiences.
Goal 4	Maintain an unwavering focus on success for all students.
Goal 5	Provide a caring campus experience, supported by quality housing, dining, recreation, health, safety and administrative services.
Goal 6	Attract, retain, and develop highly qualified and diverse faculty, staff, and administrators.
Goal 7	Increase financial resources, enhance physical facilities, employ cost-effective technology, and adopt sustainable practices.
Goal 8	Engage alumni and friends in the life of the university.
Goal 9	Engage communities in collaborative and mutually-beneficial partnerships to advance the quality of life in the community and enhance learning, research, and civic engagement.

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The ten Slippery Rock University Student Learning Outcomes

(<https://www.sru.edu/offices/academic-affairs/university-wide-outcomes>)

Outcome 1	Act as effective communicators	Outcome 6	Demonstrate creativity and develop aesthetic appreciation
Outcome 2	Apply critical thinking to argument and problem solving	Outcome 7	Become civically engaged
Outcome 3	Develop scientific literacy	Outcome 8	Act ethically
Outcome 4	Apply quantitative reasoning in appropriate contexts	Outcome 9	Develop a worldview that acknowledges diversity and global interdependence
Outcome 5	Develop as a whole person	Outcome 10	Act as responsible digital citizens

Graduate Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of graduate-level programs, all post-baccalaureate SRU graduates will be able to:	
Outcome 1	Apply the major best practices, theories, or research methodologies in the field(s) of study.
Outcome 2	Apply knowledge from the area(s) of study to address problems in the field.
Outcome 3	Formulate arguments or explanations to both an academic and general audience, in both oral and written forms.

Graduate-level programs assess student achievement of these outcomes in their own disciplinary contexts. Assessment results inform program and institutional efforts to strengthen curricula, pedagogy, and educational resources.