

MSCHE 2014 Periodic Review Report Outcomes: A Preview

By Don Sutherland

Tomorrow, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) will post the 2014 Periodic Review Report (PRR) outcomes. The range of possible outcomes includes reaffirmation of accreditation without any follow-up requests, reaffirmation of accreditation with a follow-up request (monitoring report or progress report) related to one or more MSCHE standards, a warning with a monitoring report, or probation with a monitoring report. This blog entry provides a quick preview.

Among the questions leading up to the release of the PRR outcomes concerns what share of institutions will be asked to submit a follow-up report on one or more MSCHE Standards. Over the past three PRR cycles (2011-2013), 52% of schools were asked to submit follow-up reports. That percentage has varied widely. In 2009, 38% of PRRs resulted in follow-up requests. A year later, 68% of institutions were requested to complete follow-up reports.

When it comes to addressing matters raised in requests for follow-up reports, time and resources are often required to turn things around. As a result, an institution's previous self-study might offer some insight into the risk of a follow-up report subsequent to an institution's PRR.

One possible factor might be the number of standards on which an institution was asked to produce a follow-up report following the decennial review. If the 2008 cohort of schools that produced PRRs in 2013 is representative, there would be above average risk of being asked for a follow-up report if that institution had been asked to follow-up on three or more standards in response to its self-study report. In other words, the challenges of addressing so many issues often required more than five years' time.

2008 Self-Study Report Follow-Up Requests	% of 2013 Periodic Review Reports with Follow-Up Requests
0 Standards (No Follow-up Requested)	50%
1-2 Standards	50%
3 Standards	67%
4 or More Standards	71%
2008-2013 Average	55%

A second possible factor might be the MSCHE standards for which an institution was cited in its self-study report. Planning (Standard 2) is a foundation for an institution's activities and operations. As a result, one would reasonably expect that an institution that had planning-related issues in its self-study report might require more than five years to fully address issues related to Standard 2 and their related impacts. In fact, for the 2008 self-study/2013 PRR cohort, three of every four institutions that were cited for Standard 2 in their self-study report received follow-up requests arising from their PRR. Issues with assessment-related standards (Standards 7 and 14) also resulted in frequent requests for follow-up reports from the PRR.

Although Standard 3 (Institutional Resources) saw follow-up requests below the 2008-2013 average for PRRs, MSCHE has been placing greater focus on Standard 3 in the most recent years

in its review of self-study reports. The 2013 and 2014 self-study cycles saw Standard 3 mentioned in 45% and 44% of follow-up requests respectively. It would not be implausible to see some of that increased scrutiny show up in the PRR process.

Standard Cited in 2008 Follow-Up Requests	% of 2013 Periodic Review Reports with Follow-Up Requests
Standard 2: Planning	75%
Standard 3: Institutional Resources	50%
Standard 7: Institutional Assessment	64%
Standard 12: General Education	63%
Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning	63%
2008-2013 Average	55%

If the 2008 self-study-2013 PRR cohort is representative, what does this mean for the 2014 PRR outcomes? Based on the data from the 2009 self-study reports, odds favor a somewhat higher percentage than the 2011-13 average for follow-up requests. Something around 60% of PRRs resulting in follow-up requests would be a ballpark figure, assuming MSCHE conducted its PRR reviews in a similar fashion as it did in 2013 and institutions have comparable success with the 2008 self-study/2013 PRR cohort in addressing issues raised by MSCHE. A trend toward tougher scrutiny in the context of a more demanding environment e.g., increasing federal pressure, could lead to a higher figure. In sum, a figure that is higher than the 2011-13 mean and longer 2008-13 average appears more likely than not.