



# Middle States Commission on Higher Education

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Third-Party providers/arrangements come in several different forms. Some require Commission approval; others do not. The following is designed to provide additional assistance to institutions. Please remember that institutional representatives, such as the ALO and the self-study co-chairs, can contact the Commission liaison (their assigned Vice President) with questions about third-party providers to verify whether Commission approval is needed or to discuss how best to address the agreement within the self-study report.

1. Transfer agreements – These type of agreements are typically between institutions in the same system or between institution within the same service area. The determinations for transfer of credit will be based on local/campus equivalencies and without reference to fulfillment of specific requirements for a degree or credential. ***No outsourcing is involved in these types of agreements and thus do not require Commission approval.*** An Example may be:

Subject	Course	Title	Subject	Course	Title	Credits	General Education
ENG	091	Grammar & Paragraph Mastery	TRE	NOC	Credits Not Accepted	0	
ENG	100	Intro to Composition	ENGL	1TR	Intro to Composition	3	
ENG	101	College Composition	INTD	105	Writing Seminar:	3	
ENG	102	Comp Natural & Social Sciences	ENGL	200	College Writing II	3	
ENG	105	Composition in the Humanities	ENGL	1TR	S/Composition in Humanities	3	Social Science Gen Ed
ENG	106	Technical Writing	ENGL	1TR	Technical Writing	3	
ENG	111	Scriptwriting for Radio & TV	ENGL	1TR	Scriptwriting for Radio & TV	3	
ENG	112	Copywriting	COMN	1TR	Copywriting	3	
ENG	192	Technical Writing 2	ENGL	1TR	Technical Writing 2	3	
ENG	214	Intro to Creative Writing	ENGL	2TR	Intro to Creative Writing	3	
ENG	ELE	English Elective	ENGL	000	Course needs to be evaluated	1	

2. Articulation Agreements - These types of agreements between two institutions allow for students to apply specific credits earned to specific degrees or certificates at another institution. ***No outsourcing is involved with these types of agreements and thus do not require Commission approval.*** We do want to note that the Commission has a policy on *Transfer Credit, Prior Learning, and Articulation*, which you can find online at [www.msche.org](http://www.msche.org).

3. Contractual Arrangements – These types of agreements, or contracts, are between a member or candidate institution and an unaccredited (i.e. an organization not accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education) third-party (institution, corporation, or other entity) to outsource a portion of the institution’s educational programs. The Commission’s *Substantive Change Policy* is triggered when that provider is offering 25% of one or more of the institution’s educational programs leading to an academic or professional degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential. For more about these types of agreements, see the Substantive Change Policy which can be found online at [www.msche.org](http://www.msche.org).

General Principles:

The Commission expects member institutions to use the following guidelines when establishing contractual arrangements with organizations that are not regionally accredited.

- The member institution’s appropriate representatives have the responsibility to review and approve the content of the courses/programs, and those representatives have credentials that are appropriate to the level and content of the course or program.
- The member institution follows all of the procedures established by its governance structure and by the Commission for approval of the courses/programs.
- The member institution has not only the contractual obligation, but also systematic processes, to ensure its capacity to carry out its responsibility for oversight of:
  - advertising and recruitment
  - admissions
  - appointment of faculty
  - content and rigor of course/program(s)
  - evaluation of student work
  - award of credit/certificates/degrees
  - outcomes assessment
  - academic advising
  - support services

Therefore, the self-study may require that you address other types of “educational services” through third-party providers since every institution is responsible for activities carried out under the institution’s name. Even when Commission approval is not required for that agreement, the institution, through self-study, will have an opportunity to ensure adequate and appropriate institutional review of third-party provider agreements and activities, including but not limited to:

- Tutoring
- Advising
- Counseling
- Admissions Services
- Recruiting or Marketing
- International Student Management (including ESL support)
- Other Types of Student Support Services

Services that, generally, would not fall within the umbrella of “educational services” – or “student learning opportunities” (Standard III), “student support services” (Standard IV), “assessment services” (Standard V) - would be those such as food or dining services. However, part of your assessment activities may include evaluating and assessing these services and may therefore lend to inclusion in the self-study.

*For more information, please see the Commission Policy: Contracts by Accredited and Candidate Institutions for Education-Related Services; Commission Policy on Substantive Change; Verification of Compliance with Accreditation Relevant Federal Regulations; Standards III, IV, V; Requirements of Affiliation 8, 9, 10.*