

# User Guide and Definitions for the Middle States Evidence Inventory Management System

Version 1.0 – October 31, 2023

## Objective

This document provides a review of the document management system developed to facilitate the successful creation of the Evidence Inventory that will accompany the Self-Study document submitted by the University of Maryland, Baltimore to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education in anticipation of a peer review scheduled for spring 2025.

## Evidence Inventory Management System (EIMS) Definitions and Parameters

File types: Although the PDF file format is MSCHE’s preferred document type, the EIMS is capable of handling file types other than PDF such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and JPG.

Number of Files: A minimum of one upload must be included in the evidence inventory for each of the 46 criteria associated with Standards for Accreditation and the 14 applicable Requirements of Affiliation. As it is typical for several documents to be associated with each criterion, the EIMS is designed to accommodate several hundred documents.

File naming and labeling: MSCHE recommends a standardized file naming format be adopted for files uploaded to the Evidence Inventory. The Evidence Inventory Portal also accommodates a 2,000-character explanation that should be continuously associated with the file once created.

## User Roles and Attribution

Contributor: Uploads or selects files and attributes them to Criteria and/or Requirements of Affiliation within the assigned Standard to create evidence items. Evidence items created by Contributors will have status of In Progress or Pending Review until acted on by Manager. The name of the Contributor who created the evidence item is associated with it in the system.

Manager: In addition to Contributor abilities, can review, approve, or reject evidence items submitted by Contributors within the assigned Standard that have status of Pending Review. Approved files are those that will be uploaded into the Portal. The system associates name of the Manager with actions to approve or reject files uploaded by Contributor(s).

System Administrator: Has Contributor and Manager capabilities for assigned Standards. Additional capabilities include adding and deleting system users and adding available evidence file name components. System actions are attributed where appropriate.

## Basic Workflow of an Evidence Item

### Contributor Role

Contributors create evidence items by uploading individual files into EIMS or selecting from files already uploaded into the system. The upload includes the following: 1) Original File Name; 2) Evidence Name, including Standard, Source, File Type, and Year; 3) a Description of Evidence (up to 2,000 characters) associated with the file in the MSCHE Portal; 4) Applicable Standard and Criterion, including sub-criterion (can be more than one Criterion and sub-criterion) and/or Requirement(s) of Affiliation; 5) Contributor's Comments; 6) Upload Date and Time; and 7) Name of User.

Evidence Name: The evidence name is a composite of the associated Standard, a brief yet meaningful description of the file (no more than 50 characters) created by the Contributor, and the Source, Type, and Year (if applicable) of the document selected from pre-defined lists. The evidence name should be created with care because it is the name by which the evidence is referred to within the Self-Study document and is the name seen by peer evaluators in the evidence inventory once it is uploaded to the MSCHE Portal.

Description of Evidence: A description of the evidence and how it supports the standard. This description will accompany each evidence item uploaded to the MSHCE Portal and will be seen by peer evaluators. Limit is 2,000 characters.

Selected Criteria and / or Requirements of Affiliation: The contributor associates each evidence item with one or more applicable Criteria and/or Requirements of Affiliation (RofA) within the Standard. There is no minimum (other than one) or maximum number of Criteria or RofA that must be selected. Subsequent evidence items can be associated with Criteria and RofA already associated with previously created evidence items. There is no limit on the number of evidence items that can be associated with any Criterion or RofA.

*Note: An individual evidence item cannot be associated with more than one Standard. If the same file is determined to be applicable to more than one Standard, additional evidence items must be created. In this case, since the file has already been uploaded into the EIMS, it is selected from the list of available files using the Choose a File option.*

Contributor's Comments: This field is available to provide comments, questions, or instructions to other working group contributors or managers. Comments are not seen by peer evaluators. Although optional at the time of creation, comments are required to be added to this field by Managers when evidence items are approved, sent back, or rejected.

Saving for Later: Contributors can create an evidence item and choose to save it without submitting so that additional details can be added later. Evidence items saved for later have a status of In Progress and can be edited by any Contributor within the Standard.

Submitting an Evidence Item: An evidence item can be submitted by any Contributor within the Standard when it is ready to be reviewed by a Manager.

## **Manager Role**

Managers review files uploaded by Contributors and will Approve, Send Back (Decline) or Reject each evidence item.

Approved evidence items are those to be included in the Evidence Inventory uploaded in to the MSCHE Portal, subject to final review by the Steering Committee co-chairs and Logistics Committee.

The Send Back button is used to Decline an evidence item so that one or more Contributors can revise the Evidence File Name, Description, attached file, or Criteria or Requirement(s) of Affiliation associated with the evidence item.

Rejected files will not be included in the Evidence Inventory but are retained by the EIMS. This can occur when Contributors submit evidence items that Managers do not feel are appropriate or needed for the final Evidence Inventory. Changing the status of an evidence item to “Rejected” can be reversed by a Manager at any time, however.

## **EIMS Reports (Under Development)**

The following reports aid in monitoring evidence submission and approval activity:

1. Count of files by Standard, Criteria, and Sub-Criteria with Status (In Progress, Pending Review, Declined, Approved, or Rejected). Report can be run for one (Contributors and Managers) or all Standards (System Administrators).
2. Count of files by Requirement of Affiliation with Status. Report can be run for one or all Requirements of Affiliation showing status as above.
3. Same report as #1 but includes Evidence Name, file name, Description, and Comments.
4. Same report as #2 but includes Evidence Name, file name, Description, and Comments.
5. List of Standards, Criteria, and Sub-Criteria for which no files have been uploaded. Same report for Approved status.
6. List of Requirements of Affiliation for which no files have been uploaded. Same report for Approved status.

## **Appendices:**

### **Description of the Evidence Inventory as Found in the MSCHE Portal**

The Evidence Inventory is an organizational tool that allows an institution to collect evidence and document compliance with the Commission's standards for accreditation, requirements of affiliation, policies and procedures, and federal compliance requirements. The Evidence Inventory organizes documents by standard, criterion, and requirement and provides this evidence in one readily accessible place for an institution's designated contacts, peer evaluators, and the Commission.

- The institution can begin compiling evidence after attendance at the Self-Study Institute. The institution can use this tool to identify gaps in the documentation that can be discussed and addressed throughout the self-study process.
- The institution should provide evidence which clearly and concisely supports the assertions made in the Self-Study Report and documents the institution's compliance with standards for accreditation, requirements of affiliation, policies and procedures, and federal compliance requirements.
- The institution should use appropriate excerpts or isolate specific pages rather than provide lengthy documents.
- The institution should make the relevance of each piece of evidence clear in the self-study narrative or may provide an optional brief explanation (2,000 characters or less) in the text box provided on the upload screen.
- The institution must upload at least one document per criterion under each standard or indicate that the specific criterion is not relevant to the institution. If you indicate the criterion is not relevant, you must provide a justification for why this criterion is not relevant in the text box provided. If you have a question about whether or not the criterion is relevant, contact your MSCHE Vice President liaison.
- The institution is required to respond to all requirements of affiliation.
- The institution is required to address federal compliance requirements under Standard II, Criterion 8.
- The institution must maintain student and staff privacy protections in accordance with state and federal law and regulations.

### **Description of Uploaded Evidence Library as Found in the MSCHE Portal**

[The] Uploaded Evidence Library provides a summary of all uploaded supporting evidence you have used in this review. Each document you upload as supporting evidence for the standards and requirements of affiliation sections will be added to your Evidence Library. This offers you

an alternative to uploading a document each time you wish to use it as evidence. Please note that documents uploaded to the Evidence Library may not be deleted from Library. However, you can remove the documents associated with specific criteria at any time if you so desire.

### **Description of Additional Evidence Section as Found in the MSCHE Portal**

**ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE REQUESTED BY THE TEAM:** Upload all additional information requested by the team of peer evaluators before or during the visit to verify compliance with Commission standards for accreditation, requirements of affiliation, policies and procedures, and federal compliance requirements. Consult with the team chair and section H of the Team Report for the additional evidence that must be uploaded. Commission policies and procedures require that additional evidence requested by the team be uploaded within 7 calendar days of the visit. The institution may not upload any additional evidence except what has been requested by the team. If evidence is uploaded that was not requested by the team, the Commission staff will delete it.

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