



*Southern Association of Colleges and Schools  
Commission on Colleges  
1866 Southern Lane  
Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097*

## **REQUESTS FOR DATA OR RESEARCH ASSISTANCE**

### **Guideline**

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) supports meaningful research inquiries in postsecondary education, especially on issues related to regional accreditation. SACSCOC will accept a limited number of substantive requests for data/research assistance from graduate students representing SACSCOC member institutions and working on dissertation/thesis research projects directly related to accreditation topics. SACSCOC will also accept a limited number of substantive requests for collaboration from faculty members working on scholarly projects directly related to accreditation topics. SACSCOC will provide data/research assistance only to requests/proposals that have been reviewed by the Office of Training and Research, recommended by the SACSCOC Peer Review Advisory Board (PRAB), and approved by the SACSCOC President.

In determining the procedure for addressing requests for data/research assistance from graduate students and faculty members, the SACSCOC Peer Review Advisory Board (PRAB) made a recommendation that data requests should be submitted along with the supporting information listed below. The Office of Training and Research (OTR) will, first, review provided supporting documentation. If the OTR determines that the proposed research topic is aligned with SACSCOC's strategic plan, the data request will be reviewed in the context of proposed research questions and data collection methodology.

At that point, a determination will be made by SACSCOC staff regarding the availability and confidentiality of requested data -- whether the requested data:

- (i) are available, and could be released to external constituencies by OTR in accord with SACSCOC's disclosure policy;
- (ii) are available but collected/maintained by other SACSCOC offices;
- (iii) are available but are of confidential nature and/or at the individual institution level and, therefore, in accord with SACSCOC's disclosure policy, could not be released to external constituencies without the institution's formal written approval;
- (iv) are publicly available on the SACSCOC website;
- (v) are not currently available;
- (vi) are not collected by SACSCOC; or
- (vii) that additional information/clarification on requested data is needed.

### **SUPPORTING INFORMATION TO ACCOMPANY A REQUEST:**

- I. Institutional IRB approval of the proposed research project (if applicable)

- II. Cogent project overview (4-8 pages) containing the following elements:
1. An overall problem statement for the research project
  2. Statement that explains the importance of the proposed project for SACSCOC membership and clearly aligns the proposed project with the SACSCOC strategic plan (<https://sacscoc.org/strategic-goals/>)
  3. A list of specific research questions guiding the study
  4. An outline of conceptual/theoretical framework for the inquiry
  5. An overview of proposed methodology
    - a. Research design
    - b. Data collection methods
    - c. Data analysis methods
    - d. Timeline
  6. Description of specific assistance needed from SACSCOC staff
- III. Letter of support from the Dissertation/Thesis Committee Chair (if this is dissertation/thesis research)

### **GENERAL GUIDELINES:**

- Normally, no institutionally identifiable data will be provided to researchers. Data/information provided will be limited to the aggregate data.
  - If institutionally identifiable materials are required by the IRB-approved research design, the researcher must secure from the institutions used in the study a signed formal agreement giving SACSCOC permission to release institutional case material and/or to answer questions specific about the institution that generates information released beyond SACSCOC's disclosure policy (<https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/disclosure.pdf>).
- Mailing lists will not be provided. Graduate students and faculty members will be responsible for contacting and seeking information from individual institutions, individual reviewers and/or individual institutional representatives.
- Graduate student and faculty members/researchers involved in the research projects with SACSCOC staff will sign a statement conforming to highest research ethics and confidentiality standards.
- SACSCOC staff will maintain rights to co-authorships or other appropriate credit for assistance rendered.
- Resulting papers can be reproduced or referred to in the annual SACSCOC Report and/or other SACSCOC print and web-based publications.

For more information, please contact SACSCOC's Director of Training and Research.

**Document History**  
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