



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

## **REPORTS SUBMITTED FOR SACSCOC REVIEW**

### **Policy Statement**

Institutions accredited by SACSCOC are requested to submit various reports for review by an evaluation committee or the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. Those reports include:

- Compliance Certification
- Focused Report
- Quality Enhancement Plan
- Documentation for a Substantive Change Committee Review
- Fifth-Year Interim Report
- Institutional Special Report
- Substantive Change Prospectus
- Response Report to the Visiting Committee
- Referral Report
- Fifth-Year Follow-Up Report
- Monitoring Report

When submitting a report, an institution should follow the directions below, keeping in mind that the report will be reviewed by a number of readers, most of whom will be unfamiliar with the institution. The institution should also comply with the appropriate deadline for submitting the report. These deadlines may be found either published on the SACSCOC website or in formal correspondence from SACSCOC staff. Documentation for review by an Accreditation Committee, an On-Site Reaffirmation Committee, or a Substantive Change Committee authorized to visit the institution is due to the members of the Committee and to SACSCOC staff six weeks before the start of the visit.

### **Procedures**

#### **Reports submitted for Committee Review**

##### Compliance Certification

**Accreditation Committee.** Institutions seeking initial Accreditation will submit a Compliance Certification Report – including narrative and supporting documentation – addressing their compliance with all of the standards in the *Principles of Accreditation* except Standard 7.2 (*Quality Enhancement Plan*). The Compliance Certification Report should be submitted to every member of the Accreditation Committee (including SACSCOC staff) six (6) weeks before the start of the Committee’s visit. For further information, see the SACSCOC “[Handbook for Institutions Seeking Initial Accreditation](#).”

**Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.** Institutions seeking Reaffirmation of Accreditation will submit a Compliance Certification Report – including narrative and supporting documentation – addressing their compliance with the standards in the *Principles of Accreditation*. The deadlines for submission of the Compliance Certification Report may be found in the [“Timelines for Reaffirmation Tracks...”](#) on the SACSCOC website.

*Template for the Compliance Certification Report*

Institutions should use the template for the Compliance Certification Report found on the Institutional Resources page of the SACSCOC website. Institutions will receive specific instructions for submitting their report to the members of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee before the deadline for submission.

*Presentation of the Compliance Certification Report*

Institutions may choose to submit their Compliance Certification Report electronically or in printed form.

1. **Electronic Submission (*preferred*).** Institutions should submit their Compliance Certification narrative and supporting documentation on a self-contained USB flash drive. The preferred format is a pdf, and all hyperlinks in the narrative document should open documents stored on the flash drive itself rather than linking to external resources. Documents should be bookmarked, indexed, and searchable. Printed documents should not be scanned to create a pdf, as this process will result in a large file that is not searchable. Some third-party vendors offer the option of an html or pdf format; institutions should choose the pdf option.

Institutions should also include:

- An instruction document which contains (a) clear directions on how to access the electronic documents, (b) the name and contact information of a technical support person at the institution who can assist an evaluator experiencing difficulty accessing electronic information, and (c) the name and contact information of the person at the institution who will provide print materials if an evaluator requests such.
- A **current** “Institutional Summary Form Prepared for Commission Reviews”
- An organizational chart
- Current Catalog(s)

One copy of the institution’s submission should be sent to each member of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee, and two copies should be submitted to the institution’s SACSCOC Vice President’s office.

2. **Print Submission.** Institutions may choose to submit their Compliance Certification narrative in printed form. The institution should take particular care to organize its submission so that evaluators can easily find relevant supporting documentation for each standard. In addition to the signed Compliance Certification document, the institution should provide:

- A **current** “Institutional Summary Form Prepared for Commission Reviews”
- An organizational chart
- Current Catalog(s)

One copy of the institution’s submission should be sent to each member of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee, and two copies should be submitted to the institution’s SACSCOC Vice President’s office.

3. **Additional Submission Requirements.** All institutions should send the following information to their SACSCOC Vice President’s office to enable the Commission to maintain its historical archive:

- One copy (pdf or print) of the institution’s Compliance Certification narrative *without supporting documentation*
- Two copies (pdf or print) of the most recent audit and any accompanying correspondence
- One copy (pdf or print) of the **current** “Institutional Summary Form Prepared for Commission Reviews”

**A copy (pdf or print) of the institution's most recent audit and any accompanying correspondence should also be sent to the Chair of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee and to the Committee's Finance Evaluator (designated on the roster with an asterisk).**

### Focused Report

In preparation for the visit of the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee, institutions have the option of submitting a Focused Report addressing the preliminary findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee. As with the Compliance Certification, the institution may choose to submit the Focused Report in either electronic or print format.

1. **Electronic Submission (*preferred*).** Institutions should submit their Focused Report narrative and supporting documentation on a self-contained USB flash drive. The preferred format is a searchable pdf, and all hyperlinks in the narrative document should open documents stored on the flash drive itself rather than linking to external resources. Documents should be bookmarked, indexed, and searchable. Printed documents should not be scanned to create a pdf, as this process will result in a large file that is not searchable.

Institutions should also include:

- An instruction document which contains (a) clear directions on how to access the electronic documents, (b) the name and contact information of a technical support person at the institution who can assist an evaluator experiencing difficulty accessing electronic information, and (c) the name and contact information of the person at the institution who will provide print materials if an evaluator requests such.
- A ***current*** "Institutional Summary Form Prepared for Commission Reviews"
- The Compliance Certification narrative and supporting documentation (may be on a separate flash drive)

One copy of the institution's submission should be sent to each member of the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee six (6) weeks before the start of the visit, including the institution's SACSCOC Vice President.

2. **Print Submission.** Institutions may choose to submit their Focused Report in printed form. The institution should take particular care to organize its submission so that evaluators can easily find relevant supporting documentation for each standard. The institution should also include a ***current*** "Institutional Summary Form Prepared for Commission Reviews." One copy of the institution's submission should be sent to each member of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee, including the institution's SACSCOC Vice President.

### Quality Enhancement Plan

All institutions must submit a Quality Enhancement Plan document for review by the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee. The institution may choose to submit the QEP document in either electronic or print format.

1. **Electronic Submission (*preferred*).** Institutions should submit their QEP narrative and supporting documentation on a self-contained USB flash drive. The preferred format is a pdf, and all hyperlinks in the narrative document should open documents stored on the flash drive itself rather than linking to external resources. Documents should be bookmarked, indexed, and searchable. Printed documents should not be scanned to create a pdf, as this process will result in a large file that is not searchable. One copy of the institution's QEP should be sent to each member of the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee, including the institution's SACSCOC Vice President. One print copy of the QEP should be sent to the institution's SACSCOC staff member.

2. **Print Submission.** Institutions may choose to submit their QEP in printed form. One copy of the institution's submission should be sent to each member of the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee, including the institution's SACSCOC Vice President.

**Note:** Some evaluators may prefer to review a print copy of the institution's QEP. Institutions which choose to submit their QEP document electronically may wish to offer the option of a print copy to members of their On-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

#### Documentation for a Substantive Change Committee Review

Some types of substantive changes (e.g., Branch Campus, Merger/Consolidation, or Level Change) will require a Substantive Change Committee's visit to review the institution's ongoing compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation* within six months following the implementation of the change. Other types of substantive change may result in a Substantive Change Committee's review being authorized, depending on the type of change and the nature of the institution. Six (6) weeks before the visit of the Substantive Change Committee, institutions should submit the appropriate Documentation for a Substantive Change Committee Review. The institution should choose the appropriate template from those available at <http://www.sacscoc.org/SubstantiveChangeCommitteeVisit.asp>. The institution may choose to submit its Documentation in either electronic or print format.

1. **Electronic Submission (preferred).** Institutions should submit their Documentation narrative and supporting documentation on a self-contained USB flash drive. The preferred format is a pdf, and all hyperlinks in the narrative document should open documents stored on the flash drive itself rather than linking to external resources. Documents should be bookmarked, indexed, and searchable. Printed documents should not be scanned to create a pdf, as this process will result in a large file that is not searchable. One copy of the institution's submission should be sent to each member of the Substantive Change Committee, including the institution's SACSCOC Vice President.
2. **Printed Submission.** Institutions may choose to submit their Documentation narrative and supporting documentation in printed form. The institution should take particular care to organize its submission so that evaluators can easily find relevant supporting documentation for each standard. One copy of the institution's submission should be sent to each member of the Substantive Change Committee, including the institution's SACSCOC Vice President.

#### Fifth-Year Interim Report

Member institutions are required to submit a Fifth-Year Interim Report for review by the Fifth-Year Interim Committee. This Report is submitted a little more than four years prior to an institution's next scheduled reaffirmation. Institutions are notified by letter regarding the timing and requirements of their Fifth-Year Interim Report; general information (including a timeline by reaffirmation class) may be found on the Commission's website (<http://www.sacscoc.org/FifthYear.asp>). Institutions may choose to submit their Report in electronic or print format. Institutional representatives responsible for preparing and submitting the Fifth-Year Interim Report should follow carefully the instructions contained in the letter from SACSCOC and those found in the [Template](#) for the Fifth-Year Interim Report.

1. **Electronic Submission (preferred).** Institutions should submit their Fifth-Year Interim Report narrative and supporting documentation on a self-contained USB flash drive. The preferred format is a pdf, and all hyperlinks in the narrative document should open documents stored on the flash drive itself rather than linking to external resources. Documents should be bookmarked, indexed, and searchable. Printed documents should not be scanned to create a pdf, as this process will result in a large file that is not searchable. Some third-party vendors offer the option of an html or pdf format; institutions should choose the pdf option.

Institutions should also include an instruction document which contains (a) clear directions on how to access the electronic documents, (b) the name and contact information of a technical support person at the institution who can assist an evaluator experiencing difficulty accessing electronic information, and (c) the name and contact information of the person at the institution who will provide print materials if an evaluator requests such.

2. **Print Submission.** Institutions may choose to submit their Compliance Certification narrative in printed form. The institution should take particular care to organize its submission so that evaluators can easily find relevant supporting documentation for each standard.

## **Reports submitted for SACSOC staff and/or Board of Trustees Review**

### **Substantive Change Prospectus/Application**

Member institutions may be required to submit an application or prospectus to seek approval of a substantive change (see SACSCOC Policy [“Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions”](#)). Depending on the nature of the substantive change submission, these documents will be reviewed by SACSCOC staff members or the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. Institutions may choose to submit the required documentation in either electronic or print form.

#### *Preparation of an Application or Prospectus*

The institution should follow the instructions found in the SACSCOC Policy [“Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions.”](#) Some substantive change applications will also require reference to other relevant SACSCOC policies.

#### *Presentation of Reports*

An institution may choose to submit the prospectus or application in electronic (*preferred*) or print format.

1. **For electronic submissions**, please comply with all steps outlined below:
  - a. Copy the report and all attachments onto a flash drive labeled with the name of the institution and the title of the report. The preferred format is a pdf, and all hyperlinks in the narrative document should open documents stored on the flash drive itself rather than linking to external resources. Documents should be bookmarked, indexed, and searchable. Printed documents should not be scanned to create a pdf, as this process will result in a large file that is not searchable.
  - b. Provide the name, title, email address, and phone number of the institutional representative who can provide assistance if the readers have problems accessing the information.
2. **For print submissions**, copy all documents front and back, double-space the copy, and use no less than an 11 point font. If the report requires binding beyond stapling, do not submit the report in a three-ring binder. Ring binders are bulky and must be removed before mailing to the readers.

### Institutional Special Reports

**Definition.** This type of Report addresses the institution’s ongoing compliance with one or more standards of the *Principles of Accreditation* identified during a review of a formal written complaint or unsolicited information (See SACSCOC Policies [“Complaint Procedures Against SACSCOC or Its Accredited Institutions”](#) and [“Unsolicited Information”](#)).

**Audience.** The Institutional Special Report is initially reviewed by the SACSCOC staff member assigned to the institution. That review may determine that there is sufficient evidence of the institution's compliance with the standards in question and close the case. If, however, the review cannot find sufficient evidence to determine compliance, the SACSCOC President may authorize a Special Committee to visit the institution and review ongoing compliance with the relevant standards. The Special Committee's Report and the Institutional Special Report would subsequently be reviewed by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. Finally, the SACSCOC President may choose to forward the Institutional Special Report directly to the Board of Trustees. In either of these two last eventualities, the report is subject to the review procedures of the Commission's standing committees, including the initiation of a monitoring period, the imposition of a sanction, or a change of accreditation status.

**Report Presentation.** Structure the response so that it addresses the concerns described in the letter from SACSCOC in the order that they appeared. For each standard cited, (1) restate the number of the Core Requirement or Standard exactly as it appeared in the letter; (2) cite verbatim the current request of the Commission that is related to the standard cited (reference notification letter from SACSCOC); and (3) prepare a response to the finding.

**Due Date.** The Report is due on the date specified in the letter sent by SACSCOC. If a Special Committee has been authorized to visit the institution, the Report will be due to every member of the Committee and the SACSCOC staff member no later than four (4) weeks before the start of the visit. Requests for extensions to the date must be made to the SACSCOC President at least two weeks in advance of the original due date. (*See SACSCOC policy "Deadlines for Submitting Reports."*)

**Number of Copies.** See the letter from SACSCOC requesting the Report.

## **Reports submitted for SACSOC Board of Trustees Review**

### Response Report to the Visiting Committee

Any On-Site Reaffirmation Committee, Substantive Change Committee, or Special Committee may propagate recommendations, if it determines that the institution under review has not demonstrated compliance with one or more of the *Principles of Accreditation*. In preparation for review by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, the institution should submit its Response Report addressing recommendation(s) included in the Committee's Report. A formal Transmittal Letter will be included with the Committee's Report transmitted from the SACSCOC Vice President's office to the institution's Chief Executive Officer. This Transmittal Letter provides vital information regarding the institution's Response Report, including the due date and number of copies required.

**Definition.** A Response Report addresses the findings of a visiting committee. It provides updated or additional documentation regarding the institution's compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation*.

**Audience.** The Response Report, along with the Committee Report and other documents, is reviewed by SACSCOC Board of Trustees and is subject to the review procedures of the Commission's standing committees, including the initiation of a monitoring period, the imposition of a sanction, or a change of accreditation status.

**Report Presentation.** Structure the response so that it addresses committee recommendations in the order that they appear in the report. For each recommendation, provide the number of the Core Requirement or Standard and state the recommendation exactly as it appears in the visiting committee report. Describe the committee's concerns that led to the recommendation by either summarizing the concerns or inserting verbatim the complete narrative in the report pertaining to the recommendation. Provide a response with documentation.

**Due Date and Number of Copies.** The Response Report is due on the day indicated in the transmittal letter from SACSCOC staff accompanying the visiting committee report. The transmittal letter will also indicate the number of copies that should be submitted.

## Referral Report

**Definition.** This report addresses continued concerns of compliance identified by the Committee on Fifth-Year Interim Reports and referred to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

**Audience.** The Referral Report is reviewed by SACSCOC Board of Trustees and is subject to the review procedures of the Commission's standing committees, including the initiation of a monitoring period, the imposition of a sanction, or a change of accreditation status.

**Report Presentation.** Structure the response so that it addresses the concerns described in the letter from the SACSCOC President in the order that they appeared. For each standard cited, (1) restate the number of the Core Requirement or Standard exactly as it appeared in the letter; (2) cite verbatim the current request of the Commission that is related to the standard cited (reference notification letter from the President of SACSCOC); and (3) prepare a response to the finding.

**Due Date.** The Referral Report is due on the date specified in the notification letter sent by the SACSCOC President. Requests for extensions to the date must be made to the President at least two weeks in advance of the original due date. (*See SACSCOC policy "Deadlines for Submitting Reports."*)

**Number of Copies.** See the letter from the President of SACSCOC requesting the Report.

## Fifth-Year Follow-Up Report

**Definition.** Some member institutions are asked to submit a Fifth-Year Follow-Up Report at the same time as they submit their Fifth-Year Interim Report. This report addresses ongoing compliance with one or more standards of the *Principles of Accreditation*, and institutions are usually asked to submit such a report when they encountered significant difficulties documenting compliance during their previous review.

**Audience.** The Fifth-Year Follow-Up Report is reviewed by SACSCOC Board of Trustees and is subject to the review procedures of the Commission's standing committees, including the initiation of a monitoring period, the imposition of a sanction, or a change of accreditation status.

**Report Presentation.** Structure the response so that it addresses the concerns described in the letter from the SACSCOC President in the order that they appeared. For each standard cited, (1) restate the number of the Core Requirement or Standard exactly as it appeared in the letter; (2) cite verbatim the current request of the Commission that is related to the standard cited (reference notification letter from the President of SACSCOC); and (3) prepare a response to the finding.

**Due Date.** The Fifth-Year Follow-Up Report is due with the Fifth-Year Interim Report. Requests for extensions to the date must be made to the President at least two weeks in advance of the original due date. (*See SACSCOC policy "Deadlines for Submitting Reports."*)

**Number of Copies.** See the letter from the President of SACSCOC requesting the Report.

## Monitoring Report

**Definition.** This Report address recommendations and continued concerns of compliance usually identified by the Committee on Compliance and Reports (C&R) or by the Executive Council and referred to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. It follows the C&R Committee's review of an institution's response to a visiting committee report.

**Audience.** The Monitoring Report is reviewed by SACSCOC Board of Trustees and is subject to the review procedures of the Commission's standing committees, including the continuation of a monitoring period, the imposition of a sanction, or a change of accreditation status.

**Report Presentation.** Structure the response so that it addresses committee recommendations in the order that they appeared in the report. For each recommendation, (1) restate the number of the Core Requirement or Standard, the number of the recommendation, and the recommendation exactly as it appeared in the visiting committee report; (2) provide a brief history of responses to the recommendation if more than a first response (to include an accurate summary of the original concerns of the visiting committee, a summary of each previous institutional response and an explanation of what had been requested by the Commission); (3) cite verbatim the current request of the Commission that is related to the recommendation (reference notification letter from the President of SACSCOC); and (4) prepare a response to the recommendation.

**Due Date.** The Monitoring Report is due on the date specified in the notification letter sent by the SACSCOC President. Requests for extensions to the date must be made to the President at least two weeks in advance of the original due date. (*See SACSCOC policy "Deadlines for Submitting Reports."*)

**Number of Copies.** See the letter from the President of SACSCOC requesting the Report.

#### Information Applicable to Reports submitted for review by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees

##### *Preparation of a Title Page*

For any report requested for review by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, an institution should prepare a title page that includes the following:

1. Name of the institution
2. Mailing address of the institution
3. Dates of the committee visit (*not applicable for the Referral Report or Fifth-Year Follow-Up Report*)
4. The type of report submitted
5. Name, title, and contact information for person(s) preparing the report

##### *Presentation of Reports*

An institution may choose to submit any requested report in electronic (*preferred*) or print format.

3. **For electronic submissions**, please comply with all steps outlined below:
  - a. Copy the report and all attachments onto the appropriate number of flash drives, in accordance with the number of requested copies of the report. **Each** flash drive should be labeled with the name of the institution and the title of the report. The preferred format is a pdf, and all hyperlinks in the narrative document should open documents stored on the flash drive itself. Documents should be bookmarked, indexed, and searchable. *Printed documents should not be scanned to create a pdf, as this process will result in a large file that is not searchable.*
  - b. **Each** flash drive should be submitted in a separate paper or plastic envelope not smaller than 4 x 4 inches, and **each** envelope should be labeled with the name of the institution, the title of the report, and the list of document contents.
  - c. Provide the name, title, email address, and phone number of the institutional representative who can provide assistance if the readers have problems accessing the information.
  - d. Provide **one print copy** of the response **without** the attachments.

4. **For print submissions**, copy all documents front and back, double-space the copy, and use no less than an 11 point font. If the report requires binding beyond stapling, do not submit the report in a three-ring binder. Ring binders are bulky and must be removed before mailing to the readers.

*Other Useful Information*

1. Provide a clear, complete, and concise report. If documentation is required, ensure that it is appropriate to demonstrating fulfillment of the requirement. Specify actions that have been taken and document their completion. Avoid vague responses indicating that the institution *plans to address* a problem in the future. If any actions remain to be accomplished, the institution should present an action plan, a schedule for accomplishing the plan, and evidence of commitment of resources for accomplishing the plan.
2. When possible, excerpt passages from text and incorporate the narrative into the report. Provide definitive evidence, not documents that only address the process (e.g., do not include copies of letters or memos with directives).
3. When possible and appropriate, provide samples of evidence of compliance rather than all documents pertaining to all activities associated with compliance.
4. Reread the report before submission and eliminate all narrative that is not relevant to the focus of the report. If sending electronic copies, ensure that all devices are virus free and have been reviewed for easy access by reviewers external to your institution.

**Document History**

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