



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

**APPLICATION FOR SACSCOC ACCREDITATION
FROM AN INSTITUTION CURRENTLY ACCREDITED BY AN INSTITUTIONAL
ACCREDITOR RECOGNIZED BY THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION**

Policy Statement

An institution of higher education accredited by another institutional accreditor recognized by the United States Department of Education (USDE) may apply for an accelerated pathway to membership with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) under certain conditions.

1. The institution must be accredited (not a candidate) and in good standing (that is, not under any formal sanction at the time of the application) with its current USDE-recognized institutional accreditor.
2. During the application process, the institution may not undergo any changes of a substantive nature, as defined by the SACSCOC Substantive Change policy and procedures.
3. All management agreements, option agreements, or other contractual agreements with respect to the management and control of the institution, if any, must be in place at the time of submission of the application and included for review in the application.
5. This process applies only to institutions changing accreditation from another USDE-recognized institutional accreditor to SACSCOC.
6. The institution should submit their letter of intent to change their primary institutional accreditor with the United States Department of Education (USDE) but retain their current membership at least six months prior to the planned date of change. Once the institution has secured SACSCOC accreditation and an official change of primary institutional accreditor has been approved by USDE, the institution should inform the President of the former accreditor of that official date in a timely manner.

Procedures

Steps in the Process for Changing Primary Institutional Accreditor to SACSCOC from another USDE-recognized institutional accreditor

1. The institution notifies SACSCOC and USDE in writing of its intent to change primary institutional accreditors. The notification to SACSCOC (and subsequent application) must include a copy of the notification to USDE along with documentation of authorization by the institution's governing board of the parent entity and the appropriate governmental body (if required) for the unit to change primary institutional accreditor. The President of SACSCOC assigns the SACSCOC staff member responsible for applicant institutions to review the application.
2. Representatives of the institution attend a mandatory virtual Pre-Applicant Workshop. Information concerning registering for the workshop may be obtained by visiting the SACSCOC website,

www.sacscoc.org. The workshop acquaints attendees with the accreditation process and with the Core Requirements and Standards of the *Principles of Accreditation*.

3. The institution may submit an “Application for Membership” after receiving approval for a change in primary institutional accreditor from USDE. The application should include all documentation required to demonstrate compliance with the following Core Requirements and Standards of the *Principles of Accreditation*:

Core Requirements	Standards
1.1 (Integrity)	4.2.c (CEO evaluation/selection)
2.1 (Institutional mission)	4.2.d (Conflict of interest)
3.1 a (Degree-granting authority)	5.4 (Qualified administrative/academic officers)
3.1.b (Coursework for degree)	6.2.a (Faculty qualifications)
3.1.c (Continuous operation)	6.2.b (Program faculty)
4.1 (Governing board characteristics)	7.3 (Administrative effectiveness)
5.1 (Chief executive officer)	8.2.a (Student outcomes: educational programs)
6.1 (Full-time faculty)	8.2.b (Student outcomes: general education)
7.1 (Institutional planning)	8.2.c (Student outcomes: academic and student services)
8.1 (Student achievement)	10.2 (Public information)
9.1 (Program content)	10.5 (Admissions policies and practices)
9.2 (Program length)	10.6 (Distance and correspondence education)
9.3 (General education requirements)	10.7 (Policies for awarding credit)
11.1 (Library and learning/information resources)	11.2 (Library and learning/information staff)
12.1 (Student support services)	11.3 (Library and learning/information access)
13.1 (Financial resources)	12.4 (Student complaints)
13.2 (Financial documents)	13.6 (Federal and state responsibilities)
	13.7 (Physical resources)
	14.1 (Publication of accreditation status)
	14.3 (Comprehensive institutional reviews)
	14.4 (Representation to other agencies)
	14.5 (Policy compliance)

***Note: Required Financial Information for Applicant Institutions (Core Requirement 13.2)**

In addition to providing narrative describing its compliance with Core Requirement 13.1, an institution must include with its application the following financial information:

- (1) separate institutional audits (audits opinioned on the institution) and management letters (if issued) for its three most recent fiscal years, including the audit for the most recent fiscal year ending prior to the date of the application. Should the end of another fiscal year occur during initial review of the application by SACSCOC staff, that audit must be submitted before review of the application can be completed. In addition, the audit for the most recently completed fiscal year must be provided when seeking authorization by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees to receive an Accreditation Committee visit.**
- (2) an annual budget that is preceded by sound planning, is subject to sound fiscal procedures, and is approved by the governing board.**
- (3) a statement of financial position of unrestricted net assets, exclusive of plant assets and plant-related debt (short and long term debt attached to physical assets) which represents the change in unrestricted net assets attributable to operations for the most recent year.**

Further, throughout the remainder of the process the institution must provide a separate audit and management letter for the most recently completed fiscal year ending prior to any committee visit or Board of Trustees review.

All audits must be conducted by independent certified public accountants or an appropriate governmental auditing agency.

An applicant institution may not show an annual or cumulative operating deficit at any time during the application process.

****Note: Documentation of state and federal responsibilities (Standard 13.6)**

Institutions are required to notify SACSCOC in writing if it does not intend to participate in title IV HEA programs per 34 CFR § 602.16 (b) and affirm that decision under this standard. All subsequent awards of candidacy or accreditation status will note whether an institution has requested not to include participation in title IV HEA programs in its accreditation. Institutions not participating in title IV HEA programs are not required to document compliance with federal responsibilities, but are required to document compliance with state responsibilities, if applicable. See Title IV Program Responsibilities.

The completed application constitutes a primary source of information used by SACSCOC to determine apparent compliance with the requirements and standards listed above, which are basic expectations of institutions seeking authorization of an Accreditation Committee visit with SACSCOC. Compliance with these requirements and standards, however, is not sufficient to warrant initial membership. After an Accreditation Committee is authorized institutions must demonstrate both continued compliance with these requirements and standards and compliance with all the remaining Standards of the *Principles of Accreditation*.

Note: An application which fails to provide evidence of degree-granting authority as required by the state or country in which the institution submitting the application is located will not be accepted and the institution will be notified by the President of SACSCOC that the application has been withdrawn from consideration. The institution may submit another application when it can provide appropriate evidence of degree-granting authority.

After initial review of the application by SACSCOC staff, the process is as follows: the SACSCOC Committee on Compliance and Reports makes recommendations concerning an institution's status to the Executive Council of SACSCOC which, in turn, makes its recommendation to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees which takes final action on the institution's status.

An institution may withdraw its application at any time prior to a decision of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. If an institution withdraws its application and later decides to again seek membership, it must submit a new application and follow the procedures outlined below as they apply to institutions seeking status with SACSCOC.

An applying institution bears the cost of application fees as well as the direct and indirect costs of visits. See the section of this policy entitled "Fees and Other Expenses for Applicant and Candidate Institutions."

After award of initial Membership, an institution must undergo reaffirmation in five years. This reaffirmation process will require completion of a Compliance Certification, development of a Quality Enhancement Plan (Standard 7.2), and both Off-Site and On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviews. Thereafter, the institution is reaffirmed every ten years.

4. The application and reports are forwarded to SACSCOC staff for initial review and then to one of the Committees on Compliance and Reports (C&R). The C&R Committee may authorize an Accreditation Committee visit, , or reject the application.
5. The Accreditation Committee will conduct an on-site review of the institution to verify the information provided. The Committee will write a report, and the institution will have an opportunity to respond to any recommendations in the report.
6. The Accreditation Committee Report and the institution's response will be forwarded to one of the Committees on Compliance and Reports. The recommendation of the Committee will be forwarded to the Executive Council and then to the SACSCOC's Board of Trustees for a final decision.

7. The Board of Trustees receives the report of the Accreditation Committee and either grants or denies the change of accreditation to SACSCOC from another institutional accreditor .
8. If the SACSCOC approves the change of accreditation, the newly-accredited institution will be required to have its accreditation reaffirmed five years after the granting of membership (and every ten years thereafter). For reaffirmation of accreditation, the institution must document compliance with all the standards of the *Principles of Accreditation*.
9. There is no provision for candidacy in the process of changing from another USDE-recognized institutional accreditor to SACSCOC.
10. The institution seeking a change of institutional accreditor must remain accredited by and in good standing with its current institutional accreditor until final action to approve SACSCOC accreditation is taken.
11. A copy of the letter communicating the SACSCOC Board's action will also be sent to the institution's previous primary institutional accreditor. The institution should retain its membership until a final change in primary accreditor is approved by USDE.
12. The date of the change of accreditation will be set by the SACSCOC in accordance with USDE requirements. Annual membership dues will be prorated from that date.
13. An institution may withdraw its application at any time during the review process. Upon doing so, SACSCOC will notify the institution's current institutional accreditor.
14. All final decisions regarding the accreditation status of an institution are made by SACSCOC Board of Trustees. Denial of the change of accreditation is not an appealable action.

Fees and Expenses

The institution will be required to pay an application fee and to assume all expenses incurred by the Accreditation Committee while conducting the work of the SACSCOC in accordance with the SACSCOC policy, [Dues, Fees, and Expenses](#).

Document History

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