



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

CHANGE IN MEMBERSHIP

Policy Statement

Removal of Membership

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) requires that a member institution be in compliance at all times with the [*Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement \(Principles\)*](#), comply with SACSCOC policies and procedures, and provide information requested by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees in order to maintain membership and accreditation. The SACSCOC Board of Trustees may remove an institution from membership in accordance with the [*Sanctions, Denial of Reaffirmation, and Removal from Membership*](#) policy. Information regarding disclosure obligations of this accrediting action is provided in the SACSCOC policy, [*Disclosure of Accrediting Documents and Actions of SACSCOC*](#). Information regarding the appeal and arbitration processes following a removal from membership are provided in these SACSCOC policies: [*The Appeals Procedures of the College Delegate Assembly*](#), and [*Arbitration of Adverse Actions*](#). If an institution removed from membership decides to stop admitting students during the review, appeal, or arbitration process, institutional obligations as described below apply.

Change or Voluntary Resignation of Membership

If an institution chooses to change SACSCOC as its primary accrediting agency with the United States Department of Education (USDE) or voluntarily resign from SACSCOC membership, the institution is required to communicate their intent to change or voluntarily resign in writing to the SACSCOC President, along with an estimated timeline for implementation as soon as an institutional decision is made. Institutions seeking to change or add accrediting agencies should verify their obligations to USDE prior to finalizing any change or resignation.

If the institution plans to change only SACSCOC's designation as the institution's primary accrediting agency with USDE, the institution is required to inform the SACSCOC President in writing, including an intended effective date for the change. Institutions seeking only a change in SACSCOC as its primary accrediting agency will remain responsible for maintaining compliance with the [*Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement \(Principles\)*](#), complying with SACSCOC policies and procedures, and providing information requested by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees to maintain membership and accreditation. Requests to restore SACSCOC as the institution's primary accreditor may be submitted to the SACSCOC President and will be presented to the SACSCOC Executive Council as an informational item following acknowledgment of the change by USDE.

If the institution plans to voluntarily resign its SACSCOC membership but continue in operation and enroll students in degree programs following resignation, the institution is required to inform the SACSCOC President in writing, along with an intended effective date for its voluntary resignation. This official communication will be presented to the SACSCOC Executive Council as an informational item and a public information statement regarding the institution's resignation will be posted on the SACSCOC website. Institutions resigning their membership are responsible for payment of any dues or fees incurred prior to the date of resignation submitted in the institution's official request.

Institutions accepted or approved for merger or consolidation will be assumed to be voluntarily resigning their individual SACSCOC membership as separately accredited institutions upon the date of approval of the substantive change in accordance with SACSCOC's [*Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*](#). Mergers/consolidations may not be rescinded following SACSCOC Board of Trustees' date of approval.

Institution Closure

To maintain accredited status with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), institutions are required to be in continuous operation and have students enrolled in degree programs (Core Requirement 3.1.c, [*Principles of Accreditation*](#)). If a member institution decides to stop admitting students, the institution is required to immediately communicate their intent to the SACSCOC President and submit an acceptable teach-out plan for approval by the SACSCOC Executive Council in accordance with SACSCOC's [*Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*](#). If the institution has not been removed from membership, pursuant to 34 C.F.R. 602.24, SACSCOC will maintain the institution in accreditation to complete the activities in the teach-out plan or to fulfill the obligations of any teach-out agreement to assist students in transferring or completing their programs for a reasonable period of time. New students may not be admitted to the institution during the teach-out period.

Following approval of an acceptable teach-out plan and completion of approved teach-out activities and obligations, the institution is required to inform the SACSCOC President in writing of the date that the last credential has been conferred by the closing institution. This communication will be presented to the SACSCOC Executive Council as an informational item and a public information statement regarding the institution's closure will be posted on the SACSCOC website. The institution will be removed from membership immediately upon communication in accordance with Core Requirement 3.1.c (Continuous operation) of the [*Principles of Accreditation*](#).

If an institution has been removed from membership and decides to stop admitting students prior to the conclusion of any appeal or arbitration process, the institution is required to communicate their intent and submit an acceptable teach-out plan for approval by the SACSCOC Executive Council in accordance with SACSCOC's [*Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*](#). Following approval of an acceptable teach-out plan and completion of approved teach-out activities and obligations, the institution is required to inform the SACSCOC President in writing of the date that the last credential has been conferred by the closing institution. This communication will be presented to the SACSCOC Executive Council as an informational item and a public information statement regarding the institution's closure will be posted on the SACSCOC website.

Institutions notifying SACSCOC of closure may not amend or rescind the notification past the effective date submitted in the institution closure and teach-out plan and approved by the SACSCOC Executive Council. Closed institutions are not eligible to reapply for membership for 24 months from the date that the last credential was conferred by the closed institution.

Procedures

Removal of Membership

In accordance with SACSCOC policies, *The Appeals Procedures of the College Delegate Assembly*, and the accreditation status of an institution removed from membership shall remain as it was before such action is taken until the ten-day period for filing an appeal has expired. An institution removed from membership by action of the Board will be listed as “Former Accredited: Removed by Board Action” following the appeal expiration date and/or upon resolution of the appeal upholding the Board’s decision to remove the institution from membership, unless the institution proceeds with arbitration. For cases that involve arbitration, refer to the SACSCOC policy, *Arbitration of Adverse Actions*.

Following completion of the appeal process, the accreditation status of an institution removed from membership and affirmed in appeal shall remain as it was before such action was taken until the ten-day period for notice of arbitration has expired. An institution removed from membership by action of the Board will be listed as “Former Accredited: Removed by Board Action” following the arbitration expiration date and/or upon resolution of arbitration upholding the Board’s decision to remove the institution from membership. Once an institution’s options for appeal and arbitration have expired or been exhausted, the institution’s accreditation status will be listed as “Former Accredited: Removed by Board Action” and the institution’s access to the agency’s member portal will be removed. The institution’s listing in the SACSCOC Directory of institutions will be maintained with its updated accreditation status.

Change of SACSCOC from Primary Institutional Accreditor

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 SACSCOC membership at least six months prior to the planned date of change. A letter documenting the institution’s accreditation status may be downloaded from the SACSCOC institutional portal. Once the institution has secured a new institutional accreditor and an official change of primary institutional accreditor has been approved by USDE, the institution is required to inform the SACSCOC President of that official date in a timely manner. This communication will be presented to the SACSCOC Executive Council as an informational item for acceptance. The status of institutions will continue to be listed as a SACSCOC accredited member institution. Change in SACSCOC’s designation from primary institutional accreditor does not change the obligations of the institution as a member institution.

SACSCOC staff will note the change in primary institutional accreditor in its internal records. Requests to restore SACSCOC as the institution’s primary accreditor may be submitted to the SACSCOC President and will be presented to the SACSCOC Executive Council as an informational item following acknowledgment of the change by USDE.

Voluntary Resignation of Membership

The institution should submit a letter of intent to voluntarily resign from SACSCOC membership at least six months prior to the planned date of resignation. Once an effective date of resignation has been determined, the institution is required to inform the SACSCOC President of the effective date of resignation from membership in a timely manner. This communication will be presented to the SACSCOC Executive Council as an informational item for acceptance. The status of institutions will be listed as “Former Accredited: Voluntary Resignation” upon communication of the effective date of voluntary resignation of membership and the institution’s access to the agency’s member portal will be removed.

An institution that voluntarily resigns from membership is ineligible to reapply for membership for 24 months following the official date of resignation. An action of acceptance of the voluntary resignation of the institution from membership will be read during the Annual Meeting of the College Delegate Assembly, posted on the SACSCOC website, and recorded in the *Annual Reports of SACSCOC*. The SACSCOC policy [*Disclosure of Accrediting Documents and Actions of SACSCOC*](#) is also applicable to these actions.

The following information will be posted in a public information statement on the SACSCOC website:

- a. the effective date of the institution's voluntary resignation and institution's stated reason for the resignation,
- b. a link redirecting individuals to the USDE Database of Accredited Postsecondary Institutions and Programs for additional information, and
- c. a link to SACSCOC's Directory of institutions, which includes information about the institution's accreditation status and history with SACSCOC.

The public information statement will be removed from the SACSCOC website after 12 months from the resignation effective date but the institution's listing within the SACSCOC Directory will be maintained. SACSCOC staff will note the date and reason for voluntary resignation of membership in its internal records. An institution that voluntarily resigns from membership is ineligible to reapply for membership for 24 months following the official date of resignation.

Voluntary Resignation as Part of a Merger/Consolidation

The institution should submit a letter of intent to merge/consolidate at least six months prior to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees meeting at which the prospectus will be reviewed. The institution should submit its prospectus for merger/consolidation in accordance with the [*Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*](#). An action of acceptance/approval of an institution's merger or consolidation will be read during the Annual Meeting of the College Delegate Assembly, posted on the SACSCOC website, and recorded in the *Annual Reports of SACSCOC*. The SACSCOC policy [*Disclosure of Accrediting Documents and Actions of SACSCOC*](#) is also applicable to these actions.

A separate action of voluntary resignation of the merged/consolidated institutions, however, will not be posted on the SACSCOC website, nor recorded in the *Annual Reports of SACSCOC*. However, to preserve information about the prior institution(s)' accreditation status and history with SACSCOC, the listing for the former separately accredited institution(s) will be retained in SACSCOC's Directory of institutions with an accreditation status of "Former Accredited: Merged/Consolidated" upon approval of the merger/consolidation by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. The Directory listing will also include information provided by the institution regarding the disposition of student records and transcripts. SACSCOC records for the prior institution(s) will be merged into the agency's record for the merged/consolidated institution and will be available for the institution's access through the agency's member portal. An institution that undergoes merger/consolidation is ineligible to reapply for membership as a separately accredited institution for 24 months following the approval date by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. Mergers/consolidations may not be rescinded once accepted or approved by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

Institution Closure

The institution should submit an institutional closure and teach-out plan as soon as possible after a decision has been made to stop admitting students in accordance with the [*Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*](#). Pursuant to 34 C.F.R. 602.24, closing institutions are required to include in their teach-out

plan: 1) A complete list of students currently enrolled in each program at the institution and the program requirements each student has completed, 2) a plan to provide all potentially eligible students with information about how to obtain a closed school discharge and, if applicable, information on State refund policies, 3) a record retention plan to be provided to all enrolled students that delineates the final disposition of teach-out records, 4) information on the number and types of credits the teach-out institution is willing to accept prior to the student's enrollment, and 5) a clear statement to students of the tuition and fees of the educational program and the number and types of credits that will be accepted by the teach-out institution.

The institution should submit its closure and teach-out plan via the institutional portal, specifying the date on which the institution will no longer admit new students as well as a date when the last credential will be conferred by the closing institution. The SACSCOC Executive Council will review the institutional closure and teach-out plan for approval. The accreditation status of the institution will be listed as "Accredited: Pending Closure" upon action by the SACSCOC Executive Council. The accreditation of the institution will continue only to complete the activities in the teach-out plan or to fulfill the obligations of any teach-out agreements to assist students in transferring or completing their programs for a reasonable period of time. When the institution has completed all approved teach-out activities and obligations and conferred the last credential by the closing institution, the institution should inform the SACSCOC President, and the institution's accreditation status will be changed to "Former Accredited: Closed" and the institution's access to the agency's membership portal will be removed. Any amendment to the approved date submitted by the institution in the teach-out plan requires approval by the SACSCOC Executive Council.

The institution must inform its constituencies, including; Board members, administrators, faculty, staff, students, prospective students, and any other constituencies about the institution's closure. SACSCOC will monitor these disclosures to ensure they are accurate and in keeping with the [*Disclosure of Accreditation Documents and Actions of SACSCOC policy*](#). Institutions must submit copies of their disclosure documents no later than (30) days following the date the closing institution has conferred its last credential.

SACSCOC will retain this information as part of the institution's record. In addition to the Disclosure statement, a public information statement will be posted on the SACSCOC website that includes: the effective date of the institution's closure, a listing of approved teach-out agreement partners (if any), information regarding the location of student records and transcripts, contact information for the public, a link regarding closed-school student loan discharge, and a link to SACSCOC's Directory of institutions, which will maintain information about the institution's accreditation status as a "Former Accredited: Closed" institution and history with SACSCOC. The public information statement will be removed from the SACSCOC website after 24 months from the approved date when the closed institution has awarded its last credential.

An action to remove an institution from membership will be read during the Annual Meeting of the College Delegate Assembly, posted on the SACSCOC website, and recorded in the *Annual Reports of SACSCOC*. The SACSCOC policy [*Disclosure of Accrediting Documents and Actions of SACSCOC*](#) is also applicable to these actions. An institution notifying SACSCOC of closure may not amend or rescind the notification past the effective date submitted in the institution closure and teach-out plan and approved by the SACSCOC Executive Council. Closed institutions are not eligible to reapply for membership for 24 months from the date that the last credential was conferred by the closed institution.

Document History

Approved: SACSCOC Board of Trustees, December 2024