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

ACCREDITATION PROCEDURES FOR AFFILIATE INSTITUTIONS

Policy Statement

The accreditation procedures outlined in this policy apply to Affiliate institutions, which are defined as institutions of higher education that are formerly accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), that have formally sought and maintained ongoing Affiliated Status with SACSCOC.

To become an Affiliate institution, an institution must:

1. Accept the invitation of the SACSCOC President to become an Affiliate institution.
2. Be in good standing (i.e., is not on Warning, Probation, or Probation Good Cause) at the time of voluntary resignation from SACSCOC membership.
3. Provide documentation of accreditation in good standing with a U.S. Department of Education (USDE) recognized institutional accreditor.

Benefits of Affiliate Status:

1. Maintained in SACSCOC membership communications
2. Attendance at SACSCOC-sponsored events at the member rate
3. Participation in SACSCOC-sponsored evaluator training opportunities
4. Eligibility to serve on SACSCOC peer review committees
5. Eligibility to use an accelerated pathway to restore SACSCOC as its primary institutional accreditor
6. Reduced SACSCOC Affiliate Application for Membership fee, waived pre-applicant workshop registration fee, and waived advisory visit fee

Affiliate institutions may use the accelerated pathway to restore SACSCOC membership described herein, if they meet the following conditions.

1. Maintain continuous Affiliate Status by paying annual affiliate dues, submitting annual profile information, and maintaining its listing of institutional Key Roles and institutional evaluators within the SACSCOC Institutional Portal.

2. The institution must be accredited (not a candidate) and in good standing (i.e., not under any formal sanction at the time of the Application for Membership) with a U.S. Department of Education (USDE) recognized institutional accreditor.

3. Submit a formal request to restore SACSCOC as the institution's primary accreditor along with documentation of USDE approval to proceed.

4. During the Application for Membership process, the institution may not initiate any changes of a substantive nature without prior approval by the SACSCOC President. If an institution is considering a substantive change during the Application for Membership process, it must notify SACSCOC to verify that the change does not preclude the institution from proceeding with the Application for Membership process. Should the institution initiate a substantive change without prior approval of the SACSCOC President before authorization to receive an Accreditation Committee visit, the institution may be required to submit a new application which includes the change. If an institution implements a substantive change after it has been authorized to receive an Accreditation Committee, its authorization may be revoked at the discretion of the SACSCOC President, and the institution may be required to submit a new application which includes the change prior to Accreditation Committee reauthorization.

5. 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 for Membership and included for review in the Application for Membership.

6. This process applies only to Affiliate institutions changing accreditation from another U.S. Department of Education (USDE) recognized institutional accreditor to SACSCOC.

7. There is no provision for candidacy in the process of accreditation of an Affiliate institution.

The SACSCOC philosophy of accreditation precludes denial of membership to a degree-granting institution of higher education on any basis other than failure to comply with the standards of the *Principles of Accreditation* established by the College Delegate Assembly or failure to comply with the policies and procedures of SACSCOC. The Board of Trustees of SACSCOC uniformly applies the *Principles of Accreditation* to all applicant, candidate, and member institutions.

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 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*.

Procedure for Accelerated Pathway for Affiliate Institutions Seeking to Restore Primary Institutional Accreditation with SACSCOC

1. The Affiliate institution notifies the President of SACSCOC in writing of its intent to seek restoration of primary institutional accreditation with SACSCOC. The notification must include authorization by the institution's governing board, appropriate governmental body (if required), and U.S. Department of Education approval to proceed with the process to seek restoration of primary accreditation with SACSCOC. The President of SACSCOC establishes the timeline for submission of the institution's compliance documents and assigns the SACSCOC staff member responsible for supporting the institution's pathway to restored membership.

2. Representatives of the Affiliate institution may, but are not required to, attend workshops designed to support institutions seeking SACSCOC membership. Registration information for the workshops will be provided to the institution at the time of notification and by visiting the SACSCOC website, www.sacscoc.org. The workshops acquaint attendees with the accreditation process and with the standards of the *Principles of Accreditation*.

3. If less than ten (10) years from the date of voluntary resignation from SACSCOC membership, the Affiliate institution completes an *Application for Membership* and includes all documentation required to demonstrate compliance with the relevant standards of the *Principles of Accreditation* as approved by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

    a. The *Application for Membership* is reviewed by SACSCOC staff.

    b. If SACSCOC staff determine that the institution has presented a sufficient case for compliance with all standards included in the Application for Membership, staff will refer the Application for Membership to the SACSCOC President for action. The President may authorize the Affiliate institution to complete the *Compliance Certification for New Members* addressing compliance with all standards and authorize an Accreditation Committee to visit the institution or may deny such authorization. If authorization is denied, the Affiliate institution may request that its Application for Membership be referred to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees for review.

    c. If SACSCOC staff cannot determine whether the institution has presented a sufficient case for compliance with all standards included in the Application for Membership, the Affiliate institution will be offered the option of withdrawing the Application for Membership or requesting that it be referred to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees for action. The Board of Trustees may authorize the Affiliate institution to complete the *Compliance Certification For New Members* addressing compliance with all standards and authorize an Accreditation Committee to visit the institution, or it may deny such authorization. If authorization is denied, the Affiliate institution maintains its Affiliate Status and may reapply to restore SACSCOC as its primary institutional accreditor any time that it wishes.

    d. The Accreditation Committee visit must occur within two years of authorization (or after reauthorization if required due to the initiation of substantive changes without prior approval). After that time, Accreditation Committee authorization expires, unless an extension is approved by the SACSCOC President.

    e. The Affiliate institution may not initiate other substantive changes during the time period between submission of the *Compliance Certification for New Members* through final action on restoration of SACSCOC accreditation.

4. If less than five (5) years from the date of voluntary resignation from SACSCOC membership, the Affiliate institution is not required to submit an *Application for Membership* and proceeds immediately to submission of a completed *Compliance Certification for New Members* addressing compliance with all standards.

    a. The *Compliance Certification for New Members* is received by SACSCOC staff to verify the

institution's timeline eligibility to proceed.

b. If SACSCOC staff determine that the institution is eligible to proceed, staff will refer the *Compliance Certification for New Members* to the SACSCOC President for action to authorize an Accreditation Committee to visit the institution.

c. The Accreditation Committee visit must occur within one year of authorization (or after reauthorization if required due to the initiation of substantive changes without prior approval). After that time, Accreditation Committee authorization expires, unless an extension is approved by the SACSCOC President.

d. The Affiliate institution may not initiate other substantive changes during the time period between *Compliance Certification for New Members* submission through final action on restoration of SACSCOC accreditation.

5. The institution must include with its application the following financial information:
   (1) separate institutional audits and management letters (audits opinioned on the institution) 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 three (3) 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 for (re)authorization of an Accreditation Committee or initial Membership. All audits must be conducted by independent certified public accountants or an appropriate governmental auditing agency. An applicant institution may not show 1) an annual operating deficit from the time of application to award of initial membership, or 2) a cumulative operating deficit across the years presented as documentation.

6. After authorization of an Accreditation Committee visit, the SACSCOC staff member assigned to the institution will conduct an advisory visit to assist the Affiliate institution in finalizing its *Compliance Certification for New Members* and discuss arrangements for the Accreditation Committee visit.

7. The chief executive officer of the institution will be invited to review the report, and the institution will be invited to prepare a written response to any recommendations made by the Accreditation Committee. The response must be submitted no later than the date requested by staff

8. After the Accreditation Committee visit, the report of the Accreditation Committee and the Affiliate institution's response to that report are forwarded to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees for action.

9. At the discretion of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, the Board may schedule the institution to appear before a Committee on Compliance and Reports of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees for a meeting on the record to provide evidence to further inform the decision of the Board regarding the institution,

10. The SACSCOC Board of Trustees may award accreditation, continue the institution as an Applicant and authorize a second accreditation committee, or deny accreditation. The SACSCOC Board of Trustees may award Membership if the SACSCOC Board of Trustees judge that the institution has: 1) documented compliance with the standards of the *Principles of Accreditation*, 2) met the financial requirements listed above in this document, and 3) been in operation, i.e., has without interruption enrolled students in degree programs through at least one complete degree program cycle.

11. If the SACSCOC Board awards accreditation, the newly-accredited institution will be required to submit a *Fifth-Year Interim Report* (without QEP Impact Report) five years after award of membership and have its accreditation reaffirmed ten years after the granting of membership (and every ten years thereafter). For reaffirmation of accreditation, the institution must document compliance with all standards of the *Principles of Accreditation*. The SACSCOC Board of Trustees may award accreditation with a Monitoring Report, at its discretion, if the Board determines that the institution is non-compliant with a standard that it determines has the potential to be resolved within six months. The SACSCOC Board of Trustees may not award accreditation if the institution is non-compliant with a Core Requirement.

12. If the SACSCOC Board continues the institution as an Applicant and authorizes a second Accreditation Committee, the institution must submit its original *Compliance Certification for New* Members, its original Response Report to the first Accreditation Committee's report, and a new Focused Report addressing the standards identified in the action letter from the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. The Accreditation Committee visit must occur within one year of authorization. After that time, Accreditation Committee authorization expires, unless an extension is approved by the SACSCOC President.

13. If the SACSCOC Board denies accreditation of the Affiliate institution (an appealable action), the institution maintains its Affiliate Status with SACSCOC and may reapply to restore SACSCOC as its primary institutional accreditor at any time it wishes. SACSCOC is required to disclose its actions in accordance with *Disclosure of Accrediting Documents and Actions of SACSCOC*. Such disclosure may result in further review by the institution's primary 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 an appealable action.

15. Once the Affiliate institution has been awarded accreditation and the official change of primary institutional accreditor has been approved by USDE, the institution should inform the other accreditor of the change.

Fees for Affiliate Institutions Seeking SACSCOC Accreditation

An Affiliate Application for Membership fee must accompany the *Application for Membership* submitted by the entity seeking accreditation. It covers costs associated with the review process and consultation with SACSCOC staff. The institution will incur the actual cost of the initial accreditation committee visit. Member institutions are assessed annual dues using a formula based on enrollment and on educational and general expenditures beginning with the term in which membership status is awarded. Information regarding Affiliate Application for Membership fees and membership dues is provided in the *Dues, Fees, and Expenses* policy.

Document History
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