



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

CORE REQUIREMENT 2.7.4: DOCUMENTING AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

- Policy -

Core Requirement 2.7.4 of the *Principles of Accreditation* states:

The institution provides instruction for all course work required for at least one degree program at each level at which it awards degrees. If the institution does not provide instruction for all such course work and (1) makes arrangements for some instruction to be provided by other accredited institutions or entities through contracts or consortia or (2) uses some other alternative approach to meeting this requirement, the alternative approach must be approved by the Commission's Board of Trustees. In both cases, the institution demonstrates that it controls all aspects of its educational program. An alternative approach might involve accepting coursework completed through arrangements such as consortia, articulation agreements, or contractual relationships with other institutions or organizations or assessment of transfer credit.

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If an institution does not offer all course work for at least one degree at each degree level, it must request approval and provide documentation for an alternative approach in the following situations:

- a. An institution applying for membership should provide documentation as part of its application.
- b. An institution undergoing reaffirmation of accreditation should provide documentation as part of its compliance certification even if the alternative approach has been previously approved by the Commission.
- c. An institution offering a degree at a new level—a graduate institution offering a new bachelor's degree completion program, for example—should provide documentation as part of the application for substantive change.

If there is an articulation agreement, consortium or another kind of cooperative agreement involved in the degree program, the institution must obtain agreement from the other institutions or organizations that are parties to the arrangement to provide accreditation information to the Commission at times when the institution is being evaluated.

When applying to the SACS Commission on Colleges for approval of an alternative approach, the institution should provide evidence that it controls all aspects of its educational program. Evidence should demonstrate that the institution:

1. evaluates effectively all aspects of each of the degrees for which the alternative approach is requested and that it maintains quality and coherence in those programs, including the general education component and the major or concentration for undergraduate programs, and that it identifies expected outcomes for the programs.
2. ensures appropriate prerequisites and sequences of courses and fulfillment of the completion requirements.
3. uses academically-qualified persons to effectively assess and monitor courses and components completed at other institutions.
4. ensures that the total degree program, including extra-institutional coursework or components, meets the requirements of the Comprehensive Standards for all Educational Programs and those for faculty.

Procedures

For an institution seeking reaffirmation, the document seeking approval of an alternative approach should be submitted as part of its Compliance Certification. It will be reviewed by the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee and forwarded to the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee for a final recommendation to SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

For an institution expanding programs or moving to a more advanced degree level as part of substantive change, the document seeking approval of an alternative approach should be submitted as part of its prospectus for change. It will be reviewed by a standing committee of SACSCOC Board of Trustees and will be forwarded to the Board with a final recommendation.

Document History

Adopted: Commission on Colleges, June 2001

Updated in accord with the revised Principles: December 2006

Revised: Commission on Colleges, June 2007

Revised: Executive Council, December 2010