



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

## **SPECIAL COMMITTEE PROCEDURES AND TEAM REPORT**

### **Policy Statement**

Special Committees are authorized by the Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) or its President to evaluate institutional circumstances that the Commission determines to be accreditation related. The principal role of the Special Committee is to judge whether the institution meets the requirements of the *Principles of Accreditation* in terms of the circumstances that prompted the authorization of the Special Committee visit and to determine continued compliance with the *Principles*, and/or to obtain information for the Commission. The Committee's report and recommendations are forwarded to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees for review and action.

Listed below are the protocols for conducting Special Committee reviews:

1. Special Committees may be authorized by the President of SACSCOC, the Committees on Compliance and Reports, or the Executive Council. Special Committees may not be combined with reaffirmation or substantive change reviews.

For an institution placed or continued on Probation, a Special Committee is automatically authorized to evaluate the institution prior to the next scheduled review of the institution if the institution has not been visited within six months.

2. The Special Committee is charged to conduct an on-site review in order to determine an institution's compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation* and to forward its findings to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees to enable a decision regarding the institution's accreditation status. To that end, it will review specific sections of the *Principles* cited in the notification letter from the President of SACSCOC. The Committee may extend its initial focus if any evidence of additional accreditation-related concerns comes to its attention.
3. A Special Committee should be of sufficient size to adequately review the issues and to make a determination regarding the institution's compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation*.
4. A SACSCOC staff member is required to accompany all Special Committees.
5. If an institution has filed bankruptcy and it is determined by the Commission that the institution may not have sufficient faculty, staff, or resources to host a visit or to respond adequately to a review authorized by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees or its President, the SACSCOC President may modify, reschedule, or discontinue the visit. In such cases, the institution is obligated to

provide evidence of compliance with the *Principles* through other means specified by the Commission.

## **PROCEDURES FOR THE REVIEW**

### ***Materials for the Visit***

It is the responsibility of the SACSCOC staff member to decide what materials will be sent to the Special Committee prior to the visit (including committee member writing assignments) and what materials will be available to the Committee during the on-site evaluation. It is the responsibility of the institution to provide materials as requested by Commission staff and the SACSCOC Board and to provide any additional documentation appropriate to support the institution's compliance with the *Principles*.

### ***Scheduling of the Visit***

The Special Committee visit will occur no later than four weeks prior to the date of the final mailing to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees for action on the institution's case (meaning six weeks in advance of the Board's meeting). The date will be relative to the institution's next specified review at either the Board of Trustees' Summer Meeting in June or its Annual Meeting in December.

### ***The Exit Conference***

The Commission will offer the chief executive officer the opportunity to have an exit conference to discuss the Committee's findings.

### ***The Committee Report and Response of the Institution to the Report***

The Committee will complete the "Report of the Special Committee," a report form that can be accessed on the SACSCOC website. Within one week of the conclusion of the visit, the Chair forwards the draft report to Committee members and to Commission staff. After the report is reviewed by members of the Special Committee and Commission staff, the Chair of the Committee forwards the draft report to the institution for the identification of factual errors only. Following any necessary revisions, the Chair forwards the final report to Commission staff that will then send it to the institution. If the institution elects to submit a written response, a copy of that response will be forwarded to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees if received by the date in the letter of transmittal from Commission staff—usually no later than 10 working days in advance of the Board meeting. The Report of the Special Committee and the response of the institution to the report will be forwarded to SACSCOC Board of Trustees for action.

The President of SACSCOC may grant an exception to the deadline for submitting documents only in unusual circumstances or only for previously unavailable significant documents. In such cases, the institution must petition the President in writing and include copies of the previously unavailable documents, if applicable.

### ***Meetings on the Record with SACSCOC Board of Trustees***

Representatives of an institution may be invited for a meeting on the record only if the institution's status is such that a meeting on the record is warranted in accordance with SACSCOC policy.

### **EXPENSES OF THE VISIT**

As with all committee visits, it is the policy of the Commission that the institution being reviewed bear the travel, meals, and lodging expenses of the visiting committee and the accompanying Commission staff representative, \$200 for the miscellaneous expenses of the chair and \$100 for each committee member, and any clerical expenses. In addition, the institution will be assessed \$1,500 as part of the Commission's cost recovery program for the administration of special reviews. The total cost is billed to the institution by SACSCOC following the visit.

If an institution has filed bankruptcy and a special committee has been authorized to visit the institution, SACSCOC may opt to pre-bill the institution the estimated cost of the visit in order to ensure payment.

#### **Document History**

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