



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

## **RECORDS MAINTENANCE POLICY OF THE COMMISSION**

### **Policy Statement**

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) maintains the following files and records in accordance with Commission policy or with federal regulations governing accrediting associations recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

#### **Official Correspondence to Institutions**

All official correspondence signed by the President of SACSCOC addressed to applicant, candidate, and member institutions informing them of formal Commission action and other correspondence deemed to be important for permanent retention are classified as official correspondence.

Disposition: Maintained permanently.

#### **Institutional Profiles and Important Correspondence**

Recent print copies of Institutional Profiles are maintained for one year. Institutional profile information is stored in the Commission data base.

Disposition: Information on enrollment and finances collected from the Institutional Profiles is stored in the data base for a minimum of ten years. Print copies of profiles are purged annually upon receipt of the Institutional Profile for the subsequent year and entry into computer. Audits submitted with Institutional Profiles are retained for three years after submission.

#### **Institutional Materials related to Reaffirmation**

For each institution, the Commission retains a print copy of the original signed Compliance Certification that includes narrative supporting determination of compliance, the Quality Enhancement Report, the Institutional Summary Report, Report of the Reaffirmation Committee, and the response of the institution to the Report of the Reaffirmation Committee.

Disposition: All copies of the above are maintained in off-site file storage area and recorded in the Commission's data base for such time as to permit the file to contain records of the last two comprehensive reviews. Print copies destroyed after that point; data base files are retained.

## **Institutional Materials Related to Substantive Change**

Institutions notify the Commission before making significant changes in program, location, or program delivery mode in accordance with the Commission's Substantive Change policy. The Commission's response may be simple acknowledgement, addition of the information to the Commission's files, request for further information and/or a prospectus, notification that the change will be reviewed at the point of the next Reaffirmation, referral to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees for approval, or authorization of a Substantive Change Committee visit. When a Committee is authorized, the Commission retains a copy of the Report of the Substantive Change Committee, the response of the institution to the Report, and the letter of notification informing the institution of Commission action.

Disposition: The Report of the Substantive Change Committee will be retained for 10 years. If a committee visit is authorized, the institution's prospectus or application will be maintained by the Commission staff member assigned to that institution. Once the final action of the Commission has been taken, whether by the SACSCOC President or by the SACSCOC Board, all institutional materials are destroyed except for the original institutional notification letter, the Committee Report, and the final letter of notification regarding Commission action.

## **Other Institutional Accreditation Information and Reports**

Currently, institutional accreditation information maintained by the Commission includes reaffirmation, candidate, accreditation, substantive change, special and other visiting committee reports; monitoring reports (formerly called follow-up or progress reports); accreditation decision letters; official correspondence; and fifth-year interim and follow-up reports. Other pertinent information may be maintained at the discretion of the staff.

Disposition: Information is retained off site for such time as will permit the file to contain records of the last two institutional reviews. Print copies are destroyed after that point; data base files are retained. Other information may be retained at the discretion of the staff, again, taking into account the need to maintain complete and accurate records while reducing whenever possible redundancy and file storage space requirements. All copies of Applications are destroyed after the initial Accreditation Committee report is received and official action is taken by the Commission.

If an institution is removed from candidate or accredited status or the institution withdraws its status, all files pertaining to the institution will be purged following final action by the Commission' Board of Trustees (includes appeals) with the exception of the retention of official correspondence.

## **Documents related to Appeals and Litigation**

Print copies of the administrative record, the institution's brief, the Commission's response brief, and official correspondence related to an appeal will be stored until final resolution of the appeal. Significant documents related to litigation between the Commission and an institution will be maintained until the case has been resolved.

Disposition: Upon notification that litigation has been resolved, all print copies of institutional case materials will be maintained for one year. After one year, only official correspondence and significant material related to litigation will be maintained.

Upon a final resolution of an institution's appeal, print copies of all case materials will be maintained for two years. After two years, only official correspondence related to the appeal will be maintained.

## **Staff Working Files**

Maintained in staff liaison offices, these files contain day-by-day working papers pertaining to individual institutions, notes, correspondence, etc.

Disposition: Files are purged by staff at the point of staff reassignment. Upon notification that an institution has initiated litigation, no materials regarding the institution will be purged from the files until such action is resolved.

### **Other Historical Documents relating to the Work of the Commission**

Materials include documents deemed by the staff to be important to documenting the history of the institution or of the Commission and its work.

Disposition: Documents are stored off-site and maintained permanently. Staff judgment as to contents of these files will be informed by the knowledge that, since these files relate to the history of the organization, their contents would likely be accessible to its members.

### **Review of this Policy**

This policy will be updated regularly to ensure contemporary compliance with federal laws and regulations and other pertinent legal requirements.

#### **Document History**

*Approved: Commission on Colleges, December 1994  
Revised for the Principles of Accreditation: February 2004  
Revised: December 2005, December 2006, December 2008  
Edited: January 2012*