



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

## **SEPARATE ACCREDITATION FOR UNITS OF A MEMBER INSTITUTION**

### **Policy Statement**

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) accredits an institution as a totality. This accreditation includes, in addition to the parent campus, all centers, branch campuses, campuses, or other sites of a degree-granting institution at which postsecondary degree work is offered. These centers, sites, or locations are referred to as off-campus instructional sites (OCIS). SACSCOC-accredited institutions which offer courses or programs at multiple locations must declare one of these locations a parent campus for the purposes of accreditation. All branch campuses related to the parent campus through corporate or administrative control must (1) include the name of the parent campus and make it clear that its accreditation is dependent on the continued accreditation of the parent campus and (2) be evaluated during reviews for institutions seeking candidacy, initial membership, or reaffirmation of accreditation. All other off-campus instructional sites under the accreditation of the parent campus are included in the scope of such reviews and must be evaluated as appropriate.

If SACSCOC determines that a unit of the institution – including, but not limited to an off-campus instructional site – is autonomous to the extent that the control over that unit by the parent or its board is significantly impaired, SACSCOC may direct that the extended unit seek to become a separately accredited institution. A unit which achieves separate accreditation should bear a different name from that of the parent. Failure to make adequate progress toward such accreditation may endanger the accreditation status of the unit as well as the accreditation status of the parent campus.

The entity seeking separate accreditation may not initiate other substantive changes during the time between an application for separate accreditation through final Board of Trustees action on separate accreditation. All management agreements, option agreements, or other contractual agreements with respect to the management and control of the entity, if any, must be in place at the time of submission of the application for separate accreditation and included for review in the application. After a unit becomes a separately accredited institution, it may not change ownership for at least three years following the date of accreditation as a separate entity without loss of accreditation. After the three-year period, if the institution changes ownership, it is required to notify SACSCOC and receive its approval, in keeping with the substantive change policy and procedures of SACSCOC.

If SACSCOC determines that separately accredited institutions within a system lack the autonomy for separate accreditation, SACSCOC may find those institutions to be out of compliance with standards related to governance and/or out of compliance with this policy. Institutions must address the noncompliance or must seek to be accredited as a single entity. See the policy statement on [Mergers, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisitions, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status.](#)

### **Procedure for a Unit Seeking Separate Accreditation**

1. The unit notifies the President of SACSCOC in writing of its intent to seek separate accreditation. The notification and application must include authorization by the governing board of the parent entity and the appropriate governmental body (if required) for the unit to seek separate accreditation. The President of SACSCOC assigns the SACSCOC staff member responsible for applicant institutions to review the application.

2. Representatives of the unit attend a mandatory Pre-Applicant and Institutional Effectiveness Workshops. Information concerning registering for the workshops may be obtained by visiting the SACSCOC website, [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org). The workshop acquaints attendees with the accreditation process and with the Core Requirements and Standards of the [\*Principles of Accreditation\*](#).
3. The unit completes an “Application for Membership” and includes all documentation required to demonstrate compliance with the following standards of the [\*Principles of Accreditation\*](#):

<b>Core Requirements</b>	<b>Standards</b>
1.1 (Integrity)	4.2.c (CEO evaluation/selection)
2.1 (Institutional mission)	4.2.d (Conflict of interest)
3.1 a (Degree-granting authority)	5.4 (Qualified administrative/academic officers)
3.1.b (Coursework for degree)	6.2.a (Faculty qualifications)
3.1.c (Continuous operation)	6.2.b (Program faculty)
4.1 (Governing board characteristics)	7.3 (Administrative effectiveness)
5.1 (Chief executive officer)	8.2.a (Student outcomes: educational programs)
6.1 (Full-time faculty)	8.2.b (Student outcomes: general education)
7.1 (Institutional planning)	8.2.c (Student outcomes: academic and student services)
8.1 (Student achievement)	10.2 (Public information)
9.1 (Program content)	10.5 (Admissions policies and practices)
9.2 (Program length)	10.6 (Distance and correspondence education)
9.3 (General education requirements)	10.7 (Policies for awarding credit)
11.1 (Library and learning/information resources)	11.2 (Library and learning/information staff)
12.1 (Student support services)	11.3 (Library and learning/information access)
13.1 (Financial resources)	12.4 (Student complaints)
13.2 (Financial documents)* (see note below)	13.6 (Federal and state responsibilities)
	13.7 (Physical resources)
	14.1 (Publication of accreditation status)
	14.3 (Comprehensive institutional reviews)
	14.4 (Representation to other agencies)
	14.5 (Policy compliance)

*Note Concerning Compliance with Core Requirement 13.2 (Financial documents)*

*In addition to providing narrative describing its compliance with Core Requirement 13.1 (Financial resources), an institution must include separate audits opinioned on the parent institution and opinioned on the extended unit for the most recently completed fiscal year ending prior to the date of the application. SACSCOC may require additional audits if needed. The institution must also provide with the application: an annual budget that is preceded by sound planning, is subject to sound fiscal procedures, and is approved by the governing board; and a schedule of changes in unrestricted net assets, excluding plant and plant related debt (short and long term debt attached to physical assets).*

*If an Accreditation Committee is authorized, the extended unit must make available for any committee visit a separate audit for the most recent fiscal year ending prior to that visit. All audits must be conducted by independent certified professional accountants or an appropriate governmental auditing agency. If at the time of the Accreditation Committee visit the unit seeking separate accreditation is found out of compliance with financial-related standards, it will be required to provide audited financial statements and management letters for the most recently completed fiscal year prior to review by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees.*

4. The Application Form is reviewed by SACSCOC staff.
5. If SACSCOC staff cannot determine apparent compliance with the standards listed above, the unit will be offered the option of withdrawing the application or requesting that it be referred to one of the SACSCOC Committees on Compliance and Reports. After considering the recommendation of the Committee on Compliance and Reports, the SACSCOC Board of Trustees may authorize the unit to complete a Compliance Certification addressing compliance with all standards [except 7.2 (*Quality Enhancement Plan*)] and subsequently to receive an Accreditation Committee visit, or it may deny such authorization. If authorization is denied, the unit remains a part of the parent institution and may reapply for accreditation as a separate institution at any time that it wishes.

6. If staff can determine apparent compliance with the standards listed above, the President of SACSCOC may authorize the unit to complete a Compliance Certification addressing all standards [except 7.2 (*Quality Enhancement Plan*)] and subsequently to receive an Accreditation Committee visit.
7. The extended unit seeking separate accreditation may not initiate other substantive changes during the time period between an application for separate accreditation through final Board action on separate accreditation.
8. After authorization of an Accreditation Committee visit, the President of SACSCOC will assign a SACSCOC staff member to work with the extended unit. This staff member will conduct an advisory visit to the unit to assist in the completion of the Compliance Certification and discuss arrangements for the Accreditation Committee visit.
9. After the Accreditation Committee visit, which will normally occur within two years of authorization of the visit, the report of the Accreditation Committee and the unit's response to that report are forwarded to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees and its standing committees for action.
10. The SACSCOC Board either awards or denies separate accreditation.
11. If the SACSCOC Board awards the separate accreditation of the unit, the newly-accredited institution will be required to have its accreditation reaffirmed five 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*.
12. If the SACSCOC Board denies the separate accreditation of the unit, the unit may continue to be included under the accreditation of its parent campus. However, non-compliance in connection with seeking separate accreditation could possibly affect the accredited status of the parent campus. The unit may apply again as it wishes.
13. There is no provision for candidacy in the process of separate accreditation of an extended unit.
14. The unit seeking separate accreditation remains accredited under the parent campus until final action on separate accreditation is taken.

### **Fees for Extended Units Seeking Separate Accreditation**

An Application Fee must accompany the application submitted by the entity seeking separate accreditation. It covers costs associated with the application review and consultation with staff. The institution will incur the actual cost of the initial accreditation committee visit. New member institutions are assessed annual dues using a formula based on enrollment and on educational and general expenditures beginning with the term in which candidate or membership status is awarded. Information regarding application fees and membership dues is provided in the [\*Dues, Fees, and Expenses\*](#) policy.

#### **Document History**

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## APPENDIX

### GUIDELINES FOR A UNIT SEEKING SEPARATE ACCREDITATION

**Definitions:** “Unit” or “Entity” means a part of an accredited parent institution (such as a campus) which seeks to be accredited separately from the parent institution of which it is a part.

“Parent institution” means the accredited institution which contains the unit which wishes to gain accreditation as a separate institution.

A unit *which is in the process of seeking separate accreditation* by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) meets the following conditions:

- (1) continues to be accredited as a transitioning part of the parent institution.
- (2) continues to award federal financial aid to its students, if applicable, as a part of an accredited parent institution.
- (3) admits students in the name of the parent institution (the name of the unit may also be used).
- (4) awards degrees in the name of the parent institution (the name of the unit, which must be different from the parent’s name, may also appear on the diploma under the name of the parent institution).
- (5) provides transcripts bearing the name of the parent institution (the name of the unit may also appear on the transcript with appropriate language describing the relationship).
- (6) establishes its own administrative structure to include a chief executive officer who reports to an appropriate person or board (for example, to a system CEO if part of a system or to an appropriate board).
- (7) establishes admissions processes for its programs as appropriate and with appropriate consistency with admissions processes of the parent institution until it gains separate accreditation.
- (8) develops its own policies and procedures with regard to such areas as operations, curricular development, faculty, staff, learning resources, planning and evaluation, ensuring appropriate consistency with policies and procedures of the parent institution until it gains separate accreditation.
- (9) develops its own mission statement approved by the appropriate board (consistent with its system mission if it is part of a system).
- (10) develops its own institutional planning and evaluation processes.
- (11) develops a catalog providing information concerning such matters as a calendar, admissions policies, tuition and fees, program requirements, course descriptions, accredited status, and other appropriate information specific to the unit.
- (12) provides with the application for separate accreditation at least one independent audit (separate from the audit of the parent institution) for the most recently completed fiscal year prior to submission of the application (audits for the two years previous to the most recently completed fiscal year may be audits for the parent institution reflecting the entity as a part of the parent institution).
- (13) provides the following information in its publications during the transition period: \_\_\_\_\_ (name of the parent member institution) is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award (name of specific degree levels, such as associate, baccalaureate, masters, doctorate). \_\_\_\_\_ (name of unit seeking separate accreditation) is a part of \_\_\_\_\_ (name of parent member institution) and is currently seeking separate accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. Contact the Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097 or call 404-679-4500 for questions about the accreditation of \_\_\_\_\_ (name of the parent member institution).

*Endorsed: SACSCOC Executive Council, December 2009*