



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

## REPORTS SUBMITTED FOR COMMITTEE OR COMMISSION REVIEW

### - Policy Statement -

Institutions accredited by the Commission on Colleges are requested to submit various reports to an evaluation committee or to the Commission's Board of Trustees for review. Those reports include:

Response Report to the Visiting Committee  
Monitoring Report or Referral Report

When submitting a report, an institution should follow the directions below, keeping in mind that the report will be reviewed by a number of readers, most of whom will be unfamiliar with the institution.

### Information Pertaining to the Preparation of All Reports

#### *Preparation of a Title Page*

For any report requested, an institution should prepare a title page that includes the following:

1. Name of the institution
2. Address of the institution
3. Dates of the committee visit (*not applicable for the Referral Report*)
4. The kind of report submitted
5. Name, title, and contact numbers of person(s) preparing the report

#### *Presentation of Reports*

For any report requested, an institution should

1. **For print copies**, copy all documents front and back, double-space the copy, and use no less than an 11 point font. If the report requires binding beyond stapling, do not submit the report in a three-ring binder. Ring binders are bulky and must be removed before mailing to the readers.
2. **For electronic copies**, copy the report and all attachments onto an electronic memory device (e.g., external hard-drive, DVD, CD, or flash/thumb drive). Provide the name of the person who can be contacted if the readers have problems accessing the information. Provide **one print copy** of the response without the attachments.

Each electronic memory device smaller than 4" by 4" should be submitted in a paper or plastic envelope not smaller than 4 x 4 inches and the envelope should be labeled with the name of the institution, the title of the report, and the list of document contents. The electronic memory device should be labeled with the name of the institution and the title of the report.

Each electronic memory device larger than 4" by 4" should be in a paper or plastic envelope and clearly labeled with the name of the institution, the title of the report, and the list of document contents. The electronic memory device should be labeled with the name of the institution and the title of the report.

3. Provide a clear, complete, and concise report. If documentation is required, ensure that it is appropriate to demonstrating fulfillment of the requirement. Specify actions that have been taken and, when possible, document their completion.
4. When possible, excerpt passages from text and incorporate the narrative into the report. Provide definitive evidence, not documents that only address the process (e.g., do not include copies of letters or memos with directives).
5. Specify actions that have been taken and provide documentation that such actions have been completed. Avoid vague responses indicating that the institution plans to address a problem in the future. If any actions remain to be accomplished, the institution should present an action plan, a schedule for accomplishing the plan, and evidence of commitment of resources for accomplishing the plan.
6. When possible and appropriate, provide samples of evidence of compliance rather than all documents pertaining to all activities associated with compliance.
7. Reread the report before submission and eliminate all narrative that is not relevant to the focus of the report. If sending electronic copies, ensure that all devices are virus free and have been reviewed for easy access by reviewers external to your institution.

### Information Specific for the Response to the Visiting Committee Report

- Definition:** A Response Report addresses the findings of a visiting committee. It provides updated or additional documentation regarding the institution's compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation*.
- Audience:** The Response Report, along with the Committee Report and other documents, is reviewed by the Commission on Colleges' Board of Trustees and is subject to the review procedures of the Commission's standing committees, including the continuation of a monitoring period, the imposition of a sanction, or a change of accreditation status.
- Report Presentation:** Structure the response so that it addresses committee recommendations in the order that they appear in the report. Tabs should separate each response to a recommendation.
- For each recommendation, provide the number of the Core Requirement, Comprehensive Standard, or Federal Requirement and state the recommendation exactly as it appears in the visiting committee report. Describe the committee's concerns that led to the recommendation by either summarizing the concerns or inserting verbatim the complete narrative in the report pertaining to the recommendation. Provide a response with documentation.
- Due Date:** The Response Report is due on the day indicated in the transmittal letter from Commission staff accompanying the visiting committee report.
- Number of Copies:** See the transmittal letter from Commission staff accompanying the visiting committee report.

### Information Specific to the Preparation of a Monitoring Report or a Referral Report

- Definition:** These reports address recommendations and continued concerns of compliance usually identified by the Committee on Compliance and Reports or the Executive Council (or, for a Referral Report, identified by the Committee on Fifth-Year Interim Reports). It usually follows the C & R Committee's review of an institution's response to a visiting committee report.
- Audience:** The Monitoring Report and the Referral Report are reviewed by the Commission on Colleges Board of Trustees and are subject to the review procedures of the Commission's standing committees, including the continuation of a monitoring period, the imposition of a sanction, or a change of accreditation status.
- Report Presentation:** For a Monitoring Report, structure the response so that it addresses committee recommendations in the order that they appeared in the report. Tabs should separate each response to a recommendation.
- For each recommendation, (1) restate the number of the Core Requirement, Comprehensive Standard, or Federal Requirement, the number of the recommendation, and the recommendation

exactly as it appeared in the visiting committee report; (2) provide a brief history of responses to the recommendation if more than a first response (to include an accurate summary of the original concerns of the visiting committee, a summary of each previous institutional response and an explanation of what had been requested by the Commission); (3) cite verbatim the current request of the Commission that is related to the recommendation (reference notification letter from the President of the Commission); and (4) prepare a response to the recommendation.

*For a Referral Report*, structure the response so that it addresses the concerns described in the letter from the Commission's President in the order that they appeared. Tabs should separate each response to each standard cited.

For each standard cited, (1) restate the number of the Core Requirement, Comprehensive Standard, or Federal Requirement exactly as it appeared in the letter; (2) cite verbatim the current request of the Commission that is related to the standard cited (reference notification letter from the President of the Commission); and (3) prepare a response to the recommendation.

Due Date: The Monitoring Report and the Referral Report are due on the date specified in the Commission President's notification letter. Requests for extensions to the date must be made to the President of the Commission two weeks in advance of the original due date. (See Commission policy "Deadlines for Submitting Reports.")

Number of Copies: See the letter from the President of the Commission requesting the Report.

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## **SANCTIONS, DENIAL OF REAFFIRMATION, AND REMOVAL FROM MEMBERSHIP**

### **- Policy Statement -**

SACS Commission on Colleges requires that a member institution be in compliance with *the Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement* and its Core Requirements, comply with Commission policies and procedures, and provide information requested by the Commission's Board of Trustees in order to maintain membership and accreditation. When an institution fails to comply with these requirements within a maximum two-year monitoring period, the Commission may impose sanctions. Monitoring reports submitted during this period are not sanctions.

If the Commission determines that an institution's progress is insufficient during the two-year monitoring period but not significant enough to impose a sanction, the Commission will advise the institution that if progress or compliance is insufficient at the time of its next formal review by the Commission's Board of Trustees, the institution could be placed on sanction or removed from membership. (Institutions applying for membership with the Commission on Colleges should refer to the Commission policy "Accreditation Procedures for Applicant Institutions" for procedures concerning the denial or removal of candidacy, or the denial of initial membership.)

Failure to make adequate progress toward compliance at any time during the two-year period or failure to comply with the *Principles* at the conclusion of two years may result in Commission action to remove accreditation.

The Commission's requirements, policies, processes, procedures and decisions are predicated on integrity. The Commission on Colleges expects integrity to govern the operation of institutions. Therefore, evidence of withholding information, providing inaccurate information to the public, or failing to provide timely information to the Commission may be construed as an indication of the lack of a full commitment to integrity and may result in the imposition of sanctions or removal of membership in the Commission on Colleges.

### **Sanctions**

An institution found to be out of compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation* must correct the deficiencies or face the possibility of being placed on one of two sanctions: Warning or Probation, in order of degree of seriousness. These sanctions are not necessarily sequential, and the Commission may place an institution on either sanction with or without reviewing a visiting committee's report and with or without having previously requested a monitoring report, depending on the seriousness and extent of noncompliance. In certain circumstances, an institution may be removed from membership without having previously been placed on sanction.

During the two-year monitoring period, institutions may be placed on a sanction for six or twelve months, with a monitoring report required at the end of the period of the sanction. Institutional accreditation cannot be reaffirmed while the institution is on sanction. Denial of reaffirmation of accreditation and invocation of sanctions are not appealable actions. Actions invoking sanctions are publicly announced at the annual meeting of the College Delegate Assembly, posted on the Commission's Web page, and published in the *Annual Report of SACS Commission on Colleges*.

The characteristics of these sanctions include the following:

**Warning** – The less serious of the two sanctions, Warning is usually, but not necessarily, levied in the earlier stages of institutional review and often, but not necessarily, precedes Probation. It cannot, however, succeed Probation. An institution may be placed on Warning or Probation for noncompliance with any of the Core Requirements or significant noncompliance with the Comprehensive Standards. Additionally, an institution may be placed on Warning for failure to make timely and significant progress toward correcting the deficiencies that led to the finding of noncompliance with any of the *Principles of Accreditation*. An institution may also be placed on Warning for failure to comply with Commission policies and procedures, including failure to provide requested information in a timely manner. The maximum total time during one monitoring period that an institution may be on Warning is two years.

**Probation** – Failure to correct deficiencies or failure to make satisfactory progress toward compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation*, whether or not the institution is already on Warning, may result in the institution being placed on Probation. An institution may be placed on Probation for the same reasons as discussed above regarding Warning if the Commission deems noncompliance with the *Principles* to be serious enough to merit invoking Probation whether or not the institution is or has been on Warning. Probation is a more serious sanction than Warning and is usually, but not necessarily, invoked as the last step before an institution is removed from membership. Probation may be imposed upon initial institutional review, depending on the judgment of the Commission of the seriousness of noncompliance or in the case of repeated violations recognized by the Commission over a period of time. An institution must be placed on Probation when it is continued in membership for Good Cause beyond the maximum two-year monitoring period (see section on “Good Cause” below). The maximum consecutive time that an institution may be on Probation is two years.

### **Denial of Reaffirmation of Accreditation with the Imposition of a Sanction**

If an institution is judged by the Commission to be out of compliance with a Core Requirement, its reaffirmation of accreditation will be denied, and it will be placed on a sanction. If an institution is judged to be significantly out of compliance with one or more of the Comprehensive Standards, its reaffirmation of accreditation may be denied. The action of denying reaffirmation of accreditation will be accompanied by the imposition of a sanction. The institution's accreditation will not be reaffirmed while it is on Warning or Probation, but its accreditation will be continued. Denial of reaffirmation does not affect the decennial review schedule.

### **Removal from Membership**

An institution may be removed from Commission membership at any time, depending on the Commission's judgment of the seriousness of noncompliance with the *Principles of Accreditation* or with the Commission's policies and procedures. Removal from membership, however, usually occurs after persistent or significant noncompliance during a monitoring period or any time an institution is being followed for Good Cause. A serious instance of noncompliance or repeated instances of noncompliance may result in removal of membership without a monitoring period.

An institution must be removed from membership if it has not demonstrated compliance with all the *Principles of Accreditation* within the two-year monitoring period and has not demonstrated Good Cause as to why it should not be dropped from membership. If an institution is continued in membership for Good Cause beyond the two-year monitoring period (and then only on Probation), it may be removed from membership at any time but must be removed from membership if it does not demonstrate compliance within the two years beyond the end of the two-year monitoring period (see “Good Cause” below).

When an institution fails to pay its dues by the designated deadline, the Commission will assume from this action that the institution no longer wants to maintain its membership or candidacy with SACS Commission on Colleges. By that action, the institution withdraws from membership or candidacy. The Commission will take official action on the termination of accreditation.

In accord 34 CFR Section 602.24, notification of Commission action to withdraw or terminate membership will be accompanied by a request that the institution submit a teach-out plan to the Commission for approval. (See

Commission policy "Substantive Change for Member Institutions" for the specific procedures.) This is applicable if (1) the institution fails to appeal the decision of the Commission's Board of Trustees or (2) the institution appeals the Board's decision and the Appeals Committee rules in favor of the Board.

## **Procedures for Applying Sanctions and for Terminating Membership**

Recommendations for Warning, Probation, and removal of membership are made by one of the Committees on Compliance and Reports to the Executive Council of the Commission. The Council forwards recommendations on Warning, Probation, and removal from membership to the Commission's Board of Trustees, which takes final action subject to any rights of appeal which the institution might have as described in Commission policies. Action placing an institution on Warning or Probation is not appealable.

In the cases of Warning, Probation, or loss of membership, both the chief executive officer and the chair of the institution's governing board will be informed in writing. (For public institutions that are part of a state system, the chief executive officer of the system will also receive a copy of the notification sent to the institution.) The Commission will include in its notification to the institution reasons for the imposition of sanction or for loss of membership.

An action to place an institution on Warning or Probation, to deny reaffirmation, or to remove an institution from membership, along with the reasons for the action, will be read during the annual meeting of the College Delegate Assembly, posted on the Commission's Web page, and recorded in the *Annual Report of SACS Commission on Colleges*. Actions which are appealable will be accompanied by a statement that Commission action will not take effect until the time period for filing an appeal has expired or until final action has been taken on the appeal. The Commission policy on disclosure is also applicable to these actions.

## **Definition and Conditions for Good Cause**

If an institution has not remedied deficiencies at the conclusion of its two-year maximum monitoring period, the Commission must (1) remove the institution from membership, or (2) continue accreditation for "good cause". If accreditation is extended for "good cause," the institution must also be placed on or continued on Probation.

An institution's accreditation can be extended for "good cause" if

1. the institution has demonstrated significant recent accomplishments in addressing non-compliance (e.g., the institution's cumulative operating deficit has been reduced significantly and its enrollment has increased significantly), and
2. the institution has documented that it has the "potential" to remedy all deficiencies within the extended period as defined by the Committee on Compliance and Reports; that is, that the institution provides evidence which makes it reasonable for the Commission to assume it will remedy all deficiencies within the extended time defined by the Committee on Compliance and Reports, and
3. the institution provides assurance to the Commission that it is not aware of any other reasons, other than those identified by the Commission on Colleges, why the institution could not be continued for "good cause."

The Commission may extend accreditation for "good cause" for a maximum of one year. At the conclusion of the period, the institution must appear before the Commission's Board of Trustees at a meeting on the record to provide evidence of good cause as to why its period for remedying deficiencies should be extended again for good cause. (Note: If the institution was placed on Probation during its two-year period following initial action on deficiencies, the institution must provide evidence for good cause if its accreditation is to be continued with the status of Probation.)

In all cases, the institution bears the burden of proof to provide evidence why the Commission should not remove it from membership.

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