



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

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

### **Policy Statement**

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) requires that a member institution be in compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement (Principles)*, comply with SACSCOC policies and procedures, and provide information requested by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees in order to maintain membership and accreditation. As an institutional accreditor, any instance of noncompliance applies to the entire institution and is not limited or isolated to units, offices, or programs within the institution. When an institution fails to comply with these requirements within a maximum two-year monitoring period, the SACSCOC Board of Trustees may impose sanctions. Monitoring reports submitted during this period are not sanctions.

If the SACSCOC Board of Trustees determines that an institution's progress is insufficient during the two-year monitoring period but not significant enough to impose a sanction, SACSCOC will advise the institution that if progress or compliance is insufficient at the time of its next formal review by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, the institution could be placed on sanction or removed from membership. (Institutions applying for membership with SACSCOC should refer to the [Accreditation Procedures for Applicant Institutions](#) policy 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 SACSCOC action to remove the institution from membership. An institution may submit monitoring reports for a maximum of four consecutive years, inclusive of the Monitoring period, Warning period, Probation period, or Probation for Good Cause period. In all cases, the institution bears the burden of proof to provide evidence why the SACSCOC Board of Trustees should not remove it from membership.

SACSCOC's requirements, policies, processes, procedures and decisions are predicated on integrity. SACSCOC 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 SACSCOC may be construed as a lack of a full commitment to integrity and may result in the imposition of sanctions or removal from membership.

### **Monitoring Period and Sanctions**

An institution found to be non-compliant with the *Principles of Accreditation* must correct the deficiencies within a two-year monitoring period. Failure to demonstrate progress toward becoming compliant could subject the institution to being placed on one of two sanctions during the monitoring period: Warning or Probation. These sanctions are not necessarily sequential; however, Warning cannot follow Probation. At the Board's discretion, an institution failing to demonstrate compliance with all accrediting standards during the monitoring period may be placed on Probation for Good Cause, provided it meets the provisions of Good Cause. The SACSCOC Board of Trustees may place an institution on 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. A separate Disclosure Statement will be publicly announced for any institution placed on a sanction (see SACSCOC policy, [Disclosure of Accrediting Documents and Actions of SACSCOC](#).)

The following paragraphs define a Monitoring Period or a Sanction:

**Monitoring Period** – An institution’s monitoring period begins when the SACSCOC Board of Trustees determines that the institution has failed to demonstrate compliance with one or more standards of the *Principles of Accreditation* and requests a monitoring report. The institution has a maximum of two years to comply with all identified deficiencies during this monitoring period. The Board may choose to review a monitoring report in six or twelve month increments. Institutions submitting required monitoring reports should address all areas of non-compliance in accordance with the SACSCOC policy [Documents Submitted for SACSCOC Review](#). If the institution has not demonstrated compliance with all of the standards by the end of its two-year monitoring period, the SACSCOC Board of Trustees may only continue the institution in accreditation if it determines that the institution has met the definition and conditions of Good Cause (see section on Probation for Good Cause below).

During the two-year monitoring period, institutions may be placed on a sanction, with a monitoring report submitted per the letter notifying the institution of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees’ action. 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 SACSCOC website, and published in the *Annual Reports of SACSCOC* (see SACSCOC policy [Disclosure of Accrediting Documents and Actions of SACSCOC](#)).

**Warning** – The less critical 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. Once an institution has been placed on Probation for non-compliance, however, it cannot return to a status of Warning in the same monitoring period. An institution may be placed on Warning for noncompliance with any of the Core Requirements or significant noncompliance with the other 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 SACSCOC 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 SACSCOC Board of Trustees 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 Board regarding the seriousness of noncompliance or in the case of repeated violations recognized by the Board during a monitoring period. A Special Committee’s visit to review the monitoring report will be authorized any time an institution is placed on Probation (unless the institution has hosted a Special Committee’s visit within the past six months), and the institution may be required to appear before a Committee on Compliance and Reports of the Board of Trustees at a meeting on the record at the end of the period of Probation to provide evidence as to why the institution should not be removed from membership. The maximum consecutive time that an institution may be on Probation is two years.

**Probation for Good Cause** – If an institution has not demonstrated compliance with all of the standards of the *Principles of Accreditation* at the conclusion of its two-year maximum monitoring period, the SACSCOC Board of Trustees must either (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 Probation for Good Cause. A Special Committee must be authorized to visit the institution (unless the institution has hosted a Special Committee within the past six months).

The SACSCOC Board of Trustees may continue accreditation and place an institution on Probation for Good Cause when an institution has served two consecutive years on Probation. The Board may extend accreditation for Good Cause for six or twelve months at a time. At the conclusion of that period on Probation for Good Cause, the institution must appear before a Committee on Compliance and Reports of the Board of Trustees at a meeting on the record to provide evidence as to why its period for remedying deficiencies should be extended again for Good Cause. The maximum consecutive time that an institution may be on Probation for Good Cause is two years. The decision to continue accreditation and place an institution on Probation for Good Cause is at the Board's discretion and can only be provided if the institution provides a persuasive case regarding the factors outlined below.

An institution's accreditation may be extended for Good Cause if

1. the institution has demonstrated significant recent accomplishments in addressing non-compliance, **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 SACSCOC Board of Trustees 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 SACSCOC that it is not aware of any other reasons, other than those identified by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, why the institution could not be continued on Probation for Good Cause.

As noted above, an institution may submit monitoring reports for a maximum of four consecutive years, inclusive of the Monitoring period, Warning period, Probation period, or Probation for Good Cause period. In all cases, the institution bears the burden of proof to provide evidence why the SACSCOC Board of Trustees should not remove it from membership.

### **Public Disclosure of Probationary Status or Denial or Removal from Membership**

The institution must inform its constituencies, including Board members, administrators, faculty, staff, students, prospective students, and any other constituencies about the probationary actions of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees and how to contact SACSCOC for further information. SACSCOC will prepare a Disclosure Statement to post on its website and provide the institution with an opportunity to comment. Official institutional comment will be noted with the Disclosure Statement. (See SACSCOC policy, [Disclosure of Accrediting Documents and Actions of SACSCOC](#), for additional information.)

An institution on Probation, Probation for Good Cause or removed from membership must disclose this status wherever it refers to its SACSCOC accreditation. SACSCOC will monitor these disclosures to ensure they are accurate and in keeping with the [Disclosure of Accreditation Documents and Actions of SACSCOC](#) policy. Institutions must submit copies of their disclosure documents no later than (7) business days following receipt of the action letter. SACSCOC will retain this information as part of the institution's record.

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

If an institution seeking reaffirmation of accreditation is judged by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees to be out of compliance with a Core Requirement, its reaffirmation will be denied. If an institution is judged to be significantly

out of compliance with one or more of the Standards, its reaffirmation of accreditation may be denied. When an institution's reaffirmation is denied, the institution will also be placed on sanction. The institution's accreditation may 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 SACSCOC membership at any time, depending on the Board of Trustees' judgment of the seriousness of noncompliance with the *Principles of Accreditation* or with SACSCOC's policies and procedures. Removal from membership, however, usually occurs after persistent or significant noncompliance during a monitoring period or any time an institution has been placed on Probation for Good Cause. A serious instance of noncompliance or repeated instances of noncompliance may result in removal of membership without a monitoring period. If an institution has filed bankruptcy, the SACSCOC Board of Trustees may revoke the institution's accreditation for failure to comply with the *Principles of Accreditation* during the pendency of the bankruptcy.

An institution must be removed from membership if it has not demonstrated compliance with all the Core Requirements and Standards of 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 and placed on Probation for Good Cause, it may be removed from membership at any time but must be removed from membership if it does not demonstrate compliance within the maximum four consecutive years of non-compliance.

When an institution fails to pay its dues by the designated deadline, SACSCOC will assume from this action that the institution no longer wants to maintain its membership or candidacy with SACSCOC. By that action, the institution withdraws from membership or candidacy. The SACSCOC Board of Trustees will take official action on the termination of accreditation. However, if an institution has filed bankruptcy, the Board may not act to revoke accreditation for failure to pay membership fees and dues during the pendency of bankruptcy.

## **Institutional Contingency Teach-out Plan**

In accordance with 34 CFR Section 602.24, notification of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees' action to place an institution on Probation, Probation for Good Cause, withdraw membership, or terminate membership will be accompanied by a request that the institution submit an institutional contingency teach-out plan to SACSCOC for approval. (See SACSCOC's policy [Substantive Change Policy and Procedures](#) for the specific procedures.) In the case of the Board's decision to withdraw or terminate membership, this is applicable if (1) the institution fails to appeal the decision of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees or (2) the institution appeals the Board's decision, and the Appeals Committee rules in favor of the Board. SACSCOC will maintain the institution in accreditation to complete the activities in the teach-out plan or to fulfill the obligations of any teach-out agreement to assist students in transferring or completing their programs for a reasonable period of time, defined as the period of arbitration or legal action following removal of membership.

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

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

In the cases of Warning, Probation, Probation for Good Cause, 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.) SACSCOC will include in its notification to the institution reasons for the imposition of any sanction or for loss of membership.

An action to place an institution on Warning, Probation, or Probation for Good Cause, 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 SACSCOC website, and recorded in the *Annual Reports of SACSCOC*. Actions which are appealable will be accompanied by a statement that SACSCOC's 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 SACSCOC policy [\*Disclosure of Accrediting Documents and Actions of SACSCOC\*](#) is also applicable to these actions. An institution which is removed from membership, denied initial accreditation, or withdraws from membership is ineligible to reapply for membership for 24 months, unless the SACSCOC Board of Trustees rescinds its action.

An institution that has been removed from membership by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees may choose to appeal that decision (see SACSCOC policy [\*The Appeals Procedures of The College Delegate Assembly\*](#)). Should the institution dispute the final action of the Appeals Committee, the institution must submit the dispute to arbitration before bringing any legal action (see SACSCOC policy *Arbitration of Adverse Actions*).

### **Delay of Review Dates**

If an institution is on Probation during the time of its scheduled reaffirmation of accreditation, the President of SACSCOC may act to defer action on reaffirmation pending resolution of the institution's probationary status. Likewise, if an institution is on Warning, Probation, or Probation for Good Cause at the time of its scheduled Fifth-year Interim review, the President of SACSCOC may act to defer the submission of the institution's Fifth-Year Interim Report pending resolution of the institution's status.

#### **Document History**

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