

## APPENDIX B: Glossary of Terms

### A

- Accreditation Committee** The Accreditation Committee visits a candidate institution or an institution seeking separate accreditation to verify compliance with all standards in the *Principles of Accreditation* (except for Standard 7.2 [Quality Enhancement Plan]). The candidate institution is seeking renewal of candidate status or initial membership. An institution may remain in candidacy status for a maximum of four years.
- Accreditation Contact** The Accreditation Contact is the member of the applicant institution's Leadership Team who works closely with SACSCOC staff during review of the application for membership and with the Chair of the Candidacy Committee to prepare for the institution's first on-site review.
- Accreditation Liaison** Each candidate and member institution appoints an Accreditation Liaison to serve as the resource person on campus for SACSCOC accreditation questions and as an institutional contact person for SACSCOC personnel. (A complete description of the responsibilities of the Accreditation Liaison is available at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org) under [Institutional Resources](#).)
- Adverse Action** The Commission defines four actions made by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees as adverse actions: (1) Denial of Candidacy for Initial Accreditation, (2) Removal from Candidacy for Initial Accreditation, (3) Denial of Initial Membership, and (4) Removal from Membership. All four actions are appealable.
- Annual Meeting** Each December, the Commission's College Delegate Assembly business meeting caps a four-day Annual Meeting agenda of pre-session workshops, general sessions, breakout meetings, and roundtable discussions about current issues in higher education and topics related to accreditation processes. (Information about the upcoming Annual Meeting is available at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org) under [Meetings and Events](#).)
- Appealable Action** The Commission defines four decisions made by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees or its standing committees as appealable actions: (1) Denial of Candidacy for Initial Accreditation, (2) Removal from Candidacy for Initial Accreditation, (3) Denial of Initial Membership, and (4) Removal from Membership. (Details of the appeals process can be found in SACSCOC policy, [Appeals Procedures of the College Delegate Assembly](#), available at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)

- Appeals Committee** Consisting of 12 persons who have served on the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, the Appeals Committee is elected by the College Delegate Assembly to enable applicant, candidate, and member institutions to appeal adverse decisions taken by the SACSCOC Board. (Information on the membership of the committee and its operating procedures is available in SACSCOC policy [Appeals Procedures of the College Delegate Assembly](#), available at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)
- Applicant Institution** After a prospective member institution submits to the Commission an Application for Membership, it is identified on the SACSCOC website as an applicant institution. An applicant institution has no formal status with the Commission on Colleges, nor does submission of an Application for Membership imply that the institution will attain candidacy or membership.
- Application for Membership** The first document submitted by institutions as they begin the process of securing initial accreditation, the Application for Membership describes institutional characteristics in Part A (history, control, organization, educational programs, methods of delivery, enrollment, faculty qualifications, library/learning resources, financial resources, and physical resources) and documents compliance with selected standards of the *Principles of Accreditation* in Part B (all Core Requirements, Standard 6.2, Section 7, and several other standards as identified in Appendix A of this *Resource Manual*). (More information is available at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org) under [Application Information](#).)
- Approval of Substantive Change** Some substantive changes filed by institutions require notification and approval prior to implementation of the change. When SACSCOC takes positive action (by its Board of Trustees) on an institution's prospectus or application for substantive change following notification in accord with SACSCOC policy, it has approved the substantive change and the institution can initiate the substantive change. The policy and procedures for reporting and review of institutional substantive change are outlined in the SACSCOC policy [Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions](#).
- Articulation Agreement** An agreement among institutions to accept transfer credits from one institution(s) by the other institution(s). Articulation agreements of a SACSCOC institution are covered by Standard 10.7 (Evaluating and awarding academic credit) of the *Principles of Accreditation*.
- Authorization of a Candidacy Committee Visit** The first official action in the SACSCOC procedure for securing initial accreditation is the authorization of a Candidacy Committee visit, which results from a determination that the revised Application for Membership appears to document compliance with the subset of standards in that application. (More details are in SACSCOC policy [Accreditation Procedures for Applicant Institutions](#).)

## B

**Branch Campus** A branch campus is an instructional site located geographically apart and independent of the main campus of the institution. A location is independent of the main campus if the location is (1) permanent in nature; (2) offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, diploma, certificate, or other recognized educational credential; (3) has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and (4) has its own budgetary and hiring authority. 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. (For more information on branch campuses, see SACSCOC Policy [Separate Accreditation for Units of a Member Institution.](#))

## C

**Candidacy Committee** The Candidacy Committee visits an applicant institution to verify compliance with the selected standards and requirements addressed in the Application for Membership. The applicant institution is seeking candidate status. (More details are in SACSCOC policy [Accreditation Procedures for Applicant Institutions.](#))

**Candidacy Status** An institution seeking initial accreditation is granted candidacy status upon recommendation of the Committee on Compliance and Reports and subsequent action by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees indicating that the institution has demonstrated compliance with the requirements addressed in the Application for Membership and that this compliance has been verified by a Candidacy Committee during a visit to the institution. An institution may remain in candidacy status for a maximum of four years with renewal within two years of the date when it was granted candidacy. (More information is available at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org) under [Application Information.](#))

- Change of legal status, governance, control, or form** For the purpose of accreditation and in accord with the SACSCOC policy on substantive change, an institution must seek prior approval of any of the following: a change of corporate form, governance structure, or conversion, including, but not limited to, change from limited partnership to corporation, from limited liability corporation to corporation, from a not-for profit corporation to a for-profit corporation, a private to a public, a not-for profit corporation controlled by members to one controlled by its Board of Directors, or a significant change in the size of the institution’s governing board. (Further information on consolidations is available in SACSCOC policy [Mergers, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisitions, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status](#) at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)
- Change of ownership** For the purpose of accreditation and in accord with SACSCOC policy on substantive change, an institution must seek prior approval for the sale or transfer to, or acquisition by, a new owner of all, or a substantial portion, of the institution’s assets, or the assets of a branch campus or site. (Further information on consolidations is available in SACSCOC policy [Mergers, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisitions, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status](#) at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)
- Coherent Evidence** Coherent evidence of an institution’s level of compliance with SACSCOC standards is orderly and logical and consistent with other patterns of evidence presented. (See Part II of the *Handbook for Institutions Seeking Reaffirmation of Accreditation* for information on documenting compliance.)
- College Delegate Assembly** Composed of one voting representative from each member institution, the College Delegate Assembly elects the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, the Appeals Committee, and representatives to the SACS Board, and approves revisions to the accrediting standards and the dues schedule. (See Appendix E of this *Manual*. Further information on the authority of the College Delegate Assembly is available in SACSCOC policy [Standing Rules: SACSCOC Board of Trustees, Executive Council, and the College Delegate Assembly](#) at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)
- Combination Degree** A combination degree is a situation where the same institution awards more than one degree from an overlapping course of study. Combination degrees often allow a shorter time for completion due to the “double-counting” of some coursework. Where this occurs, institutions have an obligation to explain how the quality and integrity of each degree involved is maintained. See Standard 9.2 (Program length) (CR) in this *Manual* for more detail.

- Committees on Compliance and Reports (C&R Committees)** Standing committees of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, the Committees on Compliance and Reports (C&R Committees) review Applications for Membership, reports prepared by visiting committees, and the institutional responses to those reports, and recommend action on those accreditation issues to the Executive Council. (See Appendix E of this *Manual*. Further information on the composition and duties of C&R Committees is available in SACSCOC policy [Standing Rules: SACSCOC Board of Trustees, Executive Council, and the College Delegate Assembly](#) at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)
- Complaint against the Commission** A formal written document submitted by a student, employee, or others against a Commission staff member, agency representative, the President of SACSCOC, the Commission, or a member of its Board of Trustees, alleging failure to follow Commission policy, evidence of existing bias against an institution, evidence of a conflict of interest, failure to attend to allegations of unfair treatment by a staff member against an institution, and other issues. (Further information on complaints is available in SACSCOC policy [Complaint Procedures Against SACSCOC or Its Accredited Institutions](#) at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)
- Complaint against an Institution** A formal written document submitted by a student, employee, or others against a member or candidate institution alleging possible noncompliance with a standard of the *Principles of Accreditation*. (Further information on complaints is available in SACSCOC policy [Complaint Procedures Against SACSCOC or Its Accredited Institutions](#) at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)
- Compliance** A finding of compliance in a report resulting from committee review indicates that an institution has documented that it meets the expectations set forth in a standard or requirement in the *Principles of Accreditation*. Reports written by committees require judgments about the compliance or noncompliance of the institution with all of the standards relevant to the review; each judgment is summarized in a short narrative that details how the institution meets or fails to meet the standard or requirement. (See Parts III and V of the *Handbook for Institutions Seeking Reaffirmation of Accreditation*.)
- Compliance Certification** The primary document prepared by candidate institutions for Accreditation Committees (when seeking initial accreditation) and Off-Site Reaffirmation Committees (when member institutions are seeking reaffirmation of accreditation), the Compliance Certification presents narrative arguments and appropriate documentation supporting those narratives for compliance with all standards of the *Principles of Accreditation* except Standard 7.2 (Quality Enhancement Plan), which is submitted separately as part of a reaffirmation review. (The template for the Compliance Certification is available at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org) under [Institutional Resources](#) and also under [Application Information](#).)

**Compliance Components** Embedded in the wording of the standards of the *Principles of Accreditation*, the compliance components are the multiple discrete issues that must be addressed for each standard. These components are frequently signaled by alphanumeric letter, numbers, commas, and the use of compound modifiers. When writing a narrative for a standard, all compliance components should be addressed.

**Comprehensive Standards** Prior to the 2018 edition of the *Principles of Accreditation*, some standards were identified as Comprehensive Standards. This distinction was removed in the 2018 edition.

**Consolidation** For the purpose of accreditation and in accord with SACSCOC policy, a consolidation is the combination or transfer of the assets of at least two distinct institutions (corporations) to that of a newly formed institution (corporation). An example includes two colleges consolidating to form a new institution. For purposes of accreditation, when an institution consolidates with another, SACSCOC uses the same review process as that with a change of ownership, acquisitions, and merger. (Further information on consolidations is available in SACSCOC policy [Mergers, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisitions, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status](#) at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)

**Consortial Relationship** A consortial relationship typically is a type of cooperative academic arrangement in which two or more institutions share the responsibility of developing and delivering courses and programs that meet mutually agreed-upon standards of academic quality.

**Continued Candidacy** An institution is continued in candidacy upon recommendation of the Committee on Compliance and Reports and subsequent action by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees that the institution (1) has failed to demonstrate adequate compliance with the applicable standards of the *Principles of Accreditation* and/or (2) has not been in operation through at least one complete degree program cycle and consequently has not graduated at least one class at the level of the highest degree offered by the institution. Furthermore, this failure to meet the requirements for initial accreditation has been verified by the first Accreditation Committee that visited the institution. (More details are in SACSCOC policy [Accreditation Procedures for Applicant Institutions](#) at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)

**Contractual Agreement** A contractual agreement typically is a type of cooperative academic arrangement in which an institution enters an agreement with another institution or service provider for receipt or delivery of courses/programs or portions of courses or programs delivered by another institution or service provider.

- Cooperative Academic Arrangements** Cooperative academic arrangements are agreements by institutions accredited by SACSCOC and other parties where the SACSCOC-accredited institution records credits on its transcript as its own without delivering all of the educational process for those credits. Cooperative academic arrangements require notification and a copy of the signed agreement be submitted prior to initiation. The SACSCOC-accredited institution has full responsibility for the quality and integrity of the courses and/or programs offered through such arrangements. These arrangements are covered by Standard 10.8 (Cooperative academic arrangements) of the *Principles of Accreditation*.
- Core Requirements** Basic, broad-based, foundational requirements, the Core Requirements establish a threshold of development required of all institutions seeking initial accreditation or reaffirmation. Core Requirements are designated with a “(CR)” designation following the standard, and are listed in Appendix A of this document.
- Correspondence Education** Correspondence education is a formal educational process under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor. Interaction between the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student; courses are typically self-paced. (See SACSCOC policy [Distance and Correspondence Education](#) at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)
- Credit Hour** For the purpose of accreditation and in accord with federal regulations, a credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates (1) not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours out-of-class student work each week for approximately 15 weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or 10 to 12 weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or (2) at least an equivalent amount of work as required outlined in item 1 above for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours. (Further information on the definition of credit hour is available in SACSCOC policy [Credit Hours](#) at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)
- Current Evidence** Information that supports an assessment of the institution as it exists now is current evidence of an institution’s level of compliance with SACSCOC standards and requirements. (See Part II of the *Handbook for Institutions Seeking Reaffirmation of Accreditation* for information on documenting compliance.)

## D

- Degree completion program** Typically, a degree completion program is one designed for a nontraditional undergraduate population such as working adults who have completed some college-level coursework but have not achieved a baccalaureate degree. Students in such programs may transfer in credit from courses taken previously and may receive credit for experiential learning. Courses in degree completion programs are often offered in an accelerated format or meet during evening and weekend hours, or may be offered via distance learning technologies. An institution's initial degree completion program is considered to be a substantive change.
- Degree Level** See "Level."
- Degree Programs** See "Educational Program."
- Denial of Authorization of a Candidacy Committee Visit** An institution is denied authorization of a Candidacy Committee visit upon recommendation of the Committee on Compliance and Reports and subsequent action by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees indicating that the institution has failed to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of the Application for Membership. (More details are in SACSCOC policy [Accreditation Procedures for Applicant Institutions](http://www.sacscoc.org) at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)
- Denial of Candidacy Status** An institution is denied candidacy status upon recommendation of the Committee on Compliance and Reports and subsequent action by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees indicating that the institution has failed to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of the Application for Membership and that this lack of compliance has been verified by a Candidacy Committee during a visit to the institution. Denial of candidacy status is an appealable action. (More details are in SACSCOC policy [Accreditation Procedures for Applicant Institutions](http://www.sacscoc.org) at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)
- Denial of Initial Accreditation** An institution is denied initial accreditation upon recommendation of the Committee on Compliance and Reports and subsequent action by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees that the institution (1) has failed to demonstrate adequate compliance with the applicable standards of the *Principles of Accreditation* and/or (2) has not been in operation through at least one complete degree program cycle and consequently has not graduated at least one class at the level of the highest degree offered by the institution. Furthermore, this failure to meet the requirements for initial accreditation has been verified by the second Accreditation Committee that visited the institution. Denial of initial accreditation is an appealable action. (More details are in SACSCOC policy [Accreditation Procedures for Applicant Institutions](http://www.sacscoc.org) at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)

**Denial of Reaffirmation** An institution is denied reaffirmation upon recommendation of the Committee on Compliance and Reports and subsequent action by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees that, during its decennial review, the institution (1) has failed to comply with any of the Core Requirements, (2) demonstrates significant noncompliance with other standards of the *Principles*, or (3) does not comply with SACSCOC policies. Denial of reaffirmation is accompanied by a sanction. Denial of reaffirmation is not an appealable action. (Further information is available in SACSCOC policy [Sanctions, Denial of Reaffirmation, and Removal from Membership](#) at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)

**Distance Education** In conjunction with the federal definition, SACSCOC defines distance education as a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) in a course occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. A distance education course may use the Internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or video cassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, if used as part of the distance learning course or program. (See SACSCOC policy [Distance and Correspondence Education](#) at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)

**Dual-Degree Program** A dual degree (or a dual academic award) is one whereby students study at two or more institutions, and each institution awards a separate program completion credential bearing only its own name, seal, and signature. (See SACSCOC policy [Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards](#) at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)

**Dual-Enrollment Program** A dual-enrollment program (or dual credit program) is one where a high school student earns college credit for courses that also satisfy high school requirements. Higher education institutions awarding college credit to high school students are fully responsible for the quality and integrity of that credit.

**Dues** Member and candidate institutions pay annual dues to SACSCOC based on a fixed cost set by the Executive Council, plus a percentage of the institution's full-time equivalent enrollment, plus a percentage of the E & G expenses of an institution, if the E & G expenses exceed four million dollars. Institutions are billed in April for receipt by June 30 of that same year. (See SACSCOC policy [Dues, Fees, and Expenses](#) at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)

## E

- Educational Program** An educational program is a coherent set of courses leading to a credential (degree, diploma, or certificate) awarded by the institution.
- Executive Council** Composed of thirteen members, the Executive Council is the executive arm of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees and functions on behalf of the Board and the College Delegate Assembly between meetings. (See Appendix E in this *Manual*. Further information on the composition and selection of the Executive Council and its duties is available in SACSCOC policy [Standing Rules: SACSCOC Board of Trustees, Executive Council, and the College Delegate Assembly](#) at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)
- Exit Conference** Committee visits end with a brief meeting between the Committee and the institution's leadership, the Exit Conference, at which time the Committee orally presents an overview of its draft report with emphasis on its findings of compliance/noncompliance. (See Part V of the *Handbook for Institutions Seeking Reaffirmation of Accreditation*.)

## F

- Faculty Qualifications** Standard 6.2.a (Faculty qualifications) of the *Principles of Accreditation* requires that the institution justifies and documents the qualifications of its faculty members.
- Federal Requirements** Prior to the 2018 edition of the *Principles of Accreditation*, some standards were identified as Federal Requirements. This distinction was removed in the 2018 edition. However, Appendix A of this *Resource Manual* identifies standards of the *Principles* that must be reviewed on site as part of SACSCOC's obligations as an accreditor recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.
- Fees** The Commission assesses fees to institutions for a variety of activities: application, reaffirmation of accreditation, substantive change, special reviews, and advisory visits. As part of the reaffirmation process, member institutions pay a set fee for the Off-Site Review, as well as the actual expenses incurred by members of the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee. (See SACSCOC policy [Dues, Fees, and Expenses](#) at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)
- Fifth-Year Follow-Up** Submitted five years prior to an institution's reaffirmation review, a Fifth-Year Follow-Up Report, also called an Additional Report to the Fifth-Year Interim Report, addresses accreditation issues identified for verification of continued compliance during a prior meeting of the Committee on Compliance and Reports.

**Fifth-Year Interim Report** Submitted five years prior to an institution's reaffirmation review, a Fifth-Year Interim Report includes (1) a modified Compliance Certification that addresses only those federal expectations that are integrated in the various requirements and standards of the *Principles of Accreditation*; (2) an Impact Report on the QEP; (3) an [Institutional Summary Form Prepared for Commission Reviews](#); where applicable, (4) a report on off-campus sites initiated since the institution's last reaffirmation but not reviewed; and (5) a report on issues identified for verification of continued compliance during the last reaffirmation review. (See "Fifth-Year Interim Review" in the [Institutional Resources](#) section at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)

**Focused Report** A component of the process for reaffirmation of accreditation, a Focused Report addresses the findings of the Off-Site Review Committee. (Further information about the Focused Report is available in the *Handbook for Institutions Seeking Reaffirmation of Accreditation*.)

## G

**General Education** Courses in general education introduce undergraduate students to the basic content and methodology of the principal areas of knowledge: humanities and the fine arts, the social and behavioral sciences, and the natural sciences and mathematics.

**Geographically Separate** A geographically separate site is an instructional site or branch campus that is located physically apart from the main campus of the institution. This definition is used in the application of provisions of the SACSCOC policy [Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions](#).

**Good Cause** If a member institution has not remedied deficiencies at the conclusion of its two-year monitoring period, the SACSCOC Board of Trustees must either remove the institution from membership or continue accreditation for good cause; an institution may be continued for Good Cause only if it has met all of the following three conditions: it has (1) demonstrated significant recent accomplishments in addressing noncompliance; (2) documented that it has the "potential" to remedy all deficiencies within the extended period; and (3) provided assurance to the Board that it is not aware of any other reasons why the institution could not be continued in accreditation. Good Cause must be accompanied with Probation. (For further information, see SACSCOC policy [Sanctions, Denial of Reaffirmation, and Removal from Membership](#) at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)

**Good Practices** A SACSCOC good practice is a commonly accepted practice within the higher education community designed to enhance institutional quality. (See page 5 of this *Manual*. Good practices are posted in the [Policies & Publications](#) section of [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)

**Governance** When the Commission refers to the governance of an institution, it means one of three types of control: (1) public, (2) private, not-for-profit, and (3) private, for-profit. (See also Types of Institutions.)

**Guidelines** A SACSCOC guideline is an advisory statement designed to assist institutions in fulfilling accreditation requirements. (See page 5 of this *Manual*. Guidelines are posted in the [Policies & Publications](#) section of [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)

## I

**Impact Report for the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)** Submitted as part of the Fifth-Year Interim Report five years prior to an institution's reaffirmation review, the Impact Report demonstrates the extent to which the QEP has affected outcomes related to student learning and/or student success

**Initial Accreditation** An institution is awarded initial accreditation upon recommendation of the Committee on Compliance and Reports and subsequent action by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees that the institution has demonstrated compliance with the applicable standards of the *Principles of Accreditation* and this compliance has been verified by an Accreditation Committee during a visit to the institution, that it has been in operation through at least one complete degree program cycle, and that it has graduated at least one class at the level of the highest degree offered by the institution. The date of initial accreditation is the time of action by the Board of Trustees. (More details are in SACSCOC policy [Accreditation Procedures for Applicant Institutions](#) at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)

**Initial Application for Membership** The initial Application for Membership (addressing institutional characteristics in Part A and documenting compliance with the relevant standards in Part B) is the first document submitted by the applicant institution after participation in a Pre-Applicant Workshop. (More information is available at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org) under [Application Information](#).)

**Institute on Quality Enhancement and Accreditation** Each summer, SACSCOC offers a three-day Institute on Quality Enhancement and Accreditation to address issues related to the assessment of student learning and the development of a QEP. (Programs for the upcoming institute and highlights of recent institutes are available at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org) under [Meetings and Events](#).)

**Institutional Effectiveness** Institutional effectiveness is the systematic, explicit, and documented process of measuring performance against mission in all aspects of an institution.

**Institutional Effectiveness Workshop for Pre-Applicants** All attendees at the Workshop for Pre-Applicants are invited to attend a one-day Institutional Effectiveness Workshop for Pre-Applicants, which is designed to illustrate how to write adequate narratives and appropriately document compliance with the SACSCOC requirements and standards that have historically proven most difficult for applicants to address—Section 7 (Institutional Planning and Effectiveness) and Section 8 (Student Achievement).

**Institutional Profile** Each year, the SACSCOC office collects information about candidate and member institutions. The Institutional Profile requesting information about finances is due in July; the Institutional Profile requesting information about enrollment is due in January.

**Institutional Publication** In this *Manual*, the term “institutional publication” refers to formal print materials of the institution, such as catalogs and faculty handbooks, as well as electronic materials, such as websites.

**Integrity** The honesty, sincerity, and sound moral principle embedded in the concept of integrity serve as the foundation of the relationship between the SACSCOC and its member, candidate, and applicant institutions. (See Section 1 in this *Manual*.)

## J

**Joint Degree Program** A joint degree program (or joint academic award) is one whereby students study at two or more institutions and are awarded a single program completion credential bearing the names, seals, and signatures of each of the participating institutions. (See SACSCOC policy [Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards](#) at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)

## L

**Last Reaffirmation** The date of an institution’s last reaffirmation identifies the year that the most recent comprehensive review of the institution’s compliance with SACSCOC standards was acted upon by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

**Leadership Team** The Leadership Team is the small group at the institution that coordinates and manages the internal process for developing appropriate documents and overseeing preparations for the reviews that are required for initial accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation. (See Part I of *Handbook for Institutions Seeking Reaffirmation of Accreditation*.)

**Level** Classified by SACSCOC according to the highest degree offered, member institutions are designated as operating at one of the following six levels:  
Level I Associate  
Level II Baccalaureate  
Level III Master  
Level IV Education Specialist  
Level V Doctorate (3 or fewer)  
Level VI Doctorate (4 or more)

**Loss of Membership** See “Removal from Membership.”

## M

**Main Campus** An institution’s main campus is the street address used for the institution as a whole. The main campus is typically the campus where the central administrative offices are located.

**Meeting on the Record** Committees on Compliance and Reports meet with representatives of institutions in a meeting on the record, which is an interview with a recorded transcript, when there is a significant possibility that Commission action could include appealable actions (denial of candidacy for initial accreditation, removal from candidacy for initial accreditation, denial of initial membership, and removal from membership), or when such a meeting is needed to provide more information on a complex case. (Further information is available in SACSCOC policy [Administrative Procedures for the Meetings of the Committees on Compliance and Reports](#) available at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)

**Merger** “Merger” means the acquisition by one institution of another institution’s assets. An example includes an institution accredited by SACSCOC acquiring the assets of a non-accredited institution. For purposes of accreditation, when an institution merges with another, SACSCOC uses the same review process as that with a change of ownership, acquisitions, and consolidation. (Further information on mergers is available in SACSCOC policy [Mergers, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisitions, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status](#) at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)

**Mission Statement** The mission statement is a comprehensive statement addressing all aspects of institutional function. It is important that the institutional mission statement be formally adopted, published, implemented, and made available to all the constituencies of the institution and to the general public. Because the mission statement describes what the institution does, it is the foundation for planning and effectiveness processes. These processes validate that the institution does what it claims and evaluates how well it fulfills its mission statement. The mission statement thus provides the basis and context for evaluating institutional effectiveness. SACSCOC uses the term “mission” throughout its standards to be consistent in representing other terminology that may mean the same, such as purpose or vision.

**Modified Prospectus** A modified prospectus can be submitted in lieu of a full prospectus for certain designated substantive changes. When a modified prospectus is acceptable, SACSCOC specifies requested information from the institution. (For more information see SACSCOC policy [Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions at www.sacscoc.org.](#))

**Monitoring Report** A Monitoring Report provides additional documentation of compliance for those standards of the *Principles of Accreditation* identified by the Committee on Compliance and Reports following review of a committee’s findings as issues for which full compliance has not yet been documented. (Additional information is available in SACSCOC policy [Reports Submitted for Committee or Commission Review](#) available at [www.sacscoc.org.](#))

**Multi-campus Institution** A multi-campus institution is accredited as one unit with all campuses included in that accreditation. Such campuses are permanent and usually have a core faculty and substantive administrative and academic support systems. A multi-campus institution may have a central administrative unit—a unit that administers the entire institution—with all instruction taking place on the individual campuses.

**Multiple-Level Governing Structure** The governing board of an institution typically has legal authority and responsibility for the institution’s mission, its financial stability, and institutional policies. When the governing board does not retain sole legal authority and operating control, the institution has a multiple-level governing structure, and needs to clearly outline the active control of these functions by other entities and how the multiple levels of governance relate to the governing board’s responsibilities pertaining to institutional mission, financial operations, and/or institutional policies. See Standard 4.3 (*Multiple-level governing structure*) in this *Manual*.

## N

- National Accrediting Agencies** National accrediting agencies (such as the Rabbinical and Talmudic Schools Accreditation Commission and the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools) focus on specific types of institutions wherever they are located. Normally, there are single-purpose institutions (e.g., career education, religious education). (See Part I of the *Handbook for Institutions Seeking Reaffirmation of Accreditation*.)
- Negative Actions** The Commission defines negative actions taken by SACSCOC Board of Trustees as the following: place or continue on warning; place or continue on probation; and continue accreditation for good cause and place or continue on probation.
- Next Reaffirmation** The date for the next reaffirmation of a member institution is the year in which the SACSCOC Board of Trustees will act on the results of the next comprehensive review of the institution's compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation*. Between reaffirmations, other committees (such as Substantive Change Committees) may visit the campus to review the institution's compliance with a portion of the SACSCOC standards.
- Noncompliance** A finding of noncompliance in a report written by a visiting committee indicates that an institution has failed to document that it meets a standard in the *Principles of Accreditation*. Reports written by both Off-Site Reaffirmation Committees and On-Site (all types) Committees require judgments about the compliance or noncompliance of the institution with all standards relevant to the review; each judgment is summarized in a short narrative that details how the institution meets or fails to meet the standard or requirement. In reports written by visiting committees, narratives that detail findings of noncompliance include recommendations, which formally cite the lack of compliance with a standard or requirement. (See Parts III and V of the *Handbook for Institutions Seeking Reaffirmation of Accreditation*.)
- Notification of Substantive Change** For some types of substantive changes, prior to initiation of the change, the institution must first submit a letter from its CEO, or his/her designated representative, to the SACSCOC President summarizing the proposed change and providing the intended implementation date. Some types of changes also require prior approval. The policy and procedures for reporting and review of institutional substantive change are outlined in the SACSCOC policy [Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions](#).

## O

- Objective Evidence** Objective evidence of the institution's level of compliance with SACSCOC standards and requirements is based on observable data and information. (See Part II of the *Handbook for Institutions Seeking Reaffirmation of Accreditation* for information on documenting compliance.)
- Off-Campus Instructional Site** An off-campus instructional site is a teaching site located geographically apart from the main campus. A site at which an institution provides electronic delivery and where students go to access the support services needed is also considered an off-campus instructional site. The site is not independent of the institution's main campus.
- Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee** Composed of a chair and evaluators for finance, institutional effectiveness, governance and administration, academic and student support services, library and learning support services, and two or more evaluators for educational programs, the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee completes the first review of the Compliance Certification developed by a member institution seeking reaffirmation of accreditation. (See Part III of the *Handbook for Institutions Seeking Reaffirmation of Accreditation*.)
- On-Site Reaffirmation Committee** Composed of a minimum of seven members (the chair and evaluators in the areas of organization/governance, faculty, educational programs, student support services, institutional effectiveness, and the QEP), the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee visits a member institution seeking reaffirmation of accreditation to complete the review of the standards begun by the Off-Site Review Committee and to review the QEP and Focused Report. (See Part V the *Handbook for Institutions Seeking Reaffirmation of Accreditation*.)

## P

- Policy** A SACSCOC policy is a required course of action to be followed by the Commission's Board of Trustees or its member or candidate institutions. (See page 5 of this *Manual*. Policies are posted in the [Policies & Publications](#) section of [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)
- Position Statement** A SACSCOC position statement examines an issue facing the Commission's membership, describes appropriate approaches, and states the Commission's stance on the issue. (See page 5 of this *Manual*. Position statements are posted in the [Policies & Publications](#) section of [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)

**The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations For Quality Enhancement** The accreditation requirements of SACSCOC that must be met by all applicant, candidate, and member institutions (private for-profit, private not-for-profit, and public) are published in the *Principles of Accreditation*. These requirements apply to all institutional programs and services, wherever located or however delivered.

**Principle of Integrity** The Principle of Integrity (Standard 1.1 in the *Principles of Accreditation*) embodies SACSCOC’s expectations that integrity govern the operation of all institutions and that institutions make decisions consistent with the spirit of integrity. Failure to adhere to the integrity principle may result in a loss of accreditation or loss of candidacy.

**Probation** The more serious of two SACSCOC-imposed sanctions, probation is usually, but not necessarily, invoked by the SACSCOC as the last step before an institution is removed from membership. The reasons for the imposition of probation can be found under “Sanctions.” The maximum consecutive time that an institution may be on probation is two years. (See SACSCOC policy [Sanctions, Denial of Reaffirmation, and Removal from Membership](#) at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)

**Procedure One** Procedure One of the substantive change policy is followed by member institutions prior to implementing substantive changes requiring approval, and includes the development of a prospectus or application. Procedure One applies to changes such as the following: (1) curriculum: initiating programs at a lower level, expanding at the institution’s current degree level if the new programs constitute a significant departure from current programs, initiating degree completion programs, changing significantly the length of a program, entering into a teach-out agreement or closing an institution, and initiating a joint degree program with another institution not accredited by the SACSCOC; (2) location: initiating an additional off-campus site for site-based/classroom group instruction offering at least 50 percent of the credits toward an educational program, and initiating or relocating a branch campus; and (3) delivery system: initiating distance learning courses and programs by which students can earn at least 50 percent of a program’s credits offered electronically. Substantive change is prohibited during the process for achieving initial accreditation. (A full list of substantive changes that require both notification and approval and directions for developing a prospectus can be found in SACSCOC policy [Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions](#) available at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)

**Procedure Two** Procedure Two of the substantive change policy is followed by member institutions prior to implementing substantive changes requiring only notification. Procedure Two applies to changes such as the following: (1) curriculum: repackaging of an existing approved curriculum to create a new lower degree level; (2) location: initiating an additional off-campus site for site-based/classroom group instruction offering at least 25–49 percent of the credits toward an educational program or relocating an approved off-campus site; and (3) delivery system: initiating distance learning courses and programs by which students can earn 25–49 percent of a program’s credits offered electronically, or initiating programs/courses delivered through contractual agreement or consortium. Substantive change is prohibited during the process for achieving initial accreditation. (A full list of substantive changes that require both notification and approval and directions for developing a prospectus can be found in SACSCOC policy [Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions](#) available at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)

**Procedure Three** Procedure Three of the substantive change policy is followed by member institutions prior to closing of the institution, an off-campus instructional site or branch campus, or a program at the institution. Procedure Three outlines the requirements for approval of a teach-out plan and development of teach-out agreements. (See SACSCOC policy [Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions](#) available at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)

**Programmatic Accrediting Agencies** Programmatic accrediting agencies (such as those for dentistry and for dance) are also called specialized accrediting agencies. They focus on discipline-specific educational programs and are not geographically restricted. (See Appendix E of this *Manual*.)

## Q

**Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)** Required of all member institutions undergoing reaffirmation of accreditation, the QEP is a carefully designed and focused course of action derived from the institution’s existing planning and evaluation processes that addresses a well-defined issue directly related to enhancing specific student learning outcomes and/or student success. Applicant and candidate institutions do not prepare a QEP during the process for initial accreditation. [See Standard 7.2 (*Quality Enhancement Plan*) of this *Manual*.]

## R

- Reaffirmation of Accreditation** A process that involves a collective analysis and judgment by the institution’s internal constituencies, an informed review by peers external to the institution, and a reasoned decision by the elected members of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, reaffirmation of accreditation ensures that member institutions maintain continuing compliance with Commission policies and with the *Principles of Accreditation*. An institution must be reaffirmed five years after it gains initial accreditation and every ten years thereafter.
- Recommendation** A recommendation is a formal statement written by an evaluation committee of SACSCOC indicating an institution’s lack of compliance with a standard in the *Principles of Accreditation*. The Candidacy Committee and the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee are the only SACSCOC committees that do not write recommendations (if appropriate).
- Referral Report** A Referral Report provides additional documentation of compliance for those standards identified by the Committee on Fifth-Year Interim Reports following submission of an institution’s Fifth-Year Interim Report and the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Impact Report as issues for which full compliance has not yet been documented. The Referral Report is forwarded to the Committees on Compliance and Reports for action. (Additional information is available in SACSCOC policy [Reports Submitted for Committee or Commission Review](#) available at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)
- Regional Accrediting Agencies** The seven regional accrediting agencies within the six geographic regions of the United States review the entire organization, not just the education programs, for institutions within their geographic service area. (See Part I of the *Handbook for Institutions Seeking Reaffirmation of Accreditation*.)
- Relevant Evidence** When the evidence directly addresses the standard and provides the basis for the institution’s argument for compliance, it is relevant evidence of an institution’s level of compliance with SACSCOC standards. (See Part II of the *Handbook for Institutions Seeking Reaffirmation of Accreditation* for information on documenting compliance.)
- Reliable Evidence** Evidence that can be consistently interpreted is reliable evidence of an institution’s level of compliance with SACSCOC standards. (See Part II of the *Handbook for Institutions Seeking Reaffirmation of Accreditation* for information on documenting compliance.)

- Removal from Candidacy** An institution is removed from candidacy upon recommendation of the Committee on Compliance and Reports and subsequent action by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees that the institution has failed to demonstrate compliance with the Core Requirements and/or has failed to provide strong evidence that it is making adequate progress towards complying with the other standards in the *Principles of Accreditation*. Removal from candidacy is an appealable action. (More details are in SACSCOC policy [Accreditation Procedures for Applicant Institutions](#) at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)
- Removal from Membership** An institution is removed from membership upon recommendation of the Committee on Compliance and Reports and subsequent action by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees that the institution has failed to demonstrate compliance with the Core Requirements (including the Principle of Integrity), other standards in the *Principles of Accreditation*, or has failed to comply with SACSCOC policy. Removal from membership is an appealable action. (See SACSCOC policy [Sanctions, Denial of Reaffirmation, and Removal from Membership](#) at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)
- Report of the Accreditation Committee** Prepared by the Accreditation Committee to record their on-site findings of compliance and noncompliance with the applicable standards of the *Principles of Accreditation*, the Report of the Accreditation Committee is considered by the Committee on Compliance and Reports when it determines whether to recommend initial accreditation for a candidate institution. (The template for this report is available at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org) under [Committee Resources](#).)
- Report of the Candidacy Committee** Prepared by the Candidacy Committee to record their on-site findings of compliance and noncompliance with all Core Requirements and several additional standards, the Report of the Candidacy Committee is considered by the Committee on Compliance and Reports when it determines whether to recommend the granting of candidacy status to an applicant institution. (The template for this report is available at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org) under [Committee Resources](#).)
- Report of the Reaffirmation Committee** Begun by the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee and completed by the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee to record findings of compliance and noncompliance with all requirements and standards in the *Principles of Accreditation*, the Report of the Reaffirmation Committee is reviewed by the Committee on Compliance and Reports when it determines whether to recommend reaffirmation of accreditation for a member institution. (The template for this report is available at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org) under [Committee Resources](#).)

<b>Report of the Special Committee</b>	Prepared by the Special Committee to record on-site findings of compliance and noncompliance with the applicable standards, the Report of the Special Committee is reviewed by the Committee on Compliance and Reports when it determines whether to recommend continuation of accreditation for a member institution. (The template for this report is available at <a href="http://www.sacscoc.org">www.sacscoc.org</a> under <a href="#">Committee Resources</a> , although it should be noted that this report template is almost always tailored to better match the issues under review by the Special Committee.)
<b>Report of the Substantive Change Committee</b>	Prepared by the Substantive Change Committee to record on-site findings of compliance and noncompliance with the applicable standards, the Report of the Substantive Change Committee is reviewed by the Committee on Compliance and Reports when it determines whether to recommend continuation of accreditation for a member institution. (The templates for various substantive change reports are available at <a href="http://www.sacscoc.org">www.sacscoc.org</a> under <a href="#">Committee Resources</a> .)
<b>Representative Evidence</b>	Not indicative of an isolated case, representative evidence of an institution's level of compliance with SACSCOC standards reflects a larger body of knowledge. (See Part II of the <i>Handbook for Institutions Seeking Reaffirmation of Accreditation</i> .)
<b>Response to the Visiting Committee Report</b>	A Response to the Visiting Committee Report addresses recommendations written by visiting committees by providing updated or additional documentation of compliance. (Additional information is available in SACSCOC policy <a href="#">Reports Submitted for Committee or Commission Review</a> available at <a href="http://www.sacscoc.org">www.sacscoc.org</a> .)
<b>Revised Application for Membership</b>	After the Leadership Team from the applicant institution has met with SACSCOC staff to discuss the staff analysis of the initial Application for Membership, the institution is invited to rework weak standards of the original document and submit a revised Application for Membership. The decision whether to authorize a Candidacy Committee visit will be based on this revised document. (More information is available at <a href="http://www.sacscoc.org">www.sacscoc.org</a> under <a href="#">Application Information</a> .)

## S

<b>SACS</b>	A private, nonprofit, voluntary organization, SACS (the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) comprises two separately incorporated accrediting entities: <a href="#">SACSCOC</a> , which accredits higher education degree-granting institutions, and SACSCASI (a division of a larger group known as <a href="#">AdvancEd</a> ), which accredits elementary, middle, and secondary schools. SACS itself now has no accreditation function. (See Appendix E of this <i>Manual</i> .)
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**SACSCOC** One of two separately incorporated entities of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, known as SACSCOC, is the regional body for the accreditation of degree-granting institutions of higher education in eleven Southern states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. SACSCOC also accredits international institutions of higher education. (See Appendix E of this *Manual*.)

**SACSCOC Board of Trustees** Composed of 77 elected members, the SACSCOC Board of Trustees recommends changes to the accrediting standards, authorizes special visits, takes final action on the accreditation status of institutions, nominates individuals to serve on the SACSCOC Board, elects the Executive Council, appoints ad hoc study committees, and approves policies and procedures. (See Appendix E of this *Manual*. Further information on the selection of trustees and their duties is available in SACSCOC policy [Standing Rules: SACSCOC Board of Trustees, Executive Council, and the College Delegate Assembly](#) at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)

**SACSCOC Staff Representative** Various members of the Commission staff are designated contacts for applicant, candidate, and member institutions as they move through various phases of the accreditation process. (See Part I of the *Handbook for Institutions Seeking Reaffirmation of Accreditation* and SACSCOC policy [Standing Rules: SACSCOC Board of Trustees, Executive Council, and the College Delegate Assembly](#) at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)

**Sampling** There is a clear expectation that an institution is required to be able to demonstrate institutional effectiveness for all its educational programs. This includes certificate and degree programs. To this end, an institution may provide a sampling of the effectiveness of its programs within its Compliance Certification submitted at the time of its comprehensive review. Sampling, for the purpose of accreditation, includes the following three elements: (1) a representation of the institution's mission, (2) a valid cross-section of programs from every school or division, and (3) a compelling case as to why the sampling and assessment findings are an appropriate representation of the institution's educational programs. Sampling does not preclude the institution from having effectiveness data/analysis available on all programs. It is the prerogative of a SACSCOC committee member to conduct a more in-depth review of an institution's data/findings/analysis on the effectiveness of all its educational programs.

**Sanctions** An institution that fails to comply with any of the Core Requirements, demonstrates significant noncompliance with other standards of the *Principles of Accreditation*, fails to make significant progress toward correcting deficiencies within the time allotted, or does not comply with SACSCOC policies may be placed on one of two sanctions: warning or probation. (See SACSCOC policy [Sanctions, Denial of Reaffirmation, and Removal from Membership](#) at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)

**Separate Accreditation** Separate accreditation is the process by which an extended unit of a SACSCOC-accredited institution may seek or be directed to seek separate accreditation because of its degree of autonomy from the main campus. (See SACSCOC Policy [Separate Accreditation for Units of a Member Institution](#) at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)

**Significant departure** A new program planned by an institution is a significant departure from current programs offered if the new program is not closely related to previously approved programs at the institution. To determine whether a new program is a “significant departure,” it is helpful to consider the following questions:

- What previously approved programs does the institution offer that are closely related to the new program and how are they related?
- Will significant additional equipment or facilities be needed?
- Will significant additional financial resources be needed?
- Will a significant number of new courses be required?
- Will a significant number of new faculty members be required?
- Will significant additional library/learning resources be needed?

**Site Visits** Committees of evaluators are sent to applicant, candidate, and member institutions to verify the documentation of compliance previously submitted to SACSCOC in such documents as Applications for Membership, Compliance Certifications, and prospectuses for substantive change. Site visits typically involve both the main campus and off-campus instructional sites.

**Southern Association of Colleges and Schools** See “SACS.”

**Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges** See “SACSCOC.”

- Special Committee** Special Committees are authorized by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees or by the SACSCOC President to evaluate institutional circumstances determined to indicate a lack of compliance with SACSCOC standards, regulations, or policies. (Further information is available in SACSCOC policy [Special Committee Procedures and Team Report](#) available at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)
- Staff Advisory Visit** After the Orientation Meeting for the institution’s Leadership Team for Reaffirmation, an institution may schedule an optional staff advisory visit to the institution to address preparation of the Compliance Certification. Advisory visits are sometimes conducted virtually. (See Part I of the *Handbook for Institutions Seeking Reaffirmation of Accreditation*.)
- Substantive Change** Substantive change is a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. Under federal regulations, substantive change includes institutional activities such as (1) changing the established institutional mission or objectives; (2) changing the institution’s legal status, form of control, or ownership; (3) adding courses/programs that represent a significant departure in content or in method of delivery; (4) adding courses/programs at a degree or credential level above the institution’s current accreditation; (5) changing from clock hours to credit hours; (6) substantially increasing the number of clock or credit hours for completion of a program; (7) adding an off-campus location at which the institution offers at least 50 percent of an educational program; or (8) establishing a branch campus. (See Standard 14.2 [Substantive change] of this *Manual* for more details. Further information about reporting and approval procedures for substantive change can be found in SACSCOC policy [Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions](#) available at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)
- Substantive Change Committee** Composed of a chair and a number of evaluators whose expertise is appropriate for the significant departure or expansion under review, the Substantive Change Committee visits the institution to confirm whether the institution has maintained compliance with selected standards of the *Principles of Accreditation*.

## T

**Teach-Out Agreement** A teach-out agreement is a written agreement between institutions that provides for the equitable treatment of students and a reasonable opportunity for students to complete their program of study if an institution, an educational program at an institution, or an institutional location that provides 50 percent or more of at least one program offered ceases to operate before all enrolled students have completed their program of study. Such a teach-out agreement requires SACSCOC approval in advance of implementation. (Requirements for approval of teach-out agreements can be found in SACSCOC policy [Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions](#) available at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).) See especially Procedure Three in that policy.)

**Teach-Out Plan** A teach-out plan is a written plan developed by an institution that provides for the equitable treatment of students if an institution, an educational program at an institution, or an institutional location that provides 50 percent or more of at least one program ceases to operate before all students have completed their program of study, and may include, if required by the institution's accrediting agency, a teach-out agreement between institutions. Teach-out plans must be approved by SACSCOC in advance of implementation. (Requirements for approval of teach-out agreements can be found in SACSCOC policy [Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions](#) available at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).) See especially Procedure Three in that policy.)

**Third-Party Comments** In recognition of the value of information provided by the public in determining whether an institution's performance at the time of formal committee evaluation for candidacy, initial accreditation, or reaffirmation of accreditation meets all requirements at the time of the relevant committee's review, the Commission invites the public to submit third-party comments. For the purpose of this policy, the public is defined as individuals external to the college or university, excluding students. Therefore, this policy will not apply to comments forwarded to SACSCOC by the current administration, faculty, and staff. (Further information can be found in SACSCOC policy [Third-Party Comment by the Public](#) available at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)

**Track A Institution** A Track A institution is a SACSCOC-accredited institution that offers undergraduate degrees only. The term is used to classify institutions during the reaffirmation process and affects the timing of the review.

**Track B Institution** A Track B institution is a SACSCOC-accredited institution that offers undergraduate and graduate degrees or graduate degrees only. The term is used to classify institutions during the reaffirmation process and affects the timing of the review.

**Type of Institution** On the basis of their governance systems, member institutions are classified as one of two primary types of institutions: public or private. Private institutions are further classified as not-for-profit and for-profit.

## U

**Unsolicited Information** Significant accreditation-related information revealed about a candidate or member institution (1) during off-site or on-site committee reviews, (2) between periods of scheduled review, and/or (3) during a meeting on the record with the Committees on Compliance and Reports constitutes unsolicited information that may become the basis for a request for further documentation of compliance with a SACSCOC standard or policy. (Further information can be found in SACSCOC policy [Unsolicited Information](#) available at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)

## V

**Verifiable Evidence** Evidence that can be replicated and corroborated is verifiable evidence of an institution's level of compliance with SACSCOC standards and requirements. (See Part II of the *Handbook for Institutions Seeking Reaffirmation of Accreditation* for information on documenting compliance.)

**Visiting Committees** Composed of evaluators from similar institutions outside of the home state of the host institution, visiting committees conduct site visits to home campuses and/or off-campus instructional sites and write reports of their findings for consideration by the Committee on Compliance and Reports as it addresses institutional accreditation issues. Visiting committees are most often referred to by their formal titles (such as On-Site Reaffirmation Committee or Substantive Change Committee) that reflect the nature of the accreditation issue under consideration. (See Parts V of the *Handbook for Institutions Seeking Reaffirmation of Accreditation*. Further information is available in SACSCOC policy [Ethical Obligations of Evaluators](#) which is available at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)

## W

**Warning** The less serious of two SACSCOC-imposed 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. The reasons for the imposition of warning can be found under “Sanctions.” The maximum consecutive time that an institution may be on warning is two years. Sanctions do not apply to applicant and candidate institutions. (See SACSCOC policy [Sanctions, Denial of Reaffirmation, and Removal from Membership](#) at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org).)

**Workshop for Pre-Applicants** Prior to submitting an Application for Membership, all prospective applicants (including campuses of member institutions seeking separate accreditation) are required to attend a one-day Workshop for Pre-Applicants, which is designed to (1) review the procedures for attaining membership, (2) provide an understanding of SACSCOC and its accreditation procedures, and (3) explain how to complete the application. (More information is available at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org) under [Application Information](#).)