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Accreditation Update

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Georgia Southern University

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ACCREDITATION UPDATE

Your Roadmap to Successfully Navigating SACSCOC Reaffirmation of Accreditation

As part of our university-wide process to prepare for reaffirmation of accreditation with SACSCOC, we will share our milestones and next steps through this newsletter. The current edition provides a snapshot of where we are in the reaffirmation process, including details of September's Kick-off event, an overview of the six-phased approach Georgia Southern has adopted for achieving reaffirmation of accreditation based on the [Handbook for Institutions Seeking Reaffirmation](#), a note from our Accreditation Faculty Fellow, a closer look at Core Requirement 2.1 from the *Principles of Accreditation*, and important reminders about upcoming events.

Scroll to the bottom and click "Enter to Win" for your chance to win a prize for completing a short survey!

GET READY

To engage. To assess. To shine. To achieve Reaffirmation of Accreditation.

SACSCOC Reaffirmation of Accreditation

A Successful Kick-off Event

Accreditation had its official kick-off on September 15th. The kick-off began with a

charge to the Compliance Certification teams from President Kyle Marrero. Dr. Delena Bell Gatch, Associate Vice President of Institutional Assessment and Accreditation, provided an overview of the reaffirmation of accreditation process. Provost Carl Reiber provided closing remarks. Over 60

individuals from across campuses were presented with a formal introduction of the SACSCOC accreditation process before breaking into their Compliance Certification teams. A total of ten Compliance Certification teams have been created to tackle over 70 Core Requirements and standards required for SACSCOC reaffirmation of accreditation.

During the kick-off, each team spent time diagramming their assigned standards to ensure all aspects of a standard will be covered in preparation for accreditation. In addition, teams were introduced to resources to help with their preparation and tasked with creating a plan to audit Georgia Southern's compliance with the SACSCOC standards. Evidence gathered at this stage will form the basis of the Compliance Certification narratives prepared for the SACSCOC Internal Review in Phase 3 of the accreditation process.

As the collection of evidence requires expertise from across the university community, teams were also asked to identify additional members to assist with the audit process. Since the kick-off, an additional 21 members have been identified and accepted appointments to Compliance Certification teams. In addition, the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) team has been formally constituted and charged.

For the remainder of this semester, teams will be completing their internal audit of SACSCOC standards. Early in Spring 2022, teams will present lightning talks on their audit results to the President's Cabinet and other Compliance Certification teams. The purpose of these talks is to propose an action plan for any areas where the institution could strengthen their compliance. These recommendations will be considered by the appropriate unit(s) for further action.



6 phases. 5 years.
4 instructional sites. 3 reviews.
One result.

Georgia Southern has adopted six phases to track our progress through the reaffirmation process.

PHASE 1:
KICK-OFF & TRAINING



Phase 1 includes identifying and training Compliance Certification teams.



Compliance Certification teams make recommendations based on an internal audit and begin gathering evidence for narratives in Phase 2.

PHASE 2: INFORMATION GATHERING

PHASE 3: DRAFT SUBMISSION & INTERNAL REVIEW



Teams draft initial Compliance Certification narratives and revise narratives based upon an internal review in Phase 3.



Phase 4 includes two rounds of external reviews and revisions of Compliance Certification narratives.

PHASE 4: EXTERNAL REVIEW & REVISIONS

PHASE 5: QUALITY CHECK & SACSCOC PEER REVIEW



Phase 5 includes a final quality check of submitted materials including the Compliance Certification narrative and Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) as

well as the off-site and on-site SACSCOC Reaffirmation Reviews.

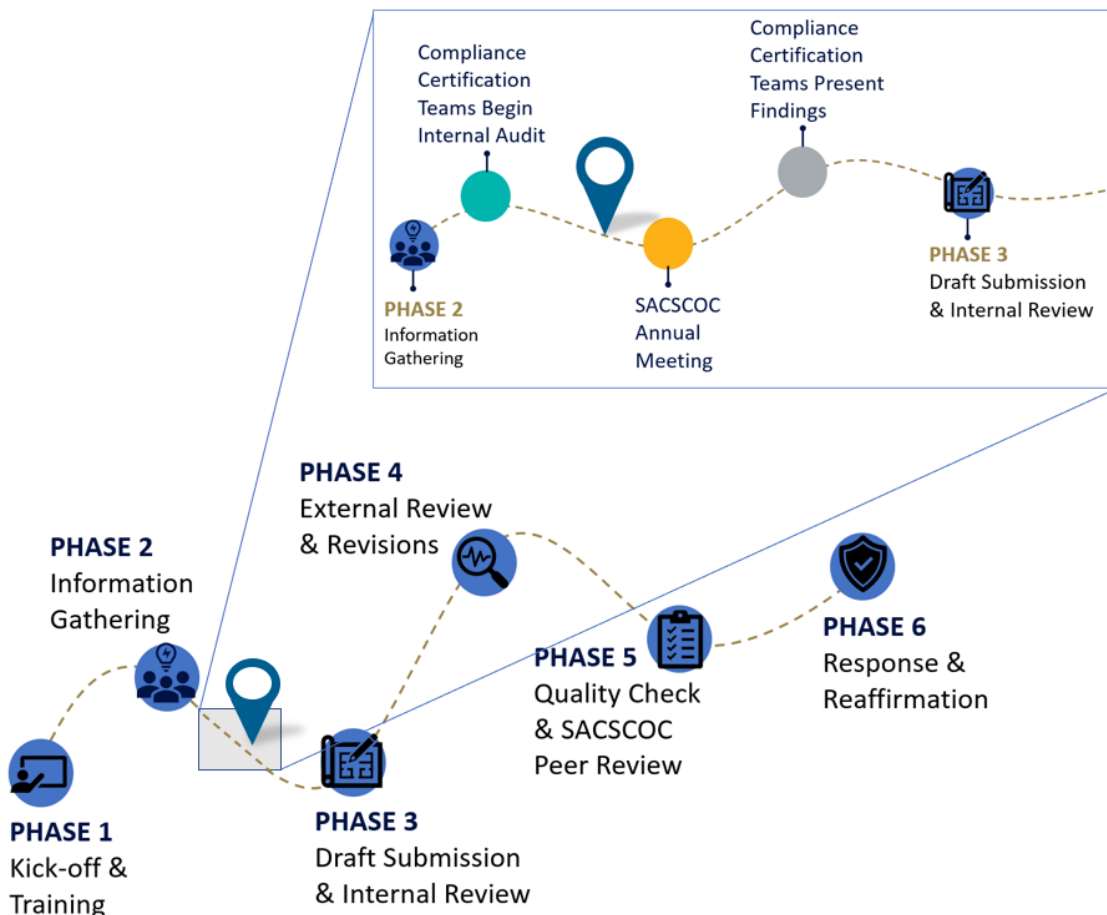


PHASE 6: RESPONSE & REAFFIRMATION

Phase 6 includes the final review by the Board of Trustees and announcement of reaffirmation at the SACSCOC Annual Meeting.

Status: We are currently in Phase 2, Information Gathering.

In Phase 2, Compliance Certification teams are becoming familiar with their assigned standards, identifying and gathering potential evidence to support compliance, and making recommendations to the President's Cabinet regarding next steps.



Faculty Connections: A Word From the Faculty Fellow

Greetings!

Congratulations to programs and core classes for completing another round of assessment! For those programs just completing their Comprehensive Academic Program Reviews, an extra hats off to you! Over the last several years we all have been reminded that assessment, when done meaningfully, can help programs and courses identify areas where student learning can be improved and challenge us to find innovative ways to engage our students and guide them toward academic excellence. When we engage in this annual process, what we may not immediately consider is where or how it fits in terms of the SACSCOC accreditation process.

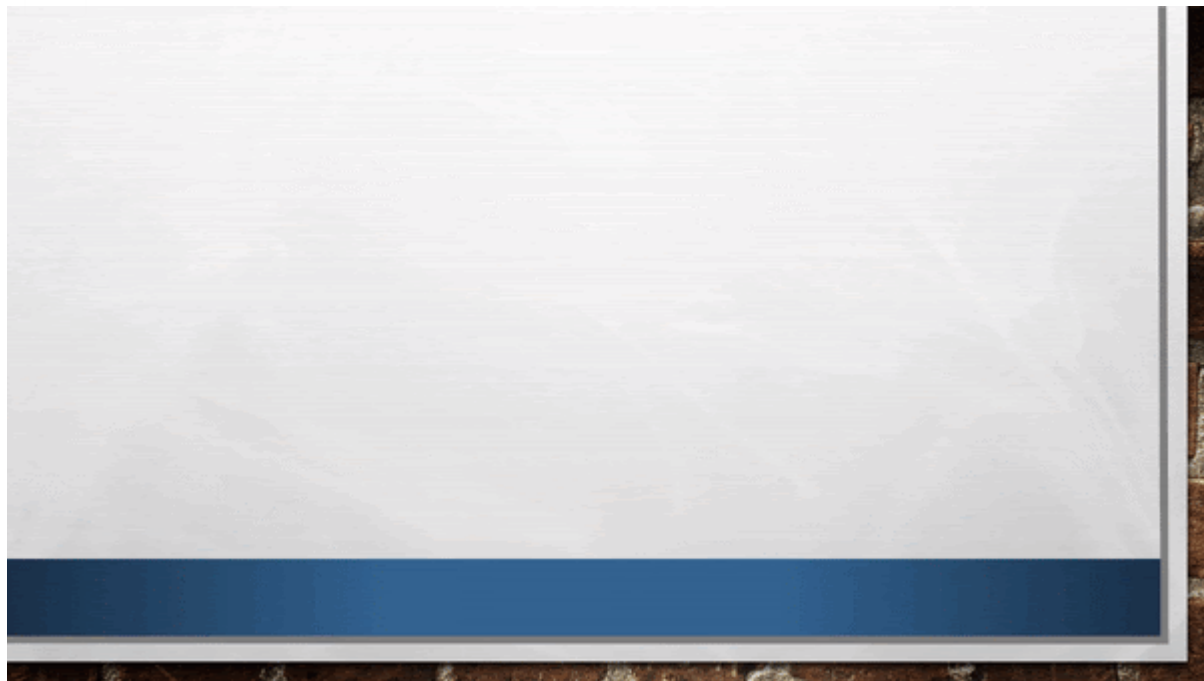
Student achievement, specifically addressed in standards 8.1 and 8.2, is a SACSCOC core requirement. This means SACSCOC understands student achievement as a “foundational requirement” that establishes “a threshold of development” required for reaffirmation. As a foundational requirement, assessment requires programs to align their mission with that of the university. Exemplary mission statements not only reflect the university’s mission but also identify program goals and activities that specifically support the institution’s mission.

So, how does this connect back with assessment? Reflecting on and constantly working toward academic excellence evidenced by student achievement is one of the primary ways we promote Georgia Southern’s mission of creating a learner-centered culture. When we challenge our students to maximize their intellectual potential and provide the necessary support for doing so, we equip them with the skills necessary to serve and lead their communities upon graduation. We all know assessment is hard work, but it does force us to reflect on what it is we do as faculty and can help us both pursue and achieve our mission at all levels of the institution.

Until Next Time,

Barbara King
IAA Faculty Fellow

Did You Know?



Section 2: Mission



One of the first steps in the accreditation process is to make certain one thoroughly understands each Core Requirement or standard in its entirety. The #1 reason peer evaluators cite a principle is failure to address **all** of the compliance components within a Core Requirement or standard. One approach recommended by SACSCOC is to diagram each standard to identify all essential components that must be met for accreditation purposes.

2.1 The **institution** *has* a clearly defined, comprehensive, and published mission specific to

the **institution** and appropriate for **higher education**. The **mission** *addresses teaching and learning* and, where applicable, **research** and **public service**.

Essential Components for Compliance:

clearly defined, comprehensive, published, specific and appropriate (to institution), addresses teaching and learning, research, public service

Core Requirement 2.1 is particularly important as it relates to most SACSCOC standards.

Institutional Excellence: The Power of Mission

Achieving Excellence

At Georgia Southern University, our learner-centered culture prepares us to think, lead, teach, and serve. We value collaboration, academic excellence, discovery and innovation, integrity, openness and inclusion, and sustainability. We promote talent and economic development to enhance quality of life through scholarly pursuits, cultural enrichment, student life, and community engagement across distinctive campuses. Our success is measured by the global impact of our students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

Contributing to our university's mission is at the core of accreditation of reaffirmation. From academic programs and student success services to budget decisions, we need to demonstrate that our activities as a university collectively align with our own stated missions and values to achieve successful reaffirmation of accreditation. For this reason, since our consolidation in 2018, departments and units have been tasked with updating or creating mission statements specific to their division.

Whether your unit is new to assessment or a seasoned professional in this process, you likely are familiar with the important role a unit's mission statement plays in the assessment process. After all, assessment is one of the primary mechanisms through which we demonstrate that our institution is aligned with SACSCOC's mission to "assure the educational quality and improve the effectiveness of its member institutions." Specifically, assessment upholds the values and expectations of accountability, transparency, peer review, and self-regulation.

So, what does a good mission statement encompass? Whereas the university's mission statement provides an overarching statement of the institution's values and goals, divisions within the institution should address how they uniquely contribute to these goals and expectations. Your statement should identify your specific purpose and how your division aligns with applicable parts of the institutional mission. For example, if you are an academic department, how do you promote collaboration and academic excellence? What activities encourage discovery and innovation? What precise steps are taken within your unit to ensure values of openness and inclusion? Considering stakeholders, how do those served by your department, both within the university and the larger community, benefit from these practices? A solid mission statement requires units within the institution to be mindful of their distinctive contributions to support the larger mission of the university. Mission statements are powerful expressions of what we do day in and day out to uphold our values and pursue our goals. They set the path we take as an institution to achieve excellence.

Upcoming Events

2021 SACSCOC VIRTUAL ANNUAL MEETING

December 2nd - 7th, 2021

NEXT ALL-TEAM COMPLIANCE CERTIFICATION MEETING

February 1st, 2022

8:30-11:30 AM

And our September newsletter winner is ...

Cassie Morgan!

Email assessment@georgiasouthern.edu within 30 days to claim your prize.

We're Listening!

In the survey from our September issue, we received a question about internal and external training opportunities and resources.

In addition to the internal Compliance Certification team training which began on September 15th, the [2021 SACSCOC Annual Meeting](#) is a great way to learn more about expectations related to reaffirmation and attend training sessions focusing on particular standards. We hope the meeting's virtual format will make it more accessible for those of you interested in attending. If you cannot attend this year, SACSCOC will offer the Institute on Quality Enhancement and Accreditation July 17th - 20th, 2022 in Lake Buena Vista, Florida, and the next annual meeting will be in Atlanta from December 3rd - 6th, 2022.

In regards to assessment, Institutional Assessment and Accreditation offers a number of internal training opportunities and resources such as FOLIO courses, Assessment Document Writers Groups, and a [Library Resource Guide](#) released this Fall. The [IUPUI Assessment Institute](#) is also an excellent resource and offers a multitude of recorded sessions for free.

SACSCOC Accreditation Resources

As we work together to prepare for our Compliance Certification and on-site review, keep in mind the resources provided by SACSCOC:

[The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement](#)

In addition to providing all of the standards and sub-standards for accreditation, this document provides an overview of the philosophy, purpose, and process of accreditation.

[Resource Manual for The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement](#) *This document provides additional guidance regarding requirements and recommendations for each standard and includes a list of guiding questions and possible evidence that could be used to support compliance in the Compliance Certification narrative.*



Institutional Assessment and Accreditation (IAA) works collaboratively with faculty, staff, and administration to ensure the quality of the programs and educational experiences offered by the university, addressing the unique assessment needs of courses, departments, colleges, or units through individual and group consultations, professional development workshops, recommendations for technology implementation, and

best practice reference materials.

[IAA website](#)

[Assessment Services Request](#)

Enter to win a prize by answering a few quick questions.

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