

Compliance Components – Enrollment Management/Admissions

Separate compliance components that constitute discrete issues to be addressed in developing a convincing argument for compliance in the Compliance Certification are underlined for each applicable requirement and standard. A narrative that addresses and documents some, but not all, of the compliance components is incomplete.

Suggestions: The “suggestions” provided below are guides to developing and documenting a narration that thoroughly addresses these compliance components.

Excerpts citing noncompliance: The “excerpts” are provided to assist Applicants and Candidates in identifying typical shortcomings in the narratives and documentation presented in support of an institution’s assertion of compliance; taken from reports developed by SACSCOC review committees, these excerpts are all part of some committee’s explanation of its finding of noncompliance.

Core Requirements:

- 2.6 The institution is in operation and has students enrolled in degree programs. (**Continuous Operation**)

Suggestion: Provide a list of programs and the number of students enrolled in each.

- 2.7.1 The institution offers one or more degree programs based on at least 60 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the associate level; at least 120 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the baccalaureate level; or at least 30 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the post-baccalaureate, graduate, or professional level.

[Notice that the remaining portions of this standard apply only under certain circumstances; consequently, they do not need to be addressed by all institutions.]

IF an institution uses a unit other than semester credit hours, it provides an explanation for the equivalency. The institution also provides a justification for all degrees that include fewer than the required number of semester credit hours or its equivalent unit. (**Program Length**)

- 2.7.2 The institution offers degree programs that embody a coherent course of study that is compatible with its stated mission and is based upon fields of study appropriate to higher education. (**Program Content**)

Excerpt citing noncompliance: “While the programs listed throughout the two catalogs are compatible with the stated mission, the Off-Site Committee found it difficult to determine exactly which programs are being offered based on the evidence provided in the Compliance Document. For example, the chart in CS 2.7.2 lists programs similar to those listed on page 55 of the catalog. However, it does not list all of them and it does list what appears to be a major, teacher education, termed elementary education in the catalog. Further, elementary education is not listed as an available major in the catalog on page 55.”

- 2.7.3 In each undergraduate degree program, the institution requires the successful completion of a general education component at the collegiate level that
- (1) is a substantial component of each undergraduate degree,
 - (2) ensures breadth of knowledge, and
 - (3) is based on a coherent rationale.

For degree completion in associate programs, the component constitutes a minimum of 15 semester hours or the equivalent; for baccalaureate programs, a minimum of 30 semester hours or the equivalent. These credit hours are to be drawn from and include at least one course from each of the following areas: humanities/fine arts; social/behavioral sciences; and natural science/mathematics.

Suggestion: *Create a table listing each degree program and the required general education course that satisfies the requirement for each of the three categories.*

Suggestion: *Ensure that the humanities course is “pure” humanities. For purposes of meeting this standard, courses in basic composition that do not contain a literature component, courses in oral communication, and introductory foreign language courses are viewed as skills courses, not as “pure” humanities courses. Examples of “pure” humanities courses include literature, philosophy, art appreciation or art history, music appreciation or music history, and, at some institutions, history courses.*

The courses do not narrowly focus on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession.

[Notice that the remaining portions of this standard apply only under certain circumstances; consequently, they do not need to be addressed by all institutions.]

IF an institution uses a unit other than semester credit hours, it provides an explanation for the equivalency. The institution also provides a justification if it allows for fewer than the required number of semester credit hours or its equivalent unit of general education courses. (**General Education**)

Excerpt citing noncompliance: *“The Associate of Science and Associate of General Studies curricula require students to take three semester hours in the humanities and three semester hours in the fine arts. Most AAS programs, on the other hand, require only three semester hours in the humanities. Students may choose from a list of humanities courses that include offerings in foreign language and communications. According to the interpretation of Core Requirement 2.7.3 adopted by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, such classes are skill courses and not pure humanities offerings. Furthermore, contrary to the institution’s stated core curriculum requirements for AAS programs, the Criminal Justice Administration curricula includes no humanities elective, while the Aviation Maintenance Technology program requires neither a humanities nor a fine arts course.”*

2.7.4 The institution provides instruction for all course work required for at least one degree program at each level at which it awards degrees.

[Notice that the remaining portion of this standard applies only to institutions that do NOT teach all of the coursework for at least one degree program at a particular level (associate, baccalaureate, master’s, specialist, doctoral), institutions such as those that teach only the upper-level courses for the baccalaureate program.]

IF the institution does not provide instruction for all such course work and (1) makes arrangements for some instruction to be provided by other accredited institutions or entities through contracts or consortia or (2) uses some other alternative approach to meeting this requirement, the alternative approach must be approved by the Commission on Colleges. In both cases, the institution demonstrates that it controls all aspects of its educational program. (*See*

Commission policy “Core Requirement 2.7.4: Documenting an Alternate Approach.”)
(Coursework for Degrees)

Suggestion: If applicable, provide copies of contracts and consortia agreements along with a description of all of the coursework provided by other organizations or institutions and evidence of internal control over the quality of instruction.

Suggestion: When requesting approval for an alternative approach, address **all** of the issues identified in Commission policy “Core Requirement 2.7.4: Documenting an Alternative Approach.”

[This is NOT the place for a general discussion of all instruction offered through contracts or consortia. That discussion belongs in CS 3.4.7 (Consortial relationships/contractual agreements), which is NOT included in the Application for Membership. The only contracts or consortia to be discussed here are those used by institutions to enable students to fulfill degree requirements for the level(s) at which they do not provide all of the instruction for at least one degree.]

Comprehensive Standards:

3.4 Educational Programs: all Educational Programs (includes all on-campus, off-campus, and distance learning programs and course work) (See Commission policy “Distance and Correspondence Education.”)

3.4.3 The institution publishes admissions policies that are consistent with its mission. (**Admissions policies**)

3.4.4 The institution has a defined and published policy for evaluating, awarding, and accepting credit for transfer, experiential learning, advanced placement, and professional certificates that is consistent with its mission and ensures that course work and learning outcomes are at the collegiate level and comparable to the institution’s own degree programs.

For all standards that require a policy, institutions must document publication of the policy in appropriate institutional documents.

The institution assumes responsibility for the academic quality of any course work or credit recorded on the institution’s transcript. (See Commission policy “The Transfer or Transcribing of Academic Credit.”) (**Acceptance of academic credit**)

[Commission policy “The Transfer or Transcribing of Academic Credit” has been replaced by “Collaborative Academic Arrangements.”]

3.4.5 The institution publishes academic policies that adhere to principles of good educational practice. These are disseminated to students, faculty, and other interested parties through publications that accurately represent the programs and services of the institution. (**Academic policies**)

For all standards that require a policy, institutions must document publication of the policy in appropriate institutional documents.

3.4.6 The institution employs sound and acceptable practices for determining the amount and level of credit awarded for courses, regardless of format or mode of delivery. (**Practices for awarding credit**)

- 3.4.8 The institution awards academic credit for course work taken on a noncredit basis only when there is documentation that the non-credit course work is equivalent to a designated credit experience. **(Noncredit to credit)**

["Not applicable" is not an adequate response; institutions that do not award credit for noncredit work should identify the policy, procedure, or catalog statement that establishes this position.]

3.5 Educational Programs: Undergraduate Programs

[Institutions that do not have undergraduate programs should mark these standards "Not applicable."]

- 3.5.2 At least 25 percent of the credit hours required for the degree are earned through instruction offered by the institution awarding the degree.

[Notice that the remaining portion of this standard applies only under certain circumstances; consequently, it does not need to be addressed by all institutions.]

IN THE CASE OF undergraduate degree programs offered through joint, cooperative, or consortia arrangements, the student earns 25 percent of the credits required for the degree through instruction offered by the participating institutions. *(See Commission policy "The Transfer or Transcribing of Academic Credit.")* **(Institutional credits for a degree)**

[Commission policy "The Transfer or Transcribing of Academic Credit" has been replaced by "Collaborative Academic Arrangements."]

- 3.5.3 The institution defines and publishes requirements for its undergraduate programs, including its general education components. These requirements conform to commonly accepted standards and practices for degree programs. **(Undergraduate program requirements)**

3.9 Student Affairs and Services

- 3.9.2 The institution protects the security, confidentiality, and integrity of student records

[This standard applies to all types of student records, not just the transcripts typically managed by the registrar's office.]

and maintains special security measures to protect and back up data. **(Student records)**

Excerpt citing noncompliance: "The Compliance Certification defines the purpose of FERPA, identifies offices that are likely to hold student records, defines 'directory information,' and references where confidentiality issues are described in institutional publications. It does not, however, state what specific safeguards or procedures are in place to protect student records and data."

3.10 Financial Resources

- 3.10.3 The institution audits financial aid programs as required by federal and state regulations. **(Financial aid audits)**

[Institutions that have recently qualified for federal financial aid programs through their Candidacy status with SACSCOC will have limited documentation of compliance with this standard available.]

Federal Requirements:

4.3 The institution makes available to students and the public current academic calendars, grading policies, and refund policies. (**Publication of policies**)

4.6 Recruitment materials and presentations accurately represent the institution's practices and policies. (**Recruitment materials**)

Excerpt citing noncompliance: "The institution described a variety of recruitment materials but did not provide samples of these materials for review."

4.7 The institution is in compliance with its program responsibilities under Title IV of the 1998 Higher Education Amendments. (In reviewing the institution's compliance with these program responsibilities, the Commission relies on documentation forwarded to it by the U.S. Secretary of Education.) (**Title IV program responsibilities**)

Excerpt citing noncompliance: "During the period of FY 2005 through FY2009, Single Audit Reports reflected approximately \$682,000 in Questioned Costs associated with Student Financial Aid programs."