

Compliance Components – Graduate School

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.

Comprehensive Standards:

3.6 Educational Programs: Graduate and Post-Baccalaureate Professional Programs

- 3.6.1 The institution’s post-baccalaureate professional degree programs, master’s, and doctoral degree programs, are progressively more advanced in academic content than its undergraduate programs. **(Post-baccalaureate program rigor)**

Excerpt citing noncompliance: “The table of Program Outcomes by Level defines the expectations for each program at the baccalaureate, master’s, and doctoral level. When undergraduate outcomes are compared with graduate outcomes, the graduate outcomes are more advanced and rigorous in their academic concepts and learning experiences. However, only two course syllabi were provided to validate the implementation of these delineated outcomes.”

- 3.6.2 The institution structures its graduate curricula
- (1) to include knowledge of the literature of the discipline and
 - (2) to ensure ongoing student engagement in research and/or appropriate professional practice and training experiences. **(Graduate curriculum)**
- 3.6.3 The majority of credits toward a graduate or a post-baccalaureate professional degree are earned through instruction offered by the institution awarding the degree.

Excerpt citing noncompliance: “The institution has a policy on the maximum number of transfer hours allowed for a master’s degree (6 semester hours), but a similar policy that states a maximum for the doctoral degree was not provided. Even though the institution’s regulations for the doctoral degree state that students are expected to complete all coursework at the university, there is a provision for exceptions to be granted. When such exceptions are granted, there is no accompanying statement that indicates that the majority of the credit must be earned at the institution.”

[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 graduate and post-baccalaureate professional degree programs offered through joint, cooperative, or consortial arrangements, the student earns a majority of credits 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: Policy and Procedures.”]

- 3.6.4 The institution defines and publishes requirements for its graduate and post-baccalaureate professional programs. These requirements conform to commonly accepted standards and practices for degree programs. **(Post-baccalaureate program requirements)**