

# Accreditation Rebranded: Updates to SACSCOC

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October 2, 2026



## Institutional Effectiveness

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“Improvement Through Insight”

# Accreditation Rebranded: Updates to SACSCOC

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Please hold questions  
until the end.

Online – type your  
questions in the chat.



# History of SACSCOC

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- Founded in 1895
- Previous name was **Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)**
- USM has been accredited since Jan. 1, 1929
- Part of triad of higher education regulation:

Department of  
Education  
**(Federal)**

Mississippi's  
Institutions of  
Higher Learning  
**(State)**

**SACSCOC**  
**(Peers)**

# History of SACSCOC

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- Originally regional accrediting body
- In 2019, Dept. of Ed. eliminated geographic scope criteria (Effective July 2020)
  - Institutional accreditation bodies are no longer classified as "regional" or "national"
- **SACSCOC accredits institutions globally**
  - 777 accredited institutions (Feb. 2026)
  - Accreditation activities in 43 US States and 67 other countries

# Mission of SACSCOC

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*... to assure the educational quality and improve the effectiveness of our member institutions through an accountable and transparent peer-review process.*

## Six core values:

- Integrity
- Continuous Quality Improvement
- Peer Review/Self-Regulation
- Accountability
- Student Learning
- Transparency

***"Students First,  
Always"***

# Peer Review – USM Reaffirmation Process

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Vice Dean for Academic Affairs  
Associate Faculty  
Humanities

Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs  
Visiting Professor  
Educational Leadership

Assistant Dean of Nursing  
Clinical Professor  
Nursing

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Professor  
Psychology

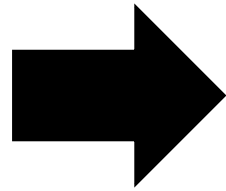
Professor/Department Head  
Professor  
Psychology

Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs  
Professor  
Political Science

President  
Professor  
Planning and Public Policy

President  
Professor  
Medicine

Effective September 1, 2026, SACSCOC  
has *changed its name*.



"SACSCOC"

"The Commission"

"CC&U"

# Why?

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The new name reflects our commitment to innovation, educational quality, and student success. While our name is changing, our mission and commitment to member institutions remain the same.

“This new identity reflects who we are today and where higher education is going,” said Dr. Stephen L. Pruitt, president of The Commission on Colleges and Universities. “The Commission on Colleges and Universities better reflects the scope of our work, the institutions we serve, and our vision for the future. We are here to partner with our member institutions as they move from accountability to impact.”

What else is  
changing?



# What's changing:

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- Our name
- Our branding and logo
- A new website – **coming soon**
- Communications materials
- Social media branding



## The Torch + Shield



The torch represents learning, discovery, and forward momentum.

The shield reflects accountability, stewardship, and our responsibility to protect the integrity and public trust of higher education.

## Navy + Gold

**Navy** speaks to trust, stability, and credibility.

**Gold** reflects achievement, excellence, and the transformative power of higher education.

Together, the colors reflect our commitment to maintaining the highest standards of quality while helping institutions pursue innovation and continuous improvement.

# What isn't changing:

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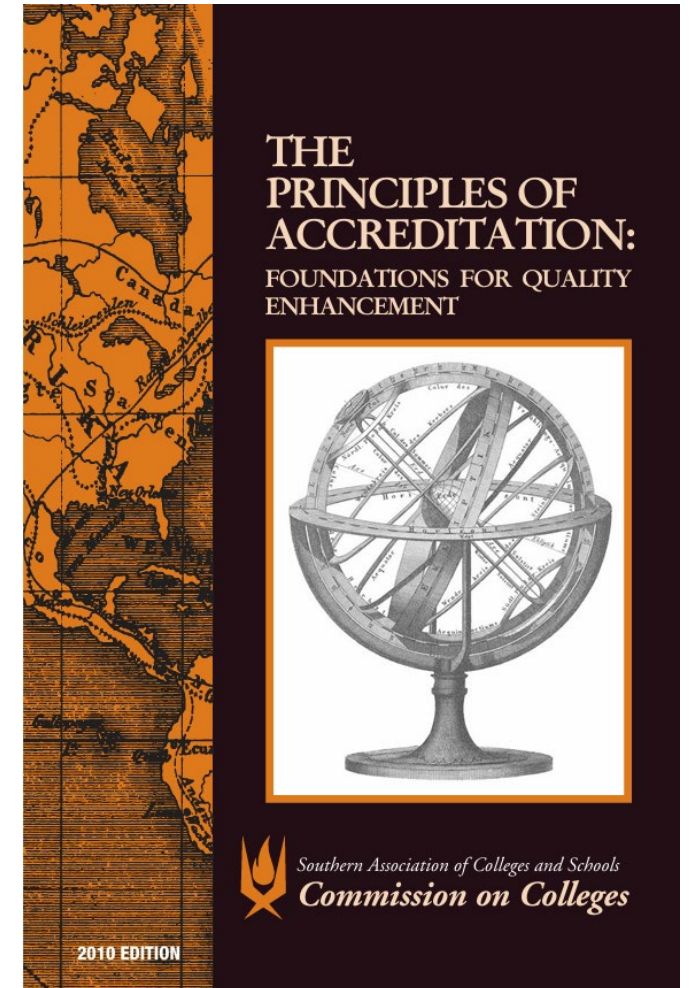
- Accreditation status
- Institutional accreditation statements
- Recognition by the U.S. Department of Education
- Our mission and purpose
- Peer review
- Service to member institutions
- Commitment to quality assurance and transparency
- Students First, Always

SACSCOC remains our accreditation name. Accreditation continues to carry the SACSCOC seal. Your institution's accreditation statement — in your catalog, in your consumer disclosures, in your state filings — does not need to change. Not now, and not at your next reprint. Your accreditation status, your reaffirmation date, and our recognition by the U.S. Department of Education are all exactly what they were in August.



# Updates to *The Principles*

- Coincidentally, *The Principles* are also being evaluated and revised.
- The Principles have changed before:
  - 1984\* (*Criteria for Accreditation*)
  - 1997
  - 2004\* (*Principles of Accreditation*)
  - 2007
  - 2009
  - 2011
  - 2017\*
  - 2023



# Guiding Questions for Revision

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- Does this requirement genuinely promote student achievement?
- Does it advance quality and continuous improvement while maintaining transparency?
- Does it improve transparency and accountability while reducing unnecessary burden?
- Does it keep focus on outcomes and results – not process for its own sake?
- Three core values: reduce administrative burden, honor institutional mission diversity, and enable innovation.

## 2024 Edition

### 1.1 Integrity

### 2.1 Mission

3.1.a Degree-granting authority

3.1.b Coursework for degrees

3.1.c Continuous operation

### 4.1 Governing board characteristics

4.2.a Mission review

4.2.b Board/administrative distinction

4.2.c CEO evaluation/selection

### 4.2.d Conflict of interest

4.2.e Board dismissal

### 4.2.f External influence

### 4.2.g Board self-evaluation

4.3 Multi-level governance

### 5.1 Chief executive officer

### 5.2.a CEO control

### 5.2.b Control of intercollegiate athletics

### 5.2.c Control of fund-raising activities

5.3 Institution-related entities

### 5.4 Qualified administrative/academic officers

5.5 Personnel appointment and evaluation

### 6.1 Full-time faculty

### 6.2.a Faculty qualifications

### 6.2.b Program faculty

### 6.2.c Program coordination

6.3 Faculty appointment and evaluation

6.4 Academic freedom

6.5 Faculty development

### 7.1 Institutional planning

### 7.2 Quality Enhancement Plan

7.3 Administrative effectiveness

### 8.1 Student achievement

### 8.2.a Student outcomes: educational programs

8.2.b Student outcomes: general education

8.2.c Student outcomes: academic and student services

### 9.1 Program content

### 9.2 Program length

### 9.3 General education requirements

9.4 Institutional credits for an undergraduate degree

9.5 Institutional credits for a graduate/professional degree

9.6 Post-baccalaureate rigor and curriculum

9.7 Program requirements

10.1 Academic policies

### 10.2 Public information

10.3 Archived information

10.4 Academic governance

### 10.5 Admissions policies and practices

### 10.6 Distance and correspondence education

### 10.7 Policies for awarding credit

10.8 Evaluating and awarding external academic credit

10.9 Cooperative academic arrangements

### 11.1 Library and learning/information resources

11.2 Library and learning/information staff

11.3 Library and learning/information access

### 12.1 Student support services

12.2 Student support services staff

12.3 Student rights

### 12.4 Student complaints

12.5 Student records

### 12.6 Student debt and financial literacy

### 13.1 Financial resources

### 13.2 Financial documents

### 13.3 Financial responsibility

13.4 Control of finances

13.5 Control of sponsored research/external funds

### 13.6 Federal and state responsibilities

### 13.7 Physical resources

13.8 Institutional environment

### 14.1 Publication of accreditation status

14.2 Substantive change

### 14.3 Comprehensive institutional reviews

### 14.4 Representation to other agencies

### 14.5 Policy compliance

Gold = Differentiated

**Gold = Federal  
Requirements**

Main Categories:

- Institutional Stability
- Quality Education
- Student Success

1. Integrity
2. Institutional Mission
- 3.1 Shared Governance
- 3.2 Governing Authority
4. Chief Executive Officer and Administrative Capacity
5. Sound Institutional Planning
6. Financial Stability
7. Control and Oversight of External Funds and Regulatory Compliance
8. Facilities, Infrastructure, and Safety
9. Undergraduate Curriculum (General Education)
10. Academic Program Content
11. Alignment with Workforce Needs
12. Definition of Credit Hour and Alternative Approaches
13. Program Length
14. Transfer Credits
15. Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes
16. Distance, Correspondence, and Direct Assessment
17. Institutional Credits for Graduation
18. Research Integrity
19. Sufficient Faculty to Deliver Quality Programs
20. Faculty Qualifications and Evaluation
21. Academic Freedom
22. Student Success and Achievement for Institutions and Programs
23. Student and Academic Support Services
24. Student Rights and Written Complaints
25. Intellectual Pluralism
26. Protection of Privacy and Integrity of Student Records
27. Transparency in Admissions and Institutional Representation
28. Publicly Disclosed Information
29. Accreditation Status and Reporting Changes
30. Representation to Other Agencies
31. Compliance with New Policy or Obligations

# Draft 2 of the Principles

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- We only know the draft standard language.
- *We don't know what the Resource Manual will say.*
- The Resource Manual *may* include:
  - Standard rationale
  - Guiding questions
  - Accountability for exceptions
  - Consumer protection
  - "The Bottom Line"
  - Institutional process for compliance
  - Ongoing Practice
  - Supporting documentation
  - Common pitfalls
  - Questions to ask as you prepare documents for accreditation, reaffirmation, or other reviews
  - Sample documentation

# Feedback on Draft 2 of the Principles: Public Survey

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- Go to [sacscoc.org/principles-review](https://sacscoc.org/principles-review)
- Select "**Public Survey**" (above the SACSCOC Principles Accreditation Review heading)
- Takes ~30-45 minutes to complete
- Must be completed by October 12, 2026

INSTRUCTIONS: We present each proposed standard to you and ask that you answer two questions about it:

-- Is this proposed standard *relevant* to quality assurance and continuous improvement?

-- Is this proposed standard *clearly understood*? Does the language of the standard clearly communicate its expectations?

We also ask that you submit *any comments* you might have about each proposed standard.

**Please indicate your institution's CC&U Level** (the highest degree offered).

- ☐ Level I (Associate)
- ☐ Level II (Baccalaureate)
- ☐ Level III (Master)
- ☐ Level IV (Educational Specialist)
- ☐ Level V (Doctorate, 3 or fewer)
- ☒ Level VI (Doctorate, 4 or more)
- ☐ *Unsure or N/A*

**Please indicate your institution's governance control.**

- ☐ Private, for-profit
- ☐ Private, not-for-profit
- ☒ Public
- ☐ *Unsure or N/A*

# What will *The Principles* revision mean for USM?

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- Operationally - not much.
- We must still abide by our policies and IHL policies.
  - Faculty Handbook - Academic Governance, Academic Freedom (USM)
  - Faculty Credentials & Qualifications Manual (USM)
  - General Education Curriculum (IHL)
  - Program Coordinator Policy (USM)

# What happens next?

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- Feedback on Draft 2 collected by October 12
- Revisions to draft made
- December 2026 (anticipated) – standards are voted on
- Grace period for implementation



## Institutional Effectiveness

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“Improvement Through Insight”

We will keep the  
university community  
updated on any  
changes!

# Questions?

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## **Institutional Effectiveness**

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**“Improvement Through Insight”**

# References

Welcome from the President: <https://sacscoc.org/welcome-from-the-president/>

SACSCOC Global Impact: <https://sacscoc.org/about-sacscoc/sacscoc-global-impact/>

The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement. SACSCOC. 2024 Edition.  
<https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2024/01/2024PrinciplesOfAccreditation.pdf>

Handbook for Institutions Seeking Initial Accreditation. SACSCOC. March 2024.  
<https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2020/02/Handbook-for-Initial-Accreditation.pdf>

Department of Education 2019 Accrediting Body Update: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/11/01/2019-23129/student-assistance-general-provisions-the-secretarys-recognition-of-accrediting-agencies-the>

Accrediting Standards: <https://sacscoc.org/accrediting-standards/>

Principles Review: <https://commissioncu.org/accreditation/the-principles-of-accreditation/>