



*Southern Association of Colleges and Schools  
Commission on Colleges  
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## **MAINTAINING EDUCATIONAL QUALITY DURING THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC**

### **A Position Statement**

Beginning spring 2020, SACSCOC member institutions have maintained a focus on their educational missions while dealing with a multitude of logistical and very real human challenges in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic. It is unclear how long institutions will need to modify operations in response to the pandemic; however, it is clear that administrators, faculty, and staff have a shared responsibility for ensuring that the quality of students' learning experiences is preserved, that technology is used in meaningful ways to engage students and facilitate learning, that grades are an accurate reflection of student attainment, and that appropriate support services are available. This is a time when more support than ever is needed for students, faculty, and staff.

SACSCOC acknowledges the significant and substantial work of its accredited institutions in making thoughtful decisions and providing the necessary structure and support to uphold their educational missions. Decisions regarding how to best provide adequate and appropriate access to learning resources, support services, and other operational functions will be driven by an institution's own understanding of the needs of its campus community. Although for most member institutions, many resources and services are already available online, for others, new methods of working and learning at a distance are required. It may be appropriate to enhance some services due to changes in student needs or to suspend, limit, or modify services due to situational restrictions or demands.

The crisis created by the pandemic also has prompted many institutions to consider innovative solutions to sustain operations and instruction. Some institutions are considering significant changes to academic calendars, which would require clear communication with campus constituencies and with prospective students and parents who are making decisions regarding attendance. If exceptions are made to educational policies (e.g., changes to admissions policies, grading policies, etc.), it is expected that those exceptions will be clearly documented, effectively communicated, and implemented in direct response to immediate or imminent concerns. Institutions also may be contemplating new collaborative arrangements and contracted services. SACSCOC encourages institutional leadership to consider any potential implications for substantive change reporting and ongoing compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation* if new partnerships are developed. During this time of uncertainty, SACSCOC continues to uphold its commitment to excellence and to support of its member institutions as they continue to monitor and adjust their strategies to protect the integrity of their institutional missions, academic programs, and learning environments.

#### **Document History**

*Endorsed: SACSCOC Executive Council, 2020*