

## 14.5 Policy compliance

The institution complies with SACSCOC policy statements that pertain to new or additional institutional obligations that may arise that are not part of the standards in the current *Principles of Accreditation*.

**Compliance Judgment:** In Compliance

### Rationale

The University of South Carolina Aiken (USC Aiken) continuously monitors and complies with policy statements that pertain to additional institutional obligations that arise since the publication of the current *Principles of Accreditation* in January of 2018. A review of policy statements by SACSCOC revealed 15 that were relevant to USC Aiken. Evidence of compliance are included below.

[Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions \(May 2018\)](#).<sup>[1]</sup> As presented in the narrative to [Standard 14.2](#)<sup>[2]</sup>, USC Aiken has a policy and a procedure that ensures SACSCOC is notified of changes in accordance with the substantive change policy. New program proposals are carefully reviewed in terms of their relationship to existing programs, equipment or facility requirements, financial resources, library and learning resources, faculty and courses. All factors impacting the decision as to whether a program is a significant departure are documented. Notifications of program terminations include teach out plans. USC Aiken is currently preparing a prospectus to add its third remote instructional site (USC Union) at which a BSN completion program will be offered starting in Fall of 2021. The program has been included in this Compliance Report because it has received all internal and state level approvals with the State and thus is on our roster of programs with the South Carolina Commission for Higher Education. The prospectus will be submitted by the time the external review committee meets in November.

**Institutional Obligations for Public Disclosure (June 2018).** <sup>[3]</sup> As noted in the response to [Standard 10.3](#) <sup>[4]</sup>, USC Aiken describes itself in a manner that is consistent with its mission statement and provides students, alumni and the public with access to archived catalogs. USC Aiken identifies the programs available online and at remote locations. Details regarding services available are noted on the websites and via publication of Academic Bulletins representing the USC campus at which remote programs are offered. As noted in the narrative of [Standard 8.1](#) <sup>[5]</sup>, student success measures such as major tallies, course and program completion rates, persistence data, degrees awarded by major, and results of licensing exams are published annually. The publications include the previous year's results for each measure and identify targets for the upcoming year. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Research and Compliance collects and archives all data related to learning outcomes and program excellence. As indicated in the narrative of [Standard 14.1](#) <sup>[6]</sup>, the accreditation status of USC Aiken is accurately and appropriately presented in accordance with SACSCOC requirements and federal policy. Finally, USC Aiken recognizes the trademark logo of SACSCOC and does not use it.

**Reaffirmation of Accreditation and Subsequent Reports (June 2018).** <sup>[7]</sup> As specified in the narrative of [Standard 14.3](#) <sup>[8]</sup>, USC Aiken has included consideration of all distance learning offerings -- online and those at remote sites. USC Aiken is prepared to have the visiting team meet in person or virtually with students, faculty, and administrators from the remote instructional site in the Spring. The relationship of USC Aiken to other institutions within the USC System has been described in the narrative for all relevant standards.

**Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards (July 2018).** <sup>[9]</sup> USC Aiken has one cooperative academic arrangement that was developed in concert with the University of South Carolina Columbia campus – the MEd in Educational Technology. In accordance with the SACSCOC policy statement and the MOA agreement between Columbia and Aiken, the program is correctly identified as a joint program; students receive a single diploma that identifies the degree as offered by the

University of South Carolina, Aiken and Columbia. Details regarding the joint program were included in the narrative to [Standard 10.9](#).<sup>[10]</sup>

**[Credit Hours \(August 2018\)](#)**.<sup>[11]</sup> USC Aiken has a policy that defines the number of contact or instructional hours required for the credit value of a course. The credit value of courses is clearly presented in publications, including the Bulletin, class syllabi, and in the case of independent work, class contracts. Details regarding credit hours are presented in the narrative to [Standard 10.7](#).<sup>[12]</sup>

**[Distance and Correspondence Education \(August 2018\)](#)**.<sup>[13]</sup> USC Aiken does not provide correspondence education. As indicated in the narrative of [Standard 10.6](#)<sup>[14]</sup>, USC Aiken has processes in place to ensure the student who registers for a distance education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course. USC Aiken has a distance education policy and appropriate protocols to protect the privacy of students enrolled in distance education courses. Further no additional fees are charged for verification of student identity in distance education classes. All students in USC Aiken classes, regardless of location or delivery mode of instruction are counted and reported to SACSCOC on its annual Institutional Profile. Finally, the narrative to [Standard 14.3](#)<sup>[15]</sup> delineates the application of all appropriate standards and policies to distance educational offerings.

**[Integrity and Institutional Obligations to SACSCOC \(August 2018\)](#)**.<sup>[16]</sup> USC Aiken's commitment to integrity in all matters was stipulated in response to [Standard 1.1](#).<sup>[17]</sup>

**[Governing, Coordinating & Other State Agencies \(August 2018\)](#)**.<sup>[18]</sup> USC Aiken keeps the institution's governing board informed of and aware of its interactions with SACSCOC. Members of the governing board are aware of the dates of the evaluation committee's visit and copies of all accreditation related reports will be provided to the board.

**[Deadlines for Reports and Profiles \(August 2018\)](#)**.<sup>[19]</sup> USC Aiken is committed to the timely submission of all reports, profiles, and requests for information.

**Dual Enrollment (December 2018).** <sup>[20]</sup> USC Aiken applies the same policies, protocols, and standards to dual courses as it does to other academic offerings. Narratives pertaining to the development, delivery, and evaluation of instruction include all classes. Faculty rosters presented in support of the narrative to [Standard 6.2.a](#) <sup>[21]</sup> include dual course offerings at local schools. The narrative to [Standard 10.5](#) <sup>[22]</sup> includes admissions standards for dual-enrolled high school students.

**Quality and Integrity of Educational Credentials (December 2018).** <sup>[23]</sup> Transferability of credits associated with course offerings were noted on the faculty rosters provided in support of the narrative to [Standard 6.2.a](#).<sup>[21]</sup> As delineated in the narrative to [Standard 9.3](#) <sup>[24]</sup>, all General Education classes meet transfer-level quality. Further, only undergraduate courses taken at a regionally accredited institution of higher education which are comparable in content and credit hours to specific courses offered by USC Aiken and in which grades of “C” or better have been earned will be accepted for transfer in fulfillment of General education requirements. As discussed in the narrative to [Standard 10.8](#) <sup>[25]</sup>, USC Aiken has specific policies and processes for evaluating, awarding and accepting transfer credit that adhere to SACSCOC standards.

USC Aiken has strategically developed increase flexibility in deliver options while maintaining its commitment to program integrity – this is evident in the proliferation of completion programs consisting of junior and senior level classes that are offered online or at a 2-year regional campus within the USC system. Such programs allow place-bound students who have an associate degree or who left university prior to completion of a 4-year program to attain a baccalaureate degree. All completion programs have the same outcomes and curricular requirements as comparable traditional on-campus programs. Thus, care is taken to articulate all credits from another institution with existing USC Aiken classes to ensure fulfillment of programmatic and curricular objectives, as illustrated with the example provided in the narrative to [Standard 10.8](#).<sup>[25]</sup>

Similar care for the quality and integrity of academic programs is taken at the graduate level, particularly with respect to the jointly offered MEd Educational Technology program. USC Columbia faculty teaching within the program are noted on the USC Aiken faculty rosters in the response to [Standard 6.2.a](#) <sup>[21]</sup> and the program is

treated as any other USC Aiken graduate program - it follows program assessment protocols and is reviewed by the Graduate Advisory Council to ensure post-baccalaureate rigor, in accordance with [Standard 9.6](#).<sup>[26]</sup>

[The Quality Enhancement Plan \(December 2019\)](#).<sup>[27]</sup> USC Aiken affirms its commitment to enhance the overall institutional quality and student success. USC Aiken will address the criteria of [Standard 7.2](#)<sup>[28]</sup> through the submission of a Quality Enhancement Plan focused on a shift from transactional academic advisement to a holistic, student-centered model. The shift will occur through the development of a First Year Advisement Center staffed by full-time professional advisors proactively handling advisement for all freshman students.

[Complaint Procedures against SACSCOC or its Accredited Institutions \(December 2019\)](#).<sup>[29]</sup> The narrative to [Standard 12.4](#)<sup>[30]</sup> illustrates that USC Aiken has adopted reasonable and fairly administered student complaint policies and procedures, and that the procedures are well publicized.

[Reports Submitted for SACSCOC Review \(December 2019\)](#).<sup>[31]</sup> USC Aiken follows the prescribed structure, timeline for submission, and delivery format of requested reports.

[SACSCOC Flexibilities Policy regarding COVID-19 \(March 2020\)](#).<sup>[32]</sup> As noted in response to [Standard 14.2](#)<sup>[2]</sup>, USC Aiken submitted a temporary emergency relocation of instruction notification in the Spring of 2020. To support continuity of instruction, all classes were placed online and support services were provided virtually with faculty and staff working from home.

### Supporting Documentation

1. [Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions Policy Statement](#)
2. [Narrative to Standard 14.2](#)
3. [Institutional Obligations for Public Disclosure Policy Statement](#)
4. [Narrative to Standard 10.3](#)
5. [Narrative to Standard 8.1](#)

6. [Narrative to Standard 14.1](#)
7. [Reaffirmation of Accreditation and Subsequent Reports Policy Statement](#)
8. [Narrative to Standard 14.3](#)
9. [Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards Policy Statement](#)
10. [Narrative to Standard 10.9](#)
11. [Credit Hours Policy Statement](#)
12. [Narrative to Standard 10.7](#)
13. [Distance and Correspondence Education Policy Statement](#)
14. [Narrative to Standard 10.6](#)
15. [Narrative to Standard 14.3](#)
16. [Integrity and Institutional Obligations to SACSCOC Policy Statement](#)
17. [Narrative to Standard 1.1](#)
18. [Governing, Coordinating & Other State Agencies Policy Statement](#)
19. [Deadlines for Reports and Profiles Policy Statement](#)
20. [Dual Enrollment Policy Statement](#)
21. [Narrative to Standard 6.2.a](#)
22. [Narrative to Standard 10.5](#)
23. [Quality and Integrity of Educational Credentials Policy Statement](#)
24. [Narrative to Standard 9.3](#)
25. [Narrative to Standard 10.8](#)
26. [Narrative to Standard 9.6](#)
27. [The Quality Enhancement Plan Policy Statement](#)
28. [Narrative to Standard 7.2](#)
29. [Complaint Procedures against SACSCOC or its Accredited Institutions Policy Statement](#)
30. [Narrative to Standard 12.4](#)
31. [Reports Submitted for SACSCOC Review Policy Statement](#)
32. [SACSCOC Flexibilities Policy regarding COVID-19 Policy Statement](#)