

Programmatic Accreditation Communication Plan

(Created May 2015; revised July 2020)

Purpose

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville holds accreditations from 26 different agencies for various academic programs. The University is obligated to report changes in accreditation status to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), and federal agencies including the Department of Homeland Security and Department of Education. Furthermore, the U.S. Department of Education expects academic programs to present the description, mission and other information about the University to their accreditors in a similar manner.

For these reasons, the University of Tennessee, Knoxville needs a communication plan. This plan will ensure that academic programs keep the Office of the Provost informed of programmatic accreditation and allow the Office of the Provost to provide guidance to departments as they prepare statements about the University's description, mission and other information regarding characteristics of the University. The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) compiles reports submitted to THEC; programmatic accreditation status impacts performance funding to the University. The Office of Accreditation compiles reports submitted to SACSCOC, including notification of involuntary and voluntary withdrawal of programmatic accreditation.

Tasks and Responsibilities

1. **Name and address of the CEO.** It is the responsibility of each academic department to inform their accrediting board of the current Chancellor and provide full contact information. Copy the Chancellor and the Provost when such correspondence is sent (either electronically or through US Postal Service to the accrediting agency).
 - a. **Explanation.** The UT System Office of the President is still listed with many accreditors as the CEO. This delays the transmission of vital information.
 - b. Correct address and full contact information:

Chancellor Donde Plowman
University of Tennessee Knoxville
527 Andy Holt Tower
Knoxville, TN 37996

Email: chancellor@utk.edu
Phone: 865-974-3265
Fax: 865-974-4811

2. **Accredited Program Contact.** Each department head or dean, as appropriate, should inform the SACSCOC Liaison, Office of Accreditation, of the person with responsibility for maintenance of each program's accreditation.
 - a. The SACSCOC Liaison maintains a list of all accreditors, programs, contacts, year of most recent accreditation and date when the accreditation expires. The list is posted to <http://sacs.utk.edu>. The program contacts list is not included on the website.
 - b. The **Accredited Program Contact** will notify the Associate Dean for Library Collections when preparation of accreditation compliance documentation and/or self-study documentation is initiated to provide ample time (preferably 6 to 12 months prior to submission) for Library staff to compile the necessary data and documentation.
3. **Scheduling Accreditation Visits.** When scheduling the on-site accreditation visit, the department will contact the Office of the Chancellor, the Provost and other Chancellor Cabinet members, as appropriate, early in the process to ensure available dates and times for the on-site team to meet with university administrators. **Last minute scheduling is not advised.**
4. **Reports.** Each Accredited Program Contact will submit to the [Office of Accreditation](#) any annual or periodic reports (electronic copies are appropriate and preferred) provided to programmatic accreditation bodies. The Office of Accreditation will forward to others within UT administration needing the information. These are retained by the Office of the Provost.
5. **Correspondence.** Each Accredited Program Contact provides the Office of Accreditation electronic copy of correspondence that indicate
 - a. reaffirmation of programmatic accreditation,
 - b. request for an extension of the accreditation period,
 - c. extension request response from the accrediting agency,
 - d. final results of accreditation reviews, and/or
 - e. other relevant correspondence.
6. **Description of the University.** The SACSCOC policy Accrediting Decisions of Other Agencies states, "Any institution seeking or holding accreditation from more than one U.S. Department of Education recognized accrediting body must describe itself in identical terms to each agency with regard to purpose, governance, programs, degrees, diplomas, certificates, personnel, finances, and constituents, and must keep each USDOE recognized accrediting body, including SACSCOC, apprised of any change in its status with one or another accrediting agency." When preparing accreditation reports that require a description of the University, the mission and vision statements or other

language relating to the items previously listed, departments should contact the [SACSCOC Liaison](#) to ensure each uses similar language and maintains compliance with this policy.

7. ***Change in Accreditation Status.*** SACSCOC requires an institution report any change in status with an accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.
 - a. See SACSCOC Policy Accrediting Decisions of Other Agencies (available at <http://www.sacscoc.org> under Policies & Publications) that states “In accord with Federal code §602.28, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) observes the following policy concerning the accrediting decisions of other agencies: “SACSCOC does not grant candidacy, initial accreditation, or reaffirmation to an institution if the Commission knows, or has reason to know, that the institution is the subject of the following:
 1. A pending or final action brought by a State agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution’s legal authority to provide postsecondary education in the State;
 2. A decision by another United States Department of Education (USDOE) recognized agency to deny accreditation or candidacy;
 3. A pending or final action brought by another USDOE recognized accrediting agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution’s accreditation or candidacy; or
 4. Probation or an equivalent status imposed by a USDOE recognized accrediting agency.”
 - b. When a program voluntarily discontinues accreditation,
 1. SACSCOC Liaison must report to SACSCOC the reason for voluntarily discontinuing accreditation and provide appropriate documentation;
 2. OIRA must report the voluntary discontinuance of accreditation to THEC.
 - c. When an accreditor withdraws accreditation,
 1. The program must notify the SACSCOC Liaison and provide electronic copy of the notification documentation.
 2. SACSCOC Liaison must report to SACSCOC the reason for the withdrawn accreditation and provide appropriate documentation; iii. OIRA must report the withdrawn accreditation to THEC.