

<b>ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION</b>	ACAF Academic Affairs
<b>POLICY NUMBER</b>	ACAF 2.05
<b>POLICY TITLE</b>	Consortial Academic Contracts and Agreements
<b>SCOPE OF POLICY</b>	USC System
<b>DATE OF REVISION</b>	August 21, 2025
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER</b>	Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
<b>ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE</b>	Office of the Provost

**PURPOSE**

The University of South Carolina engages with institutions and agencies nationally and internationally to collaborate in the offering of consortial academic programs. These collaborations are typically regulated by a formal consortial contract or agreement that outlines expectations and obligations for each institution or entity. This policy defines the standards according to which consortial academic contracts and agreements are developed, governed and reviewed.

**DEFINITIONS**

As used in this policy, the term “consortial academic contract/agreement” applies to any formal contract/agreement governing and supporting educational programs that:

- Establishes a dual degree, a joint degree, joint certificate or comparable arrangement resulting in the award of one or more degrees.
- Involves partnership with an academic institution or agency inside or outside the United States.
- Is executed on behalf of or in the name of the University of South Carolina or any of its campuses, colleges, schools, departments, or units.

**POLICY STATEMENT**

All university consortial academic contracts and agreements are subject to the authority of the Board of Trustees. The Office of the Provost oversees their development and review for the Columbia and Regional campuses. Within the Office of the Provost, Global Carolina is charged with oversight of contracts and agreements with international institutions, as per University policy [ACAF 2.06 International Academic Agreements](#). For the Comprehensive campuses, the Chancellors oversee the development and review of university consortial academic contracts and agreements.

**PROCEDURES**

A. Required Approvals (may take up to 6 months prior to start date)

1. College:

All proposed or renewed agreements must be approved by the academic unit head(s), and the college or school dean(s). For Columbia and the Palmetto College campuses, the Academic Program Liaison (APL) for the college, school, or regional Palmetto College campus will serve as the main information resource on procedures for their respective unit.

## 2. Administrative Review

The enrollment and student financial and support services implications of consortial academic contracts and agreements may require acknowledgement by the following:

- a. Office of Admissions, if the consortial agreement involves special admissions or enrollment provisions for program participants
- b. Registrar, if special coding or tracking of students in the program will be required.
- c. Office of Financial Aid, if the program impacts the awarding of financial aid to student participants.

Other offices on the Columbia campus such as the Office of Enrollment Management, if the program impacts the overall enrollment makeup of the undergraduate student body, and/or if the program participants will be receiving scholarship aid or Office of Student Affairs and Academic Support, if program participants will require student support services, such as special accommodations, or housing.

## 3. Provost Office

The Office of the Provost will evaluate all consortial academic agreements and contracts against the purpose of the institution when proposed and every five years or when subject to renewal. The evaluation will consider the following factors: consistency with university mission, agreement activity, appropriateness of administration, adequacy of risk and safety management, academic soundness, and ongoing viability. In addition, approval may be required by one or more of the following for the Columbia and Regional campuses:

- a. Vice Provost and Associate Vice President of Global Affairs must approve international consortial agreements.
- b. Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Studies must approve consortial agreements pertaining to undergraduate degrees.
- c. Dean of the Graduate School must approve consortial agreements pertaining to graduate degrees.

#### 4. University

The University Budget Office advises the Provost regarding fiscal issues tied to consortial academic contracts and agreements. The Office of General Counsel processes and maintains records of all consortial agreements, each of which must be reviewed and signed by the Office of the Board of Trustees. No other individuals at the university are approved to sign agreements referencing the University of South Carolina. See also University policy [BTRU 1.04 Authority to Sign Contracts](#).

#### 5. External Review

These contracts and agreements may also require Commission on Higher Education (CHE) and Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) approval. For the Columbia and Regional campuses, academic units must consult with the Office of Academic Program Planning and Decision Support regarding external approvals.

### B. Approval Criteria

1. Each consortial academic contract/agreement must provide for the following:
  - a. A clear indication of the responsibilities of all parties to the agreement;
  - b. Provision for ensuring the quality of the programs and courses offered through the agreement;
  - c. Provision for evaluating the agreement in relation to the mission of the University;
  - d. An assessment of the risk and safety management practices.
  - e. Detailed information pertaining to curriculum and transfer of credit (if applicable).
2. The consortial academic contract/agreement should contain the anticipated beginning date of the agreement, a description of the agreement, and the complete address and location of all parties involved in the agreement. If the contract or agreement is for a dual or joint degree, then agreement must also address admission and progression requirements, the percentage of the degree that needs to be completed at the home institution, in residence requirements, and graduation requirements.
3. The consortial academic contract/agreement must be approved by all USC authorities before the program commences. If the contract of agreement is for a dual or joint degree, it must be approved by CHE and SACSCOC prior to implementation.
4. If the proposed or renewal agreement is related to a new or existing academic program or degree, the academic unit head(s) must also follow the procedures outlined in University

Policy ACAF 2.00, “Creation and Revision of Academic Programs” to ensure compliance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE) regulations.

5. The following disclaimer statement must be used in any materials describing the relationship with a non-SACSCOC-accredited institution, inside or outside the United States. USC is responsible for reviewing, approving, and monitoring the non-SACSCOC partner institutions’ statements of relationship to ensure conformity with the disclaimer:

*The University of South Carolina is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award Associate, Baccalaureate, Masters, and Doctoral degrees. [Name of partner institution] is not accredited by SACS Commission on Colleges and the accreditation of the University of South Carolina does not extend to or include [name of partner institution] or its students. Further, although the University of South Carolina agrees to accept certain course work from [name of partner institution] to be applied toward an award from University of South Carolina, that course work may not be accepted by other colleges or universities in transfer, even if it appears on a transcript from University of South Carolina. The decision to accept course work in transfer from any institution is made by the institution considering the acceptance of credits or course work.*

6. Specific criteria used when reviewing proposed and renewal agreements to assess the connection to the university's academic mission, institutional interest, and potential for success include:
  - a. the perceived level of demand for the proposed program or record of demand for an existing program requesting renewal;
  - b. the prospects for substantive collaboration to occur;
  - c. the caliber of the partnering college or outside entity;
  - d. the compatibility of institutional mission; and
  - e. the existence of agreements with other partnering institutions or agencies that may compete with or duplicate proposed agreement
7. Additional criteria used to review program agreements may include:
  - a. whether the partnering institution/agency (and the university when appropriate) has relevant coursework that the student can take;
  - b. for international agreements: the quality of the language instruction at the partnering institution;
  - c. the administrative support and facilities available for students at the partnering institution;

- d. the alignment between the academic calendar of the partnering institution and the University's academic calendar; and
- e. the ability of students from partnering institutions to meet admissions requirements.

C. Existing Consortial Program Review and Renewal

1. Consortial academic contracts and agreements will usually have five year terms unless otherwise stated in the agreement. The office responsible for contract or agreement management will be designated in the contract or agreement, and will work with the Office of Academic Program Planning and Decision Support for agreements with U.S. institutions or agencies, or under Global Carolina for international agreements. No domestic consortial academic contract and agreement should automatically renew.
2. Global Carolina will initiate and coordinate regular reviews of international agreements as per policy [ACAF 2.06 International Academic Agreements](#). The Office of Academic Program Planning and Decision Support will initiate and coordinate regular reviews of non-international agreements, except those for contract courses maintained by the College of Education for the Columbia and the regional Palmetto College campuses. The chief academic affairs officers on the comprehensive campuses will coordinate regular reviews of non-international agreements for their campuses.
3. The responsible office designated according to I.D.1 above will notify the Office of the Provost in writing regarding the outcome of all agreement or program reviews. Additionally, copies of all agreement or program renewals should be forwarded to the Office of Academic Program Planning and Decision Support.
4. The responsible office designated according to I.D.1 above is responsible for maintaining the official list of their respective agreements and programs on the Columbia and Regional campuses.

**RELATED UNIVERSITY, STATE AND FEDERAL POLICIES**

[ACAF 2.00 Creation and Revision of Academic Programs](#)

[ACAF 2.06 International Academic Agreements](#)

[BTRU 1.04 Authority to Sign Contracts](#)

**HISTORY OF REVISIONS**

DATE OF REVISION	REASON FOR REVISION
	New policy approval. To provide policy and procedural criteria for the establishment and renewal of consortial academic contracts and agreements, whether national or international.
April 14, 2025	Policy reviewed, revalidated and updated to standard template.

August 21, 2025	Policy updated to align with current procedures. Updated item 2 in procedures to reflect current enrollment management positions.
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**APPENDIX**  
[Domestic Consortial Agreement Review/Renewal Form](#)