



REPORT OF THE REAFFIRMATION COMMITTEE

Statement Regarding the Report

The Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) is responsible for making the final determination on reaffirmation of accreditation based on the findings contained in this committee report, the institution's response to issues contained in the report, other assessments relevant to the review, and application of the Commission's policies and procedures. Final interpretation of the Principles of Accreditation and final action on the accreditation status of the institution rest with SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

Name of the Institution: **University of South Carolina - Columbia**

Date of the Review: **March 22 – 25, 2021**

SACSCOC Staff Member: **Dr. Linda Thomas-Glover**

Chair of the Committee: **Dr. Laurie Casteen**
Associate Dean of Students
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, VA

or mode of delivery, or location. These policies are grounded in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) definition of a credit hour. These policies require oversight by persons academically qualified to make the necessary judgments. In educational programs not based on credit hours (e.g., internships experiential learning, laboratory courses) the institution has a sound means for determining credit equivalencies by appropriate faculty and directed through the Faculty Senate Instructional Development Committee. These policies are under the oversight of qualified faculty within the unit and by Faculty Senate. Credit for courses offered exclusively for a professional degree from the College of Pharmacy, College of Medicine, and School of Law are determined by the unit's faculty and are described and examples are provided. Credit by examination for undergraduate courses may be approved by the dean or department chair for a grade of B or better.

The institution provided ample evidence that it publishes and implements policies for determining the amount and level of credit awarded for its courses, regardless of format, mode of delivery, or location. These policies are grounded in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) definition of a credit hour and require oversight by persons academically qualified to make the necessary judgments. The institution has a thorough means for determining credit equivalencies – by appropriate faculty and directed through the Faculty Senate Instructional Development Committee – for educational programs not based on credit hours (e.g., internships, experiential learning, laboratory courses, etc.). The policies are under the oversight of qualified faculty within appropriate units as well as by the Faculty Senate. Credit for courses offered exclusively for a professional degree from the College of Pharmacy, College of Medicine, and School of Law are determined by the unit's faculty and are described and examples are provided. Credit-by-examination for undergraduate courses may be approved by the dean or department chair for a grade of B or better.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee interviewed the Interim Director Office of Academic Programs and Director Office of Distributed Learning; University Registrar; Vice Provost and Dean of Faculty; Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Studies; Dean, USC Salkehatchie (Palmetto College); Associate Provost (Palmetto College); Transfer Evaluation Coordinator, Office of the Registrar; Dean, South Carolina Honors College; Associate Dean for Undergraduate Student Affairs, Undergraduate Program Director, Public Health, and SME evaluator for Public Health; Assistant Dean for Enrollment Management and Academic Program Development, College of Education and SME evaluator for Education; Undergraduate Student Services Coordinator, School of Visual Art & Design, and SME evaluator for Art; and Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Advisement and Director of University Advising Center in support of the institution's case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

- 10.8 The institution publishes policies for evaluating, awarding, and accepting credit not originating from the institution. The institution ensures (a) the academic quality of any credit or coursework recorded on its transcript, (b) an approval process with oversight by persons academically qualified to make the necessary judgments, and (c) the credit awarded is comparable to a designated credit experience and is consistent with the institution's mission.
(Evaluating and awarding academic credit)

The institution has in place a comprehensive system of policies and practices for evaluating, awarding, and accepting credit not originating from the institution, which is enacted through the faculty governance process. Articulation agreements define the process of awarding from other participating institutions and from a statewide articulation agreement origination from the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education.

Transfer credit is determined either by qualified faculty evaluators or by qualified evaluators trained by, overseen by, and evaluated by qualified faculty. A roster of qualified faculty and their suitable qualifications is provided. Credit for graduate course work from other institutions “must be relevant to the program and have course content and a level of instruction equivalent to that offered by the institution’s own graduate programs,” including courses for professional degrees. All these policies and practices together ensure the academic quality of any credits appearing on the institution’s transcripts. An illustrative example of related policy use and implementation could not be found, nor was there provided a valid explanation for this.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee examined the process used to evaluate and award academic credit by reviewing the online Transfer Evaluation System (TES) and the database of course transfer equivalency (table) with other institutions. The institution provided multiple examples of redacted transcripts in the Focused Report depicting equivalency and applicability of transfer credits across all levels of student categories including in-state and between four senior institutions (USC Columbia, Aiken, Beaufort, and Upstate), community colleges, other regionally accredited institutions outside of South Carolina, as well as overseas institutions.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee interviewed the Interim Director Office of Academic Program and Director Office of Distributed Learning; University Registrar; Vice Provost and Dean of Faculty; Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Studies; Dean of USC Salkehatchie; Associate Provost (Palmetto College); Transfer Evaluation Coordinator in the Office of the Registrar; Dean of South Carolina Honors College; Associate Dean for Undergraduate Student Affairs; Undergraduate Program Director for Public Health; SME evaluator for Public Health; Assistant Dean for Enrollment Management and Academic Program Development in the College of Education and SME evaluator for Education; Undergraduate Student Services Coordinator in the School of Visual Art and Design, and SME evaluator for Art; and the Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Advisement and Director of University Advising Center in support of the institution’s case for compliance.

- 10.9 The institution ensures the quality and integrity of the work recorded when an institution transcripts courses or credits as its own when offered through a cooperative academic arrangement. The institution maintains formal agreements between the parties involved, and the institution regularly evaluates such agreements.
(Cooperative academic arrangements)

The institution and regional Palmetto College campuses do not transcript courses or credits earned at other institutions as its own. Academic Affairs policies ensure quality of courses recorded on a transcript when offered through a cooperative agreement, directing agreements related to new or existing programs through the faculty governance process to ensure quality. These agreements, however, would be appropriately addressed under Standard 10.8.