

Preparing for the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee Visit

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Commission on Colleges

Rockingham Community College | September 25-28, 2023



SACSCOC by the Numbers

14 Sections with 86 standards that require response in the SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation. 


11 States in the southeast are in the SACSCOC region—as well as schools in Latin America, Dubai, and Canada.


 **369**

Pages in RCC's Compliance Certification PDF report (submitted March 2023).

Evidence files included with the Compliance Certification Report.

3,272 

Average number of standards that colleges and universities require follow-up on when submitting a Focused Report. **15.7** 

3 Standards that required a follow-up in RCC's Focused Report. 

7 Reviewers on the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee.



5 Pages in RCC's Focused Report (PDF)

ACCREDITATION OVERVIEW

What you need to know about accreditation and the reaffirmation process.

ACCREDITATION

Rockingham Community College is part of the Southern Association of College and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Class of 2024 for reaffirmation of our accreditation status. It is hard to overemphasize the importance of accreditation to institutions. Accreditation is the way the federal government ensures compliance with federal laws and mandates for higher education. Additionally, accreditation determines the institution's eligibility to receive federal and state funds, and our ability to transfer credits with other schools. Our campus SACSCOC liaison is Gretchen Parrish, Associate Vice President for Technology and Institutional Effectiveness.

COMPLIANCE CERTIFICATION

As part of this reaffirmation review, we submitted our Compliance Certification, an extensive self-study of all aspects of the College at the end of February 2023. The effort was led by the SACSCOC Writing and Review Teams which included many faculty and staff. Everyone on campus helped in some way, by participating in assessment, preparing needed reports and documentation, and helping to ensure our ongoing compliance with the more than 70 standards required in the SACSCOC *Principles of Accreditation*. An Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee comprised of our peers from other institutions across the SACSCOC region came together in April 2023 to review our Compliance Certification Report.

FOCUSED REPORT

Following the Off-Site Review of our Compliance Certification Report, the committee requested follow-up on three standards:

6.2.a Faculty Qualifications 10.2 Public Information 14.1 Publication of Accreditation Status

In August 2023, RCC submitted a follow-up Focused Report on these three areas to provide clarity for the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN (QEP)

As part of the reaffirmation of accreditation process, every SACSCOC institution is required to develop a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) which "identifies key issues emerging from institutional assessment and focuses on learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning and accomplishing the mission of the institution." The QEP topic for RCC is soft/employability skills. The full report of the QEP is available on the Employee Portal.

Members of the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee may approach anyone – faculty they meet in the elevator, students having lunch, staff whom they visit with during meetings and meals – and ask them if they know what our QEP topic is. Be prepared!

ON-SITE REAFFIRMATION VISIT

September 25-28, 2023, RCC will host a team of peer reviewers from other colleges and universities in the SACSCOC region. This On-Site Reaffirmation Committee will try to resolve any lingering Compliance Certification questions from the Focused Report and will focus their attention on the QEP. During the visit, the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee may request to meet with individuals or groups of people (students, faculty or staff) to understand specific issues related to compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation* and the QEP. There may be interviews scheduled at the last minute, but we expect for them to occur on Tuesday, September 26 and Wednesday, September 27. Thank you for your flexibility and willingness to meet with the Committee members during that time!

EXIT CONFERENCE

The Exit Conference will take place on the morning of Thursday, September 28. The Exit Conference is a brief dialogue between the SACSCOC On-Site Reaffirmation Committee and institutional leadership during which the Committee conveys its initial findings. The SACSCOC On-Site Reaffirmation Committee will submit a final report at a later date.

SCHEDULE

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

Afternoon Committee members arrive

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

Morning (TBD) Reidsville High School
Afternoon Remaining committee members arrive

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

10:00am-10:20am Welcome Session with Leadership Team
10:30am-11:20am Meeting with QEP Leadership
12:00pm Lunch with Group of Students and Faculty
1:15pm-4:00pm Committee Interviews
Campus Tour

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27

8:30am-10:00am Committee Interviews
8:30am-9:00am Tour of Key Facilities
9:00am-10:00am Meeting with Board of Trustees
10:15am-11:00am *Exploring the QEP:
An Examination of the Focus and Assessment*
11:15am-12:00pm *Exploring the QEP:
An Examination of the Institutional Capacity and
Campus Involvement*
2:00pm-4:00pm Follow-up Interviews

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28

9:00am-9:30am Exit Conference

ON-SITE COMMITTEE FOCUS:

The areas the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee are most likely to investigate include:

- QEP (Standard 7.2) – including meeting with various constituents to see how the QEP is going to move our college forward and benefit our students.
- Assessment – including meetings with program coordinator faculty and others charged with assessment on campus.
- Compliance questions and US Department of Education requirements (table below).

Standards Required to be Reviewed On-Site

5.4	Qualified administrative/academic officers	10.5	Admissions policies and practices
6.1	Full-time faculty	10.6	Distance and correspondence education
6.2.b	Program faculty	10.7	Policies for awarding credit
6.2.c	Program coordination	12.1	Student support services
8.1	Student achievement	12.4	Student complaints
8.2.a	Student outcomes: educational programs	13.6	Federal and state responsibilities
9.1	Program content	13.7	Physical resources
9.2	Program length	14.1	Publication of accreditation status
9.3	General education requirements	14.3	Comprehensive institutional review
10.2	Public information	14.4	Representation to other agencies

TOP FIVE THINGS TO REMEMBER:

1. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee is composed of highly qualified individuals from peer institutions similar in size and scope to RCC. The number one goal of the Committee is to ensure the college is fulfilling its mission to students.
2. SACSCOC does not provide the Committee a list of questions; the Committee develops their own questions based on the materials provided by the College in the Compliance Certification, Focused Report, QEP, and information gathered during the visit itself.
3. Everyone will be asked about the QEP. Be sure to familiarize yourself with *Flight Ready* prior to the visit.
4. Always be honest and act with integrity.
5. If you do not know the answer to a question, simply say so and offer to find the answer to the question following the interview. Pass the answer along to Gretchen Parrish or Laura Jennings to communicate it with the Committee.

TIPS FOR WORKING WITH THE ON-SITE REAFFIRMATION COMMITTEE

- Operate with integrity in all matters related to SACSCOC. This is in the *Principles of Accreditation*, Section 1 and something on which we are assessed.
- Know RCC's mission, vision, and goals.
- Keep your schedule as flexible as possible in case you are called to be interviewed by the SACSCOC On-Site Reaffirmation Committee related to your area of responsibility. If so, please bring copies of whatever documents are requested and be prepared to answer hard questions.
- If questioned or interviewed by a site visitor, answer honestly. Focus on the positive attributes of the College and the strategies that are in place for areas needing improvement.
- If you do not know the answer, just say so and ask for time to find out. Send your answer to Gretchen Parrish or Laura Jennings. Do not communicate with members of the committee outside of your scheduled interview time.
- Interviews will likely be 20 to 30 minutes. Preparation is critical.
- Think deeply about how planning and evaluation for your area/program has resulted in continuous improvement – through awareness, innovation, adaptation, and so on.
- The members of the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee are our peers, and generally consists of chancellors and provosts, administrators, and faculty members on other campuses in our region. They understand the complexity of the SACSCOC standards and they want us to move through the reaccreditation process as smoothly as possible. *The On-Site Committee want to see us through a successful visit and reaffirmation of our accreditation status.*
- The reviewers have prepared thoroughly for their visit. They have looked at our Compliance Certification, read the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) and the Focused Report, and often have spent a generous amount of time on the college website and reading internal documents such as the *RCC Catalog and Student Handbook*.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR:

Faculty/Staff should prepare by reviewing the narrative and all supporting documentation submitted in the Compliance Certification and Focused Report. Be sure to read and understand the guidelines published in the SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation for your area. You may be asked to provide additional documentation during the visit; if this happens, let Gretchen Parrish or Laura Jennings know what has been requested. They will collect the materials and facilitate delivery to the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

Students should expect questions related to the student experience and the QEP. They may be asked about program of study, career choice, challenges faced as a student at RCC, etc.

Board of Trustees should expect broad questions about the following:

- Ways in which the College fulfills its mission.
- How governing structure and lines of responsibility are followed.
- QEP.

INTERVIEW DOS AND DON'TS

DOS

- ✓ Prepare in advance by reviewing materials and documentation.
- ✓ Arrive early for the interview time.
- ✓ Let the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee set the pace of the interview.
- ✓ Listen carefully to the question being asked and tailor your answer to address the question.
- ✓ Be thorough in your response, but concise. Do not elaborate unless requested.
- ✓ Focus on the positive attributes of the College.
- ✓ Answer all questions honestly and to the best of your ability.
- ✓ Ask for clarification if you don't understand a question.
- ✓ Be honest and be yourself.
- ✓ Remain professional, cordial, and respectful.
- ✓ Thank the peer reviewers for serving on the committee.

DON'TS

- ✗ Provide information not specifically requested by members of the Committee.
- ✗ Volunteer information on matters about which you may not be entirely informed.
- ✗ Chat or make small talk with interviewers.
- ✗ Criticize or blame others.
- ✗ Make excuses or negative comments.
- ✗ Gossip.
- ✗ Lie or misrepresent anything.
- ✗ Be unprepared.
- ✗ Treat the interviewer casually .
- ✗ Use a lot of acronyms or jargon without content.
- ✗ Give one or two word answers.
- ✗ Be late.

TIPS FOR PREPARING FOR THE ON-SITE VISIT

- Have a basic understanding of our Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP): Flight Ready. Review the [QEP report](#) on the Employee Portal.
- If you teach courses, educate students about the upcoming reaffirmation site-visit and the QEP topic.
- Be familiar with the RCC's mission:

The mission of Rockingham Community College is to enhance individual and community success by fostering life-long learning and economic development through high-quality, accessible education and innovative partnerships.
- Review and prepare for the sample interview questions in this document.
- Review SACSCOC principles that are pertinent to your area of responsibility. See the description of standards in the [SACSCOC Resource Manual](#) as well as the College's response to each standard in the [Compliance Certification](#) Report linked on the Employee Portal. Examples of relevant sections include, but are *not limited to*:

Facilities and External Affairs	Section 13: Financial and Physical Resources
Administrative Services	Section 13: Financial and Physical Resources
Faculty	Section 6: Faculty Section 8: Student Achievement Section 9: Educational Program Structure and Content
Student Development	Section 10: Educational Policies, Procedures, and Practices Section 11: Library and Learning/Information Resources Section 12: Academic and Student Support Services
Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness (all areas)	Section 7: Institutional Planning and Effectiveness Section 8: Student Achievement

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN (QEP)

What is a QEP?

As part of the reaffirmation process, every SACSCOC institution is required to develop a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) which “identifies key issues emerging from institutional assessment and focuses on learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning and accomplishing the mission of the institution.”

What is RCC’s QEP?

RCC’s QEP, *Flight Ready*, focuses on soft/employability skills. The QEP topic selection process involved input from many stakeholders including RCC faculty and staff, students, employers, and the community.

Why are soft/employability skills important?

Success after college graduation requires an expanded set of skills beyond the technical or academic skills learned in the classroom. Students entering the workforce need to bring with them the soft skills necessary to function efficiently in professional settings. Research indicates that employers favor candidates who communicate well, show initiative, and demonstrate reliability. Soft skills are important for the future success of students planning to transfer to four-year institutions. Research shows a clear correlation between the teaching of soft skills and later success in the college classroom. The connection between soft skills and academic success established in the literature provides evidence that RCC’s QEP focus will benefit students entering the workplace and transfer institutions.

What are the goals of the QEP?

Flight Ready seeks to improve graduates’ readiness for entering the workforce or transferring to a four-year institution by developing students’ soft skills in the areas of written and verbal communication, initiative related to improving academic performance, and reliability in planning and completing college-related activities. The QEP utilizes multiple strategies that focus on developing students’ soft skills, readying them for transition into the workforce or to a four-year transfer institution. These strategies include in-class assignments and interventions addressing *Flight Ready* student learning outcomes (SLO), out-of-class support activities, and professional development for RCC employees.

GOAL 1: PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION	SLO 1.1: Students will produce effective written professional communication. SLO 1.2: Students will produce effective verbal professional communication.
GOAL 2: ACADEMIC INITIATIVE	SLO 2.1: Students identified as at-risk in course performance will take appropriate steps to improve their academic performance. SLO 2.2: Students will utilize instructional feedback.
GOAL 3: RELIABILITY	SLO 3.1: Students will develop strategies to manage their time more effectively.
GOAL 4: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	Operational Outcome: Employees will complete professional development aligned with QEP goals.

How will the QEP be implemented?

Through the implementation of *Flight Ready*, each degree program at RCC will include at least one SLO from each of the student-focused Goals (1-3). Courses within each degree program will include assignments and interventions that develop each of the *Flight Ready* skills. *Flight Ready* provides QEP-specific assignments and interventions for faculty to address these SLO, provides College employees with professional development so employees can better demonstrate and teach the skills, and provides out-of-class support activities to employees and students to promote teaching and learning of the *Flight Ready* skills.

Why should I know about the QEP?

Members of the On-Site Review Committee may approach anyone – faculty they meet in the elevator, students having lunch, staff whom they visit with during meetings and meals – and ask them if they know what our QEP topic is. Please be prepared!

Where can I find more information about the QEP?

The full QEP report is available on the Employee Portal.

SAMPLE SACSCOC INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Approximately two weeks before the arrival of the team, a group of individuals on campus will be "scheduled for interviews" on Tuesday, September 26 and Wednesday, September 27. You will be interviewed on topics related to your area or the College in general. Reviewing this document and the possible questions below will help to prepare you for your interview. Please do not be alarmed if you are asked to be in more than one interview. It is possible that the Committee may decide that additional interviews may not be necessary if all questions are answered during an initial interview.

- ✓ Please wear your RCC nametag September 25-28.
- ✓ Always be courteous and helpful yet refrain from initiating a conversation with the team members.
- ✓ Answer only the questions that are asked during your interview.
- ✓ If you do not know the answer, just say so and ask for time to find out. Send your answer to Gretchen Parrish or Laura Jennings. Do not communicate with members of the committee outside of your interview time.
- ✓ Focus on the positive attributes of the university and the strategies that are in place for areas needing improvement.
- ✓ Please do not guess or make assumptions.

The following questions are provided as sample or mock questions one might expect the SACSCOC On-Site Committee to ask. While not an exhaustive or guaranteed list, the questions do align with the Principles of Accreditation and Standards assessed by SACSCOC in the Compliance Certification

Department/Program/Division General Questions:

- How does your program/department/office/position support and reinforce the mission of RCC?
- How do you participate in planning and assessment? Which plans do you contribute information or create?
- Can your dept./program/division provide examples of evidence of improvement based on assessment?
- Please show me or tell me about the mission statement for your organizational unit.
- Can you tell me about some specific strategic goals that your unit is pursuing at the present time?
- Can you tell me how your unit will evaluate the achievement of those goals to ensure that they are accomplishing their intended outcome?
- Please show me the results of some tests and/or other analyses and evaluations of assessment.
- Do you have available copies of any external program reviews or accreditation reviews from specialized accrediting groups?
- Please show me the results of any surveys that you may have conducted.
- Can you show me a current policy (procedures) manual for your unit?
- Do you have access to, and can you show me minutes of administrative committees, councils, etc. to document where they are addressing matters of institutional effectiveness?
- How is your own work performance evaluated? What are the criteria or expectations?
- Please describe what limitations, if any, prevent you from doing your best work here?

Compliance Certification Report Questions:

- Can you tell me about the mission of the College in your own words?
- Were you involved in the development of the Compliance Certification report?
- Have you had an opportunity to review the Compliance Certification report (i.e.: was it available for your review?)

SAMPLE QUESTIONS CONT...

Assessment/Institutional Effectiveness Questions:

- To what extent and in what ways does the institution demonstrate that it uses the results of its planning and evaluation efforts?
- Does the institution and its components have stated goals or expected educational results that reflect a direct relationship to the statement of purpose/mission?
- What provision does the institution make for evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of your own organizational unit?
- How does the institution gather and use the results of feedback from its constituents regarding the quality and performance of instructional services?
- Are there clear and documented examples of changes -- additions, deletions, revisions -- made to any program or policy as a result of assessment or other effectiveness activity?
- Please tell me about something you do today differently than you did a few years ago as a result of some assessment activity. Describe that assessment activity.
- How does the institution use the results of its institutional research activities to change, strengthen, or enhance its educational programs and services?
- How are institutional research findings communicated to you?
- How does the College plan what it is going to do in the future? Do you have an opportunity for input?
- Can you describe something the College once planned to do through its formal planning process that was later discovered, through its evaluation process, to not work as expected? What did the College do with this finding? Describe how the College made decisions about this plan and this evaluation.

Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Questions:

- What is a QEP?
- Why is a QEP necessary?
- What is RCC's QEP, *Flight Ready*, topic?
- What are the specific goals of *Flight Ready*?
- How will *Flight Ready* improve student learning?
- How will student learning be assessed?
- Does RCC's QEP include specific activities for faculty?
- How will RCC support the successful implementation and continuation of the QEP?
- What was the process used to select and develop the QEP?
- When will RCC's QEP begin?
- How did you or your department contribute to the development of the topic and comprehensive planning for the QEP?
- How will the QEP benefit the students in your program/dept./division?
- How will your program/dept./division be involved with the implementation of the QEP?



GENERAL SACSCOC FAQs

What is SACSCOC?

SACSCOC is the acronym for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (founded 1895), whose Commission on Colleges is the accrediting body for Rockingham Community College. SACSCOC is approved by the U.S. Department of Education to accredit institutions in its region. Approximately 80 institutions undergo review each year by SACSCOC.

How often do we participate and why do we participate?

Continually, with formal application for reaffirmation every ten years, because of required approvals for substantive change, eligibility for federal funds, and assessment of institutional quality. Although we formally seek reaffirmation only every decade, our participation in SACSCOC is ongoing through requests for substantive change, program assessments, and planning for institutional effectiveness. We participate for several reasons. One is that accreditation by SACSCOC ensures access to federal funds, including those for student scholarships and financial aid. Accreditation also gives RCC the stamp of approval indicating that we have been evaluated thoroughly by our peers according to national educational standards. Finally, the self-analysis leading to reaffirmation gives us valuable insight by documenting areas of excellence and highlighting areas needing improvement.

What constitutes reaffirmation?

SACSCOC requires institutions to demonstrate compliance with each standard as it appears in the *Principles of Accreditation*.

The *Principles of Accreditation* are based upon the following four basic elements;

- Peer review
- Institutional integrity
- Continuous improvement
- Student learning

What happens between one reaffirmation and the next?

Interim reporting, continuous assessment, planning for institutional effectiveness. Sustained efforts are ongoing through assessments of our effectiveness as an institution. SACSCOC's underlying philosophy is that the primary goal of institutions of higher education is to provide a quality education whose effectiveness can be documented. We seek approvals from SACSCOC for substantive changes to approved programs, including new sites. Program assessments of student learning continue. During the 10-year period, we also submit updated institutional summaries, prepare a Fifth-Year Interim Report, and monitor the impact of our QEP on student learning.

What does SACSCOC require in order to reaffirm our accreditation?

Step 1: Submit the Compliance Certification Report (March 2023)

Step 2: Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviews the Compliance Certification Report and provides feedback. (April 2023)

Step 3: The institution responds to the Off-Site Committee's findings by submitting a Focused Report. (August 2023)

Step 4: The institution submits a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). (August 2023)

Step 5: On-Site Reaffirmation Committee visits the College to learn more about the QEP and verify compliance with the SACSCOC standards. (September 2023)

Step 6: The SACSCOC Board of Trustee votes on reaffirmation. (July 2024)

For questions related to SACSCOC accreditation, the SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation, the College Compliance Certification, Focused Report, or On-Site Visit:

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For questions related to the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP):

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THANK YOU!

**RCC's successful reaccreditation is a
result of your efforts every day.**

