



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What you need to know about SACSCOC accreditation probation

Virginia Union University is committed to student success and to meeting our regional accreditation criteria. This FAQ gives information to commonly asked questions regarding the recent placement of VUU under Accreditation Probation by our accrediting agency, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

All the issues identified by the SACSCOC are in the process of being addressed through revisions and improvement in our policies, procedures, and institutional oversight. **Virginia Union University remains accredited** during the probation period.

Any additional questions may be directed to VUU SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison Dr. Mignon Jacobs via mjacobs@vuu.edu.

Q: Who is the SACSCOC and what is accreditation?

A: The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) is one of several regional and national organizations that accredit colleges and universities. Accreditation is an important indication that a college/university is operating acceptably. According to the U.S. Department of Education, "Accrediting agencies . . . develop evaluation criteria and conduct peer evaluations to assess whether . . . those criteria are met. Institutions and/or programs that request an agency's evaluation and that meet an agency's criteria are then 'accredited' by that agency."

Q: What is Accreditation Probation?

A: Probation is a public status signifying that an accredited institution is no longer in compliance with one or more of SACSCOC *Principles of Accreditation*. **Virginia Union University's accreditation remains in effect during the 12-month probation period**, during which time we will address SACSCOC's request to see a “clean” audit, free of comments about ways to improve financial controls. Once we have done this, **VUU will return to normal accreditation status with no lapse in accreditation**. Virginia Union University had been on monitoring for two (2) years and the maximum consecutive time for a monitoring period is two (2) years. Virginia Union University was at the end of its two-year monitoring period. However, instead of removing the institution’s accreditation, the SACSCOC Board of Trustees can extend accreditation for Good Cause if (1) the institution has demonstrated significant recent accomplishments in addressing non-compliance, and (2) the institution has provided evidence which makes it reasonable for the Board to assume it will remedy all deficiencies within a 12–month period, and (3) the institution has provided assurance to the Board that it is not aware of any other reasons, other than those identified by the Board, why the institution cannot be continued for Good Cause. Probation is the most serious public sanction imposed by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees short of loss of accreditation. In December 2024, Virginia Union University will have been on Probation for Good Cause for one year. For additional information about sanctions, see the SACSCOC policy entitled [“Sanctions, Denial of Reaffirmation and Removal from Membership”](#).

Q: Why is VUU on probation?

A: Virginia Union University was continued in accreditation for Good Cause and placed on Probation because the SACSCOC Board of Trustees determined that the institution did not demonstrate compliance with the Principles of Accreditation, namely, Core Requirement 4.1 (Governing board characteristics), Core Requirement 13.2 (Financial documents), Standard 13.3 (Financial responsibility), Standard 13.4 (Control of finances), and Standard 13.6 (Federal and state responsibilities).

Q: What prompted the SACSCOC review?

A: Virginia Union University was continued in accreditation for Good Cause and placed on Probation because the SACSCOC Board of Trustees determined that the institution failed to demonstrate compliance with the Principles of Accreditation, namely, Core Requirement 4.1

(Governing board characteristics), Core Requirement 13.2 (Financial documents), Standard 13.3 (Financial responsibility), Standard 13.4 (Control of finances), and Standard 13.6 (Federal and state responsibilities). These standards expect an institution (1) has a governing board that (b) exercises fiduciary oversight of the institution; (2) to provide the following financial statements: (a) an institutional audit (or Standard Review Report issued in accordance with Statements on Standards for Accounting and Review Services issued by the AICPA for those institutions audited as part of a system-wide or statewide audit) for the most recent fiscal year prepared by an independent certified public accountant and/or an appropriate governmental auditing agency employing the appropriate audit (or Standard Review Report) guide; (b) a statement of financial position of unrestricted net assets, exclusive of plant assets and plant-related debt, which represents the change in unrestricted net assets attributable to operations for the most recent year; and (c) an annual budget that is preceded by sound planning, is subject to sound fiscal procedures, and is approved by the governing board; (3) to manage its financial resources in a responsible manner; (4) exercise appropriate control over all its financial resources; and (5) (a) is in compliance with its program responsibilities under Title IV of the most recent Higher Education Act as amended and (b) audits financial aid programs as required by federal and state regulations.

Q: How long will VUU be on Probation?

A: Virginia Union University was at the end of its two-year monitoring period, however, instead of removing the institution's accreditation, the SACSCOC Board of Trustees can extend accreditation for Good Cause if (1) the institution has demonstrated significant recent accomplishments in addressing non-compliance, and (2) the institution has provided evidence which makes it reasonable for the Board to assume it will remedy all deficiencies within a 12-month period, and (3) the institution has provided assurance to the Board that it is not aware of any other reasons, other than those identified by the Board, why the institution cannot be continued for Good Cause.

Q: Has the University lost its accreditation?

A: No. VUU continues to be accredited.

Q: Who is responsible on campus for making sure VUU remains accredited?

A: The University President has the primary responsibility for ensuring that the University maintains its accreditation.

Q: What happens if the areas of concern are not fixed? Will VUU lose its accreditation?

A: We are confident that we can address the areas of concern. VUU fully expects to demonstrate compliance within the period of Probation. The University's Board of Trustees and Administration are fully committed and prepared to implement all of the necessary corrective actions to satisfactorily address the areas of concern.

Q: Does the Probation status decision affect students' financial aid?

A: No. The University remains accredited by SACSCOC and is still recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) in the Database of Accredited Postsecondary Institutions and Programs to offer and award federal financial aid to eligible students.

Q: Will this Probation status impact the courses the University offers this spring?

A: No. The SACSCOC Probation status will have no impact on the course offerings.

Q: How will probation impact students' ability to gain internships?

A: The SACSCOC Probation status did not arise from concerns about the quality of Virginia Union University's educational programs. VUU students will continue to receive a first-class education and will remain highly competitive for internship opportunities.

Q: How will a potential graduate school view this Probation by SACSCOC in determining whether a VUU graduate is accepted?

A: VUU students will still be graduates of an accredited institution. The SACSCOC Probation did not arise from concerns about the quality of VUU's academic programs. The University's graduates will continue to be highly competitive for admission to graduate programs.

Q: Will students still receive full credit for the classes currently enrolled in on their transcripts?

A: Yes. The SACSCOC Probation status does not impact the academic standing or coursework of VUU students.

Q: How does probation affect students' graduation this fall/spring? Will employers want to hire VUU graduates?

A: A VUU degree will continue to be valued and is just as valid as it was before the institution was placed on Probation. Students will still graduate from an accredited institution. The SACSCOC Probation did not arise from academic concerns about the quality of VUU's education. VUU graduates will remain highly competitive for employment.

Q: What does probation mean for a current student's degree?

A: VUU remains accredited during the probation period. Other institutions of higher education will continue to accept VUU credits in transfer or for admission to a program at a higher level. Accreditation probation will have **no impact on federal funding, including financial aid available to students.**

Q: Would a completed degree be recognized by other institutions? Would a student be able to get into graduate school? Would credits transfer to an accredited institution?

A: The decision to accept or not accept credits from another institution, whether accredited or unaccredited, always remains with the receiving institution. Concerned students should contact institutions they are considering transferring to and determine the answers to these questions. **At all times while on sanction, VUU remains accredited, and students remain eligible for Title IV funds.** Students will be considered to have graduated from an accredited institution, even though the institution is on sanction. Institutions remain accredited, unless and until the Commission withdraws accreditation.

Q: What actions has VUU taken and what else must it do to ensure uninterrupted accreditation?

A: The University is continuing to expand the Business Office, strengthening our internal fiscal infrastructure to accommodate the University's growth. This includes streamlining processes and reducing the time it takes to accomplish transactions. The leadership team continually reviews all internal processes to make sure they demonstrate the speed, rigor, and commitment to compliance that our stakeholders expect. The University is confident that it will have addressed the areas of concern and that VUU's accreditation will continue uninterrupted.

Q: What will happen in December 2024?

A: The SACSCOC Board of Trustees will consider the accreditation status of Virginia Union University following a review of a Monitoring Report submitted by the institution addressing the standards cited above. The Board will have the following options: (1) remove the institution from Probation without an additional report; (2) remove the institution from Probation and request a Follow-Up Report at the time of the submission of the Fifth-Year Interim Report; (3) continue accreditation for Good Cause, continue the institution on Probation, request a Monitoring Report, and authorize a Special Committee; or (4) remove the institution from membership for failure to comply with the Principles of Accreditation. SACSCOC staff will not speculate on what decision might be made by the Board of Trustees in December 2024.

Q: What if the SACSCOC revokes VUU's accreditation?

A: It is extremely unlikely event that SACSCOC withdraws accreditation from an institution. The University gets a second year of Probation to show satisfactory progress.

Q: How can I stay informed about new developments regarding VUU's status with SACSCOC?

A: VUU will continue to update the University's website with any new developments regarding SACSCOC.

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