



ROAD TO SACSCOC REAFFIRMATION

# NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2025



## What is Reaffirmation of Accreditation?

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges' (SACSCOC) Reaffirmation of Accreditation is a comprehensive internal and external review process to ensure that member institutions maintain continuing compliance with Commission policies and with [The Principles of Accreditation: Foundation for Quality Enhancement](#).

According to SACSCOC, "At the heart of SACSCOC's philosophy of accreditation, the concept of quality enhancement presumes each member institution is to be engaged in ongoing improvement of its programs and services and be able to demonstrate how well it fulfills its stated mission. Although evaluation of an institution's educational quality and effectiveness in achieving its mission is a difficult task requiring careful analysis and professional judgment, an institution is expected to document the quality and effectiveness of all its programs and services."

## Newsletter Archive

**Missed a Newsletter?** No problem! Visit our OAAE website to catch up on all past issues

- [December 2024](#)
- [January 2025](#)
- [February 2025](#)
- [March 2025](#)

## SACSCOC SITE VISIT SAVE THE DATE!!

While there is much work to be done between now and the SACSCOC On-site Reaffirmation Committee visit, please mark your calendars.

**MARCH 24th - 26th, 2026**

# STANDARD SHOWCASE:

Standard of the Month

## SECTION 9: Educational Program Structure and Content

### 9.1: Program Content

**Standard 9.1** Educational programs (a) embody a coherent course of study, (b) are compatible with the stated mission and goals, and (c) are based upon fields of study appropriate to higher education.

All educational programs at Baylor College of Medicine (BCM) embody a coherent course of study, are compatible with the stated mission and goals of the institution, and are based upon fields of study appropriate to higher education. Program coherence, compatibility with the institutional mission, and appropriateness to higher education are maintained through policies and processes intended to promote ongoing quality, including the Academic Program Approval Policy; Procedure for Approval of New Academic Programs; Substantive Change Policy; and Distance Learning Policy. In structuring and evaluating curricula, BCM ensures that program coherence is reflected in sequencing, increasing complexity and linkages among program components so that student learning is progressively more advanced in terms of requirements, scholarship, increasing levels of knowledge integration, and critical skill development.

#### Coherence of the Course of Study

All educational programs incorporate a coherent course of study using foundational or core courses followed by advanced-level science, clinical, research and/or laboratory rotations that support progressive mastery and application of more advanced concepts and skills that align with program outcomes. These programs lead to degrees, certificates and a diploma that prepare learners for careers in health professions and biomedical sciences (please see Table 9.1-1). Coherence and quality of educational programs is the responsibility of the school dean/academic program leader and qualified faculty serving on each program's curriculum committee. In addition to the ongoing oversight of the school deans/academic program leaders and the curriculum committees of School of Medicine (SOM), Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (GSBS), School of Health Professions (SHP), and National School of Tropical Medicine (NSTM), five of BCM's degree programs and the diploma program also demonstrate program coherence that aligns with program-specific accreditation requirements, including Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME), Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs (COA), Accreditation Council for Genetic Counseling (ACGC), Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant, Inc. (ARC-PA), and Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP).

**Table 9.1-1. List of Degrees, Certificates and Diploma Programs Offered at BCM**

Program	School
Doctor of Medicine (MD)	School of Medicine
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cancer and Cell Biology</li><li>• Chemical, Physical, &amp; Structural Biology</li><li>• Development, Disease Models &amp; Therapeutics</li><li>• Genetics and Genomics</li><li>• Immunology and Microbiology</li><li>• Neuroscience</li><li>• Quantitative &amp; Computational Biosciences</li><li>• Clinical Investigation</li></ul>	Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences

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Program	School
Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP)	School of Health Professions
Master of Science, Biomedical Sciences (MS)	Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences
Master of Science, Clinical Investigation (MS)	Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences
Master of Science, Orthotics and Prosthetics (MS)	School of Health Professions
Master of Science, Physician Assistant Studies (MS)	School of Health Professions
Master of Science, Genetic Counseling (MS)	School of Health Professions
Diploma of Tropical Medicine (DTM)	National School of Tropical Medicine
Biomedical Educator Certificate of Added Qualification	Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences
Graduate Certificate in Biomedical Sciences and Health Equity	Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences
Certificate of Added Qualification in Clinical Translational Research	Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences
Certificate of Added Qualification in Clinical Investigation	Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences

Course listings, degree plans and credential requirements for each degree, certificate and diploma program document coherence and are available on BCM's public website. These resources delineate program sequences and graduation requirements, and they demonstrate coherence in sequencing, increasing complexity, and alignment between and among program components. BCM defines each awarded degree, certificate or diploma based upon the total number of credit hours required to earn the credential, which can be found in BCM's published credit hour policy.

#### **Appropriate Fields of Study for Higher Education**

All BCM programs are based upon fields of study appropriate for higher education and are reviewed periodically to ensure their appropriateness to fields of higher education.

At the institutional level, periodic comprehensive review of academic programs and adherence to program specific accreditations ensure ongoing alignment with the institutional mission and certify that curricula are appropriate to the degrees awarded.

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### 9.1: Program Content

BCM conducts a comprehensive institutional review of programs at least once every 10 years for programs who do not have a specialized accreditor. Comprehensive reviews incorporate external visits, program assessment summary reports, and lead to recommendations from the Baylor College of Medicine Accreditation Committee for program improvement. For programs with external accreditors, the specialized accreditation review cycle will be accommodated. External evaluation may be submitted in lieu of full BCM review with supplemental documentation using the External Accreditation Checklist. All programs undergo a mid-cycle interim review using the Interim Review Outline.

BCM's programs in medicine, nurse anesthesia, genetic counseling, orthotics and prosthetics, physician assistant studies, and tropical medicine adhere to institutional and specific program accreditor requirements of their respective program accrediting agencies (please see Table 9.1-2.). Specialized accreditation supports compliance with specific academic standards for a coherent course of study and the appropriateness of the degree or diploma to higher education. External review of all programs occurs at established intervals, determined by each accrediting agency and indicated in Table 9.1-2. Findings derived from external reviews inform curricular enhancements and guide programs in continued assessment and improvement.

**Table 9.1-2. Baylor College of Medicine Externally Accredited Programs**

Program	Accreditation Agency	Most Recent Review	Status	Next Review
Doctor of Medicine Program	Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME)	March 2022	Accredited	2029-2030
Doctor of Nursing Practice (Nurse Anesthesia)	Council of Accreditation (COA) of Nurse Anesthesia Education Programs	2024	Accredited	2034
Master of Science, Genetic Counseling	Accreditation Council for Genetic Counseling	December 2021	Accredited	2029-2030
Master of Science, Orthotics and Prosthetics	Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Programs (CAAHEP) and National Commission on Prosthetic and Orthotic Education (NCOPE)	March 2020	Accredited	2025
Master of Science, Physician Assistant Studies	Accreditation Review Committee on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA); (ARC-PA BCM Accreditation History)	July 2019	Accredited	2029
Diploma in Tropical Medicine	American Society of Tropical Medicine (ASTMH)	May 2012	Accredited	Accreditation indefinite. No future review scheduled.

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## SECTION 9: Educational Program Structure and Content

### 9.2: Program Length

**Standard 9.2** The institution offers one or more degree programs based on at least 60 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the associate level; at least 120 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the baccalaureate level; or at least 30 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the post-baccalaureate, graduate, or professional level. The institution provides an explanation of equivalencies when using units other than semester credit hours. The institution provides an appropriate justification for all degree programs and combined degree programs that include fewer than the required number of semester credit hours or its equivalent unit.

Baylor College of Medicine's (BCM) Credit Hour Policy defines credit hours, credit hour requirements and the minimum number of credit hours required for its graduate, diploma and certificate programs by utilizing standards and best practices derived from state/national standards, peer group data and comparative analysis to current programs. All BCM graduate degree programs meet or exceed the 30-semester credit hour minimum for post-baccalaureate, graduate or professional level programs. All credits required for degrees at BCM are outlined in the Credit Hour Policy, which is posted on the Academic Policies page of BCM's public website. BCM uses the semester credit hour unit across all degree-granting schools and programs. Where applicable, calculations to derive alternative unit equivalency to semester credit hours are detailed in BCM's Credit Hour Policy.

#### **Program Length**

##### *Doctoral Degrees*

In accordance with the BCM Credit Hour Policy, the minimum requirement for a doctoral degree is a minimum of 60 semester credit hours. At least one-third of credits toward a graduate or professional degree must be earned at BCM.

##### *Master's Degrees*

In accordance with the BCM Credit Hour Policy, the minimum requirement for a master's degree is a minimum of 30 semester credit hours. At least one-third of credits toward a graduate or professional degree must be earned at BCM.

##### *Additional Programs*

In accordance with the BCM Credit Hour Policy, the requirement for a certificate, a non-degree program, is 18-24 semester credit hours. The requirement for a certificate of completion, a non-degree program, is 6-15 semester credit hours. The requirement for a certificate of added qualification, a non-degree program, is 6-12 semester credit hours that are distinct from the academic requirement for the credential to which they are added.

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## SECTION 9: Educational Program Structure and Content

### 9.2: Program Length

#### **Monitoring Program Length**

In accordance with the New Academic Programs and Significant Changes to Existing Programs, the Office of Education Affairs, the Office of Accreditation and Education Affairs, the President, and the Board of Trustees evaluate the program length during the process of considering requests for new programs. The program specifies the courses and the number of credit hours in degree programs when programs are initially created and continues to monitor changes through its internal program review process. Any review or revision of a program must address the issue of the minimum number of hours. Program length is monitored through the program approval process and degree audits performed prior to graduation. Current practice is that the deans/program directors, in conjunction with the Office of the Registrar, verify that program requirements have been met via degree audits.

## SECTION 10: Educational Policies, Procedures, and Practices

### 10.7: Policies for Awarding Credit

**Standard 10.7** The institution publishes and implements policies for determining the amount and level of credit awarded for its courses, regardless of format or mode of delivery. These policies require oversight by persons academically qualified to make the necessary judgments. In educational programs not based on credit hours (e.g., direct assessment programs), the institution has a sound means for determining credit equivalencies.

Baylor College of Medicine (BCM) publishes and implements policies to determine the amount and level of credit awarded for courses, regardless of format or mode of delivery. Academically qualified individuals, as evidenced by faculty and/or staff appointment, degrees and/or experience, oversee these policies. Practices under this standard are consistent with BCM's own credit hour policies and with the SACSCOC Policy Statement on Credit Hours.

#### **Credit Hour Policy**

The BCM Credit Hour Policy defines the responsibilities, guidelines and procedures for implementation of all coursework and assignment of credit assigning qualified faculty of record to teach and grade courses. The curriculum committee for each school is comprised of faculty members within the school. Each committee is responsible for the approval and assignment of credit hours using specified equivalencies. The committees also ensure the number of credit hours and/or weeks of instruction required to earn a specific degree are applied as outlined in BCM's Credit Hour Policy, including non-credit ("zero-credit") coursework offerings. Each school is responsible for their respective curriculum committee's compliance with policy.

BCM's Credit Hour Policy defines how the number and level of credits are awarded for courses, regardless of format or mode of delivery.

#### **Policy Approval and Publication**

The Office of the Registrar maintains responsibility for the Credit Hour Policy, which is reviewed annually. Updates to the credit hour policy are based upon recommendation of the Institutional Policy Committee (IPC). BCM uses the semester credit hour as the unit of credit and requires each school to adhere to this policy when determining credit for courses.

For more information contact the SACSCOC Liaison, Jennifer Christner at [jennifer.christner@bcm.edu](mailto:jennifer.christner@bcm.edu) or Office of Accreditation and Education Effectiveness at [accreditation@bcm.edu](mailto:accreditation@bcm.edu)

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## SECTION 10: Educational Policies, Procedures, and Practices

### 10.7: Policies for Awarding Credit

#### **Defining Semester Credit Hours**

Across campuses, BCM adopts the federal definition of credit hour, as a mandatory guideline when awarding credit and employs sound educational practices and procedures by implementing standards consistent with its own Credit Hour Policy and the SACSCOC Policy Statement on Credit Hours. BCM's Credit Hour Policy defines a semester credit hour unit and the criteria used to define and determine the amount and level of such credit to be awarded for graduate course work.

BCM refers to principles developed by nationally recognized organizations when developing its policies regarding the type of semester credit hour and amount of such credit awarded. These organizations include the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) and the Commission on Accrediting Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP).

In accordance with its own Credit Hour Policy and the Federal Definition of the Credit Hour presented in the SACSCOC Policy Statement on Credit Hours, BCM defines the semester credit hour unit as follows.

“A credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates:

- Not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time, or
- At least an equivalent amount of work as required outlined in item 1 above for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.”

BCM programs identify the minimum number of credit hours required for degrees at each level by using standards and commonly accepted best practices derived from state/national standards, program-specific accrediting agencies, peer group data and comparative analysis to current programs (e.g., AACRAO, LCME). Academic credit measures the amount of engaged learning that occurs in various settings (classroom, laboratories, rotations, etc.).

#### **Distance Education**

BCM has a Distance Learning Policy to ensure that BCM: 1) meets the needs of students; 2) complies with the SACSCOC's Policy Statement on Distance and Correspondence Education and state and federal regulations related to Distance Learning; and 3) maintains the quality of educational programs offering Distance Learning. BCM offers distance education courses in the Doctor of Nursing Practice (Nurse Anesthesia) and Orthotics and Prosthetics programs which are part of the SHP and web-based modules in the NSTM. BCM's School of Medicine's M.D. Program is by definition not a distance education program. In addition, neither the M.D. Program nor Ph.D. programs offer distance education in required courses as described in the SACSCOC Standards, but some elective courses may be offered virtually.

For more information contact the SACSCOC Liaison, Jennifer Christner at [jennifer.christner@bcm.edu](mailto:jennifer.christner@bcm.edu) or Office of Accreditation and Education Effectiveness at [accreditation@bcm.edu](mailto:accreditation@bcm.edu)

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## SECTION 10: Educational Policies, Procedures, and Practices

### 10.7: Policies for Awarding Credit

BCM students enrolled in distance education courses engage in learning through various methods, including reading course presentations/lectures and materials, research, online discussions, etc. Per the Distance Learning Policy, all distance education must utilize the Time on Task guidelines, as approved by the vice president of education affairs, to calculate the amount of time students are spending on academic tasks (e.g., time on task, academically engaged time) per semester hour of credit. Time on task is the total learning time spent by a student in a course, including instructional time and time spent studying and completing course assignments (e.g., reading, research, writing, individual and group projects).

One semester hour of distance learning is equivalent to 45 hours of learning activities, considering both the time spent online and student work off-line. The 45-hour total for one semester credit is standard practice per BCM's Time on Task guidelines for awarding credit for distance education courses. In asynchronous learning environments, the time on task must be quantified for each course. When faculty plan and develop asynchronous courses, whether fully online or blended, they must account for the equivalent of 45 hours of time on task for each semester hour. In the absence of actual data, the following rubric can be used to estimate asynchronous time on task.

**Table 10.7-1. Time on Task Estimates**

<b>Interactions with Course Content</b>	<b>Time on Task Estimates</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Reading: descriptive and technical text (1)	3 minutes per page	textbooks and reference materials, both online and traditional
Reading: online screens w/no interactivity (1)	2 minutes per screen	PowerPoint slide shows/syllabus/announcements/case studies/journals
Lecture Capture	Actual time per lecture	staged or classroom capture
Audio	Actual time per audio presentation	music/medical/history/speeches/radio/nature
Practice Problems	10 minutes per problem	Math/computer science/case studies/surveys



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## SECTION 10: Educational Policies, Procedures, and Practices 10.7: Policies for Awarding Credit

Interactions with Course Content	Time on Task Estimates	Examples
Outside Online Short Training modules	Average time per outside course	courses taken, usually from government sources (e.g., CITI Online Training courses) as one requirement in an online course
Writing Assignments/Papers (2)	2 hours per page (including prep)	
Developing AV presentations	1 hours per slide (including prep)	
Discussion Forum	15 minutes per post (incl. preparation and actual posting)	discussion/remote conferencing/chats/group collaboration/wikis/blogs/social learning/online office hours
Competency Checks/Exams	3 minutes per objective question; 15 minutes per essay question.	

1. Reduce time on task by 50 percent for required review of information previously studied.
2. Other types of assignments must be evaluated for time on task, based on expected output.

# REAFFIRMATION OF ACCREDITATION TIMELINE:

All dates subject to change throughout the process

Target Date	Accreditation Process	Quality Enhancement Plan
<b>October 2024</b>	SACSCOC Executive Committee Established and First Meeting  SACSCOC Reaffirmation 2026 Kick-Off  Review of SACSCOC narratives begins	Launch QEP Survey  Recruit QEP Director
<b>November 2024</b>	Reaffirmation Newsletter  Review of SACSCOC narratives	Review Survey Results/Analyze Comments  Examine Feasibility of Topic  Recruit QEP Director
<b>December 2024</b>	SACSCOC Annual Meeting, Austin, TX (12/7 to 12/10)  Reaffirmation Newsletter  Review of SACSCOC narratives	Review Survey Results/Analyze Comments  Examine Feasibility of Topic
<b>January 2025</b>	Reaffirmation Newsletter	Engage Content Specialist  Identify External review/advisory committee  Recommend Topic to Executive Leadership  QEP Topic Announced to BCM Community
<b>February 2025</b>	Reaffirmation Newsletter	Determine QEP time frame for implementation and budget
<b>March 2025</b>	Reaffirmation Newsletter	
<b>April 2025</b>	Leadership Review of Compliance Certificate begins Reaffirmation Newsletter	
<b>July 2025</b>	Compliance Certificate Draft Completed	
<b>August 2025</b>	Final Review of Compliance Certificate	
<b>September 2025</b>	Compliance Certificate Due (9/8)	
<b>November 2025</b>	Site Visit Prep  Off-Site Peer Review Conducted (11/4 to 11/7)	
<b>December 2025</b>	Site Visit Prep  Mock Visit	
<b>January 2026</b>	Site Visit Prep  Mock Visit	
<b>February 2026</b>	Site Visit Prep  Optional Focused Report Due (2/10)	QEP Due (2/10)
<b>March 2026</b>	On-Site Peer Review Conducted (3/24 to 3/26)	Present and discuss QEP (3/24 to 3/26)
<b>December 2026</b>	Review by SACSCOC Committee Board (12/3 to 12/6)	

# OUR MISSION, OUR PURPOSE

**Mission:** Our mission at Baylor College of Medicine is to provide guidance, support and resources to help faculty and staff create and implement effective changes while ensuring the highest quality of education for our students.

**Purpose:** Our purpose is to promote academic excellence and innovation through accreditation and education effectiveness. We strive to foster a culture of continuous improvement and to provide resources and support for faculty and staff to develop and implement effective educational programs that prepare students for success.

## The Office of Accreditation and Education Effectiveness supports the Baylor College of Medicine education enterprise by:

- Facilitating institutional accreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and monitoring ongoing compliance with SACSCOC principles of accreditation
- Providing support for program level specialized accreditation
- Coordinating ongoing assessment of educational programs and the university's quality enhancement plan (QEP)
- Conducting and reporting the results of academic program reviews
- Conducting general institutional research and data analysis
- Reporting key academic performance metrics to federal, state, and professional organizations
- Conducting general institutional research and data analysis
- Providing process expertise in the approval of substantial changes to existing programs
- Managing educational affiliation agreements, observerships, and external learners

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