



ROAD TO SACSCOC REAFFIRMATION

NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 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](#)
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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 12: ACADEMIC & SUPPORT SERVICES

12.4: Student Complaints

Standard 12.4: The institution (a) publishes appropriate and clear procedures for addressing written student complaints, (b) demonstrates that it follows the procedures when resolving them, and (c) maintains a record of student complaints that can be accessed upon request by SACSCOC.

Baylor College of Medicine (BCM) (a) publishes appropriate and clear procedures to address written student complaints, (b) demonstrates that it follows the procedures when resolving complaints, and (c) maintains a record of student complaints that can be accessed upon request by SACSCOC. BCM is committed to treating all students respectfully and equitably and to providing a quality educational environment and experience for all learners. To that end, BCM has a standardized, well-publicized, institution-wide 23.1.08 - Student Appeals and Grievances Policy. The policy is administered with oversight from the vice president of education affairs to ensure documentation, centralized tracking, and prompt, fair resolution of outstanding issues reported by students at all locations and campuses, including those who receive remote instruction.

Policies and Procedures for Addressing Student Complaints

BCM's Student Appeals and Grievances Policy is the overarching policy that provides well documented guidance to students on addressing written complaints. In this policy, a "written student complaint" is defined as one that has not been resolved by informal processes (e.g., meeting with a program director, dean, or Office of the Ombuds) and has been documented in writing by the student, or by faculty or staff on behalf of a student. The policy provides information to assist students in identifying the responsible unit based on the topic or substance of a complaint, appeal, or grievance. All students, regardless of physical location and instructional modality, follow the same procedures and processes.

Student Appeals and Grievances Procedures and Resolution

BCM's Student Appeals and Grievances Policy established two categories of written student complaints: appeals and grievances. Appeal procedures are used to resolve academic complaints. They are implemented by school and program faculty with curriculum and instruction expertise. Grievance procedures are used to resolve professionalism/non-academic complaints regarding the status, rights, experience, services, or privileges of a member of the student body. The burden of proof in formal complaint cases rests with the complainant. The complaints are reviewed and resolved by institutional administrators with subject matter expertise based upon the complaint type (e.g., adverse academic action and grade appeals by deans/program directors).

As delineated in the Student Appeals and Grievances Policy, BCM's process for managing and resolving student complaints includes multiple steps consistent with the policy and procedures, including: submission of a written appeal or grievance; triage; application of the procedure appropriate to the type of grievance or appeal; resolution or subsequent implementation of the appeals procedure leading to resolution; and communication of the result of the written appeal or grievance to the complainant.

Written Appeals and Grievances Procedures

As a first step, BCM encourages resolution of appeals and grievances directly by the student and the individual (student, faculty, and/or staff) most closely related to the complaint. If no resolution is reached, the student may ask her/his supervisor, program director or dean for assistance. If the supervisor, program director or dean is unable to achieve informal resolution to the complaint, the student is directed to BCM's Integrity Hotline and recommended to file a written appeal or grievance, as noted on the Student Appeals and Grievances webpage.

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The Integrity Hotline serves as the centralized point of entry into the BCM student complaint process for all written appeals and grievances. . Students use the Integrity Hotline Claim Filing page to file a report.

Those seeking to report a complaint may file appeals and grievances into BCM's Integrity Hotline through a phone call or electronically, via a web-based form. Depending upon the nature of the grievance, complaints may be filed anonymously. Complaints filed by phone are recorded and transcribed into the system. Thus, regardless of the method by which an appeal or grievance is entered (phone or web-based form), it is considered a written complaint.

The individual filing a grievance is asked to complete a standardized online form or to answer questions, (when filing over the phone), designed to provide as much information as possible to assist in moving toward resolution. The portal allows for the student to communicate with the Office of Education Affairs during the appeals and grievances process and receive updates regarding the status of the report.

Due Process

BCM encourages students to raise concerns when they have them, seeks to address those concerns promptly and equitably, and maintains due process for complainants through multiple methods, including ability to appear on their behalf, representation, appeal escalation and conflict of interest management. Appeals and grievances may also be escalated for another level of review following the initial decision. The final level of review is conducted by the Student Appeals and Grievances Committee, who provides a recommendation for resolution to the vice president of education affairs who renders the final decision.

Students have the opportunity to appear before a subcommittee of the Student Appeals and Grievances Committee. or to provide written responses to inquiries. Additionally, students may request a faculty support person serve as a source of information and support throughout the resolution process. For Title IX Grievances, the complainant and respondent may, at their own expense, choose an advisor who may attend live hearings and ask relevant parties or witnesses questions pertinent to the case.

Triage and Resolution

Written student appeals and grievances received through BCM's Integrity Hotline that are "unresolved" are assigned by the Chief Compliance Officer or a designee to the unit/department most suited to resolve the complaint, based on the grievance subject. Written appeals or grievances that are legal in nature or that relate to BCM's facilities (e.g., disability, Title IX/Sexual Harassment) are triaged to the appropriate party outside of the vice president of education affairs by the Office of Compliance. These cases follow separate resolution pathways based on the Accommodations for Learners and Program Applicants with Disabilities Policy or the Title IX Misconduct and Grievance Policy.

Written complaints that are academic or related to professionalism/student mistreatment are assigned to the vice president of education affairs by the chief compliance officer or designee. From assignment by the chief compliance officer, the vice president of education affairs becomes responsible for managing and further triaging these complaints.

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Table 12.4-1. Classification of Appeals

Type of Appeal	Designated Reviewer (s)	
	Initial Appeal	Final Appeal
Grade(s)	dean of school or designee	vice president of education affairs or designee
Adverse Action(s)	dean of school or designee	vice president of education affairs or designee
Other Academic Issues (e.g., academic misconduct)	dean of school or designee	vice president of education affairs or designee
Sexual Misconduct/Other Prohibited Conduct (e.g., harassment, stalking)	director of Title IX & disability Services or designee (e.g., deputy Title IX coordinator)	Title IX Appeal panel

Table 12.4-2. Classification of Grievances

Type of Grievance	Designated Reviewer(s)
Non-Academic Student Misconduct	dean of school or designee
Lapse in Professionalism	dean of school or designee
Mistreatment of Students	dean of school or designee
Other Academic Issues (Administrative processes: e.g., financial aid, accounts billing, leave of absence)	dean of school or designee
Discrimination (e.g., race, religion, sex), Harassment (e.g., sexual orientation), and Retaliation	Employee Relations Division of Human Resources/ vice president of Human Resources or Designee
Requests for Disability Accommodation (Approvals)	director of Title IX & disability services or designee (e.g., deputy disability Coordinator)
Title IX Misconduct (e.g., harassment, stalking)	director of Title IX & disability services' designee (e.g., Title IX decision-maker, appeal officer)
Compliance (e.g., HIPAA Privacy)	chief compliance officer or designee
Legal	senior vice-president and general counsel or designee
Facilities Management (e.g., housekeeping, lights)	director of facilities or designee
Authorship	vice president of education affairs or designee
Use of BCM Network Resources	director of compliance and audit services or designee
Development or Use Intellectual Property (BCM & Third Parties)	senior vice-president and general counsel or designee (associate general counsel)

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Publication and Dissemination

Policies and procedures, including the Student Appeals and Grievances Policy are published and publicly available via student handbooks of each degree-granting school including the School of Medicine Student Handbook (which is applicable to both the Houston and Temple campuses), Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences Policy Handbook, and the School of Health Professions Student Handbook. Policies and procedures are also published and publicly available via the Student and Trainee Resources website, on the Academic Policies website, and on the College's policy manual on the intranet, all of which are accessible to students in Houston and in Temple. Upon matriculation, each student must attest to having reviewed their school's handbook, including any policies and procedures referenced therein. Students, faculty, and staff have access to information on student appeals and grievances data, policies, and procedures via BCM's public website and Intranet, online publications, e-mail communications, and training.

BCM's student appeals and grievances policy and procedures, and information about the Integrity Hotline Policy also are available on BCM's Compliance intranet web page. All incoming students receive information about student appeals and grievances process at program/course orientations and via documents such as course overview documents. Faculty members with primary teaching and administrative duties and staff with administrative responsibilities also receive information (e.g., Student Appeals and Grievances Policy updates) about policies and procedures during scheduled education meetings and training throughout the academic year.

To ensure that all students are familiar with the appeal and grievance process, the Office of Education Affairs conducts required online training on the Appeals and Grievances Policy for all students upon matriculation. If significant updates are made to the student appeals and grievance process, all students are required to complete the updated training. The training covers processes related to the resolution of written complaints, including detailed instructions on how to access and use BCM's Integrity Hotline (referring to both phone and website process) and information posted to the Student Appeals and Grievances webpage, which can be accessed via the Student and Trainee Resources webpage.

Maintenance of Student Complaints and Trend Analysis

The vice president of education affairs is responsible for maintaining student appeals and grievances records, including complaint date, redacted student name, description/type of complaint, steps to resolution, date(s) of resolution, result and location of supporting documentation. All complaints are tracked in the online Integrity Hotline system (reports are housed indefinitely). Pertinent information (complaint, school, resolution, case notes) about each case is maintained by the vice president of education affairs in a secured TEAMS folder in accordance with BCM's Record Retention Policy. To safeguard against data breaches or loss of data during disasters, Box and the Integrity Hotline have industry-certified controls to protect and ensure that BCM's information is maintained in their systems.

The vice president of education affairs conducts a review of the data tracked year-over-year to determine trends and create plans to resolve recurring appeals and grievances.

The vice president of education affairs communicates trend analysis and corrective actions annually to education leaders, faculty and students via the Student Appeals and Grievances Annual Report. The Student Appeals and Grievances: 7 Year Summary is also published on the Student Appeals and Grievances webpage. Any patterns of complaints about individual faculty members are handled appropriately through intervention by the appropriate department chair and/or dean. The vice president of education affairs also communicates yearly trend analysis and corrective actions to each school leader. This includes report type, complaint determination, and report type comparison by school.

REAFFIRMATION OF ACCREDITATION TIMELINE:

All dates subject to change throughout the process

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