



National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements

NC-SARA: The National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements

Promoting postsecondary access, affordability, and quality assurance

Nationwide, the number of students who access postsecondary education opportunities online continues to grow. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, **more than a third of all U.S. postsecondary students took at least one online course in 2018, and the number of students who are exclusively taking online courses jumped to 3.2 million.**

Recognizing the growing demand for distance learning opportunities, higher education stakeholders – including state regulators and education leaders, accreditors, the U.S. Department of Education, and institutions – joined together in 2013 to establish the **State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA)**, which **streamline regulations around distance education programs.**

BENEFITS OF SARA:

- **Improves distance education program quality** nationwide.
- Makes it **easier for students to access online courses** across state lines.
- **Reduces costs and bureaucracy** for states and institutions.
- **Improves coordination** between states on higher education opportunities.
- Provides **valuable oversight** of distance education programs.
- Shares **out-of-state learning experience data** like clinical hours and practice teaching

FAST FACTS:

SARA helps expand students' access to educational opportunities and ensures more efficient, consistent, and effective regulation of distance learning programs.

- **SARA is a voluntary agreement** among member states, districts, and territories; entities that no longer wish to participate in SARA may simply withdraw from the agreement.
- As of August 2020, **2,142 institutions participate and 49 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands** are voluntary members of SARA.
- **SARA is open to all degree-granting institutions** – public, private, independent, non-profit, and for-profit, who pay between \$2000-\$6000 annually based on enrollment.
- **Participating colleges and universities must adhere to stringent requirements**, including accreditation and remaining in good financial standing.

KEY NC-SARA PRIORITIES AND PROJECTS:

NC-SARA coordinates with a broad array of higher education stakeholders to **ensure alignment on core elements and requirements of SARA**, support **quality assurance and consumer protections for students**, and **increase the value of credits earned through distance learning programs**. Here are a few of our current priorities and projects:



State Authorization Guide. To help institutions determine whether their distance learning programs are compliant with state regulations and can be offered to students across state lines, NC-SARA **recently launched a comprehensive guide** of the 50 states and territories that serves as a valuable resource to colleges and universities.



Promote Student Consumer Protections. Every student deserves access to a quality educational experience. NC-SARA member states **provide student protections against false or misleading information** by SARA-participating institutions through investigation and resolution of allegations of dishonest or fraudulent activity. NC-SARA maintains a **comprehensive online database** of such student SARA complaints.



Simplify Access to Distance Education Programs. NC-SARA is developing a **searchable catalog of distance education programs from SARA institutions nationwide** in an effort to make it easier for current and prospective students to find the program that best fits their needs and career goals. The catalog will launch in 2021.



Share Information about Professional Licensure Requirements. NC-SARA collaborated with regional compacts and states to develop a new resource for students and institutions to **obtain contact information from professional licensure boards** across state lines in five key professions, including counseling, psychology, social work, nursing, and teacher education.



Clarify Return on Investment. States pay no fees to join SARA, and annual costs for institutions are as low as \$2,000 – dramatically lower than Institution would be forced to pay for state-by-state authorization efforts. The **low cost of the SARA model reduces costs that could otherwise be passed down to students and taxpayers**, promoting improved **college affordability**. NC-SARA is commissioning a study in 2020 to learn more about these specific cost savings.

To learn more about NC-SARA, visit www.nc-sara.org.