



**National Council for
State Authorization
Reciprocity Agreements**

MHEC • NEBHE • SREB • WICHE

State: _____

Regional Compact _____

Initial Application _____

Renewal Application _____

Application and Approval Form for State Membership in SARA

A state that would like to apply for or renew membership in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA) must submit this form and required documentation to its **regional** education compact’s SARA office.

A state may wish to include a cover letter and/or additional documentation to supplement the application and to strengthen the case for becoming a member or renewing membership in SARA.

To be accepted or renewed into SARA, a state must agree that it can and will operate under the criteria for state membership established in the Unified State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement, as the foundational document, and the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements Policy Manual (*SARA Policy Manual*). For purposes of SARA, the term “state” includes the District of Columbia and the organized U.S. Territories. The requirements for state membership are set forth below.

| | Requirements for State Membership in SARA | State affirms meeting the requirements (Initial here) | Regional Compact affirms state meets the requirement |
|----|---|---|--|
| | Core Requirements | | |
| 1. | The state is a member of one of the four interstate higher education regional compacts that administers SARA, or has concluded an affiliation agreement with a regional compact covering SARA activity. | | Yes or No |
| 2. | The state entity responsible for joining SARA has the legal authority under state law to enter into an interstate agreement on behalf of the state and has provided a copy of the statutory or other legal authority documenting this authority. | | Yes or No |
| 3. | The state considers applications from degree-granting institutions of all sectors (public, private not-for-profit, private for-profit) on the same basis and approves institutions that meet SARA standards and agree to SARA policies without differentiating by sector. | | Yes or No |
| 4. | The state agrees to require each SARA applicant institution to apply for state approval using the standard SARA institutional application and agrees to operate under the <i>Interregional Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education</i> developed by the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC), as summarized in the <i>SARA Policy Manual</i> . | | Yes or No |
| | Consumer Protection | | |
| 5. | The state accepts institutional accreditation by an accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education — and whose scope of | | |

| | Requirements for State Membership in SARA | State affirms meeting the requirements (Initial here) | Regional Compact confirms state meets the requirement |
|-----|---|---|---|
| | authority, as specified by the Department of Education includes distance education — as sufficient, initial evidence of academic quality for approving institutions for participation in SARA. | | Yes or No |
| 6. | For private institutions, the state accepts the U.S. Department of Education's institutional federal financial responsibility score of 1.5 or above (or 1.0-1.49 with additional justification satisfactory to the state) as indicating sufficient financial stability to qualify for participation in SARA. | | Yes or No |
| 7. | The state has a clearly articulated and comprehensive state process for consumer protection in regard to SARA activities, both with respect to initial institution approval and on-going oversight, including the resolution of consumer complaints in all sectors, and has provided the regional compact a copy of the complaint investigation and resolution process to be used to handle all complaints resulting from institutional operations (public, private not-for-profit, private for-profit) under SARA. | | Yes or No |
| 8. | The state agrees that it will work cooperatively with other SARA states, regional compacts and NC-SARA to enable successful collaboration. It will follow up on requests for information or investigations from SARA member states or any SARA regional or national office, providing required data and reports. | | Yes or No |
| 9. | The state agrees that, if it has requirements, policies, standards, fees or procedures for the approval and authorization of non-domestic institutions of higher education providing distance education in the state, it will not apply those policies, fees, or procedures to any non-domestic institution that participates in SARA. Instead, the state will apply those policies, fees, or procedures specifically prescribed in or allowed by the <i>SARA Policy Manual</i> . | | Yes or No |
| 10. | The state designates a "Portal Entity" as defined in the <i>SARA Policy Manual</i> , to coordinate SARA matters for the state and provide a principal point of contact for resolution of student complaints. Note: the designated entity need not itself be responsible for all oversight activities of SARA providers inside the state, but will be the SARA Portal Entity for that state. | | Yes or No |
| 11. | The state agrees to serve as the point of contact for any SARA-related complaint filed against an institution approved by the state to participate in SARA. The state's SARA Portal Entity is responsible for coordinating complaint resolution and is empowered to investigate and resolve complaints that originate outside of the state. All other state entities and governing boards of SARA participant institutions shall assist as necessary in such investigations and report as needed to the Portal Entity. State remedies, including refunds or other corrective action, must be made available to resolve complaints involving residents of other SARA states. | | Yes or No |
| 12. | The state agrees to document: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) all formal complaints received; b) complaint notifications provided to institutions and accrediting bodies; | | |

| | Requirements for State Membership in SARA | State affirms meeting the requirements (Initial here) | Regional Compact confirms state meets the requirement |
|-----|--|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> c) actions taken that are commensurate with the severity of violations; and d) complaint resolutions. | | Yes or No |
| 13 | The state agrees that it will promptly report complaints and concerns to the institutions about which the complaint is lodged, the home state SARA Portal Entity responsible for any such institution, and if appropriate, the relevant accrediting bodies. | | Yes or No |
| 14. | <p>The state has clear and well-documented policies and practices for addressing catastrophic events, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The state may request assistance from the institution's accreditor as the accreditor applies its standards under 34 C.F.R. §602.24(c) and (d) of federal requirements for catastrophic events. b) The state has laws, regulations, policies and/or processes in place to deal with the unanticipated closure of an institution and will make every reasonable effort to assure that students receive the services for which they have paid or reasonable financial compensation for those not received. Such laws, regulations, policies and/or processes may include tuition assurance funds, surety bonds, teach-out provisions or other practices deemed sufficient to protect consumers. c) The state requires institutions to have adequate disaster recovery plans, particularly with respect to the protection of student records, or the state provides such a plan. d) A SARA member state agrees to apply its policies and practices for catastrophic events consistently and equally within each sector (public, private non-profit, and private for-profit) to residents of any state. | | Yes or No |
| 15 | The state agrees that it has developed and implemented a means to hear and internally resolve appeals from institutions for which it denies initial participation or renewal of participation in SARA. During any such appeal, the institution's status as a SARA participating (or non-participating) institution remains unchanged. | | Yes or No |
| | Data | | |
| 16. | The State agrees that each quarter it will report to NC-SARA the number of appealed complaints it has received regarding each of the state's SARA-participating institutions and the resolution status of those complaints. | | Yes or No |

Section 2 - SARA State Portal Entity Designation and Voluntary State Action and Information

Name of SARA State Portal Entity: _____

Mailing address of SARA State Portal Entity:

Website of SARA Portal Entity (location of state's SARA information): _____

Name of Principal SARA State Portal Entity contact¹: _____

Title of SARA State Portal Entity contact: _____

SARA State Portal Entity email: _____

SARA State Portal Entity phone: _____

Name of Secondary SARA State Portal Entity contact: _____

Title of Secondary SARA State Portal Entity contact: _____

Secondary SARA State Portal Entity email: _____

Secondary SARA State Portal Entity phone: _____

I, the undersigned representative of the State of _____ having the authority to commit the state to the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA), agree that the state will abide by SARA requirements as stated above. The state has provided proof of those requirements needing documentation, and hereby apply for the state's admission/renewal to SARA.

Signature _____ Date _____

Typed name of Signatory Officer: _____

Title of Signatory State Officer: _____

¹ The principal contact is the person with whom state entities and regional compacts should communicate about the state's membership in SARA. It is not necessarily the State Signatory Officer or the person(s) whom institutions and students should contact regarding institutional participation in SARA, student complaints, and other matters regarding the normal discharge of a state's responsibilities under SARA.

Mailing address: _____

Email address: _____

Phone: _____

Section 3 - Regional Compact Evaluator Recommendation

For a state to initiate or renew its SARA membership, the evaluator must find that the state meets all of the requirements set forth in sections 1-16. If the evaluator finds that the state meets all required standards, the Regional Compact SARA Director shall recommend approval of the state's membership to the Regional Steering Committee of the compact by signing below.

State Name: _____

The evaluator recommends approval of the application to the SARA Regional Steering Committee:

Yes

No

Evaluator comments:

Signature of Regional Compact Director: _____

Name of Regional Compact Director: _____

Date signed: _____

Title of Regional Compact Director: _____

Signature of Regional Compact President: _____

Name of Regional Compact President: _____

Date signed: _____

If SARA membership is denied by the regional compact, the Regional SARA Director will provide to the applicant state a written reason for the denial. The state may reapply at any time, having corrected any deficiencies, or may appeal the denial to the Regional Compact.

Section 4 - Regional Steering Committee Recommendation

For a state to initiate or renew its membership in SARA, the Regional Steering Committee of the appropriate regional compact must find that the state meets all of the requirements set forth in sections 1-16. If the Committee finds that the state meets all required standards, the Committee Chair shall recommend approval of the state's membership to the regional compact by signing below.

State Name: _____

The Regional Steering Committee recommends approval of the application to the regional compact for action under the process the compact has determined:

Yes No

Committee comments:

Signature of Regional Steering Committee Chair: _____

Name of Regional Steering Committee Chair: _____

Date signed: _____

If SARA membership is denied by the regional compact, the Regional SARA Director will provide to the applicant state a written reason for the denial. The state may reapply at any time, having corrected any deficiencies, or may appeal the denial to the Regional Compact.