



SARA Quick Start Guide

INSTITUTION APPLICATIONS

Overview:

This Quick Start Guide for Institution Applications may be used by SARA State Portal Entity (SPE) staff and institutional staff engaged in the annual institutional application process. It is intended to provide general guidance and does not include any state-specific guidance. This guide includes descriptions of potential documentation required, the goal of each requirement related to SARA policy, and the SARA policy reference. This tool was created using existing SPE materials and tools from several states, along with reviews and feedback from SPEs and regional compact staff.

Confirm Your State's Requirements:

SARA State Portal Entities have the responsibility and authority to hold institutions in compliance with SARA policy. This information is intended to serve as general guidance; institutions should be in regular contact with their [SARA State Portal Entity](#) for state-specific requirements, directions, and guidance.

About SARA Quick Start Guides: When institutions participate in SARA, they agree to a set of compliance requirements as detailed in the [SARA Policy Manual](#). SARA Quick Start Guides are intended to help institution personnel understand a particular requirement to help them maintain compliance, communicate with colleagues regarding SARA requirements, and explain the requirement to students and other stakeholders. Institutions should always check for any state-specific requirements with their [SARA State Portal Entity](#).

Section 1-Verification of Requirements for Institution Participation in SARA

Requirement Number	Requirement Description	Is Documentation Required?	Documentation Examples	Goal of this Requirement (What are SPEs looking for?)	Policy Manual Sections Addressing the Requirement
1.	Documentation of legal domicile in home state	Yes	<p>Example documentation:</p> <p><i>Most recent</i> documentation of institution's authorization to operate in the state, such as the following example documentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> __ Code of state legislation __ Copy of enabling statute __ Letter of Authorization (or equivalent) from home state's governmental entity responsible for business registration __ 990 PF Form (first page) __ Articles of Organization most recently filed with the state. 	Confirmation that the institution has legal domicile in the state.	Section 3.1 Eligibility
2.	Documentation of Accreditation Status	Yes	<p>Example documentation:</p> <p><i>Most recent</i> action letter from institution's primary accrediting agency (or equivalent that specifies</p>	Confirmation that the institution is currently accredited.	Section 3.1 Eligibility

			current accreditation status).		
3.	Agree to notify home state's SPE of any negative changes to accreditation status	It is the state's purview to determine what, if any, documentation is required after initial application review.		Confirmation that the state and NC-SARA are aware of any negative change to the institutions' accreditation status that might impact SARA participation.	Sections 3.2(a)(1) and 4.3(e)
4.	Federal Financial Responsibility Composite Score	Yes (if the institution is not public)	<p>Example documentation:</p> <p>___ Letter from US Dept of Education with calculated FRSC Score</p> <p>___ Copy of US Dept of Education spreadsheet row containing most recent FRCS Score</p> <p><i>Institutions controlled or owned by another entity should include the FRCS of the parent entity.</i></p> <p>___ Non-Title IV institutions must provide the FRCS score calculated by a certified, independent accountant using the USDOE methodology. Review the requirements in the most current <i>SARA Policy Manual</i>.</p>	Confirmation that the institution has the financial resources to carry out the mission and appropriately serve students and that they have the minimum score required for SARA participation.	2.5 c. Functional responsibilities of SARA States
5.	Abide by C-RAC Guidelines	It is the state's purview to		Confirmation that the institution	

		determine what, if any, documentation is required after initial application review.		adheres to policy and practices to facilitate the delivery of high-quality distance education courses and programs.	4.7 Incorporation and use of C-RAC Guidelines
6.	Does not enforce Arbitration Agreements	It is the state's purview to determine what, if any, documentation is required after initial application review.		SARA-participating institutions are not permitted to enforce arbitration agreements on students enrolled under SARA provisions, and such agreements must not be applied. Institutions that utilize mandatory arbitration agreements for the resolution of non-SARA complaints or disputes shall provide a disclosure that such agreements must not be applied towards a complaint or dispute that falls within the scope of the <i>SARA Policy Manual</i> .	4.4 c Responsibilities for resolving complaints
7.		It is the state's purview to	Example documentation:	Confirmation that third-party	5.5 Third-party providers

	Responsible for institution activities	determine what, if any, documentation is required after initial application review.	Agreement/contract with Third party provider.	providers meet the standards that the institution has agreed upon for SARA participation.	
8.	Will resolve complaints	Yes	<p>Example documentation:</p> <p>___ A copy of the student complaints policy/procedures applicable to distance education students</p> <p>___ A copy of the policy/procedure that explains which students are eligible to file a SARA complaint</p> <p>___ Other complaint types addressed in policy/procedure</p>	Confirmation that complaint policies are in place, can be easily found by students or others who believe they have a complaint against the institution.	<p>4.4 Responsibilities for resolving complaints.</p> <p>4.5 Process for Resolving Complaints</p> <p>4.6 Oversight of Complaint Investigation</p>
9.	Application signed by CEO or CAO	No	<p>Requirement of initials and signature on application.</p> <p>In some states, applications not signed by CEO or CAO are returned for the appropriate signature.</p>	Confirmation that the leadership of the institution is aware of and agrees with the requirements for SARA participation.	Institution Application form instructions, first paragraph
10.	Disclosure Requirements – Adverse Actions	No, unless the institution has adverse action(s) to disclose.	Institutions shall disclose to their home state any adverse action against the institution and any investigation by an oversight entity related to	Institution disclosure includes: a. The notice of adverse action	<i>SARA Policy Manual</i> Section 3.9(a)

			the institution's academic quality, financial stability, student consumer protection policies or practices, or compliance with any state or federal requirements within 30 days of the institution's first knowledge of the action or investigation and provide the disclosure.	provided by the oversight entity, b. A summary of steps the institution will take to resolve the issue(s) or concern(s) leading to the adverse action, and c. Any additional documents or materials requested by the home state.	
11.	Disclosure Requirements – Changes in Institution Operations	No, unless the institution has change(s) in institution operations to disclose.	Institutions shall disclose to their home state any changes in the institution's operations that are inconsistent with the requirements contained in the <i>SARA Policy Manual</i> or that may impair the institution's ability to satisfy any requirement of the <i>SARA Policy Manual</i> within 30 days of the institution's first knowledge of the change and provide the disclosure.	Institution's disclosure must include information about the nature of the changes in the institution's operations and any additional documents or materials requested by the home state.	<i>SARA Policy Manual</i> Section 3.9(b).
12.	Agree to professional licensure disclosures	It is the state's purview to determine what, if any, documentation is required after	Example documentation: General Disclosures: For prospective and enrolled students, the following lists for all Professional Licensure programs	Confirmation that students are aware of how the program they are matriculated in or considering does or does not	5.2 Programs leading to Professional Licensure

		<p>initial application review.</p>	<p>___ A list of all states for which the institution has determined that its curriculum meets the state educational requirements for licensure or certification; ___ A list of all states for which the institution has determined that its curriculum does not meet the state educational requirements for licensure or certification; and ___ A list of all states for which the institution has not made a determination whether its curriculum meets the state educational requirements for licensure or certification.</p> <p>Direct Disclosures: For prospective students prior to enrolling and enrolled SARA students who are located in a state where the Professional Licensure program does not meet the requirement or if the institution has not made a determination* whether the program meets the requirements, an email or other direct electronic communication sent directly to the student, containing notice to that effect.</p>	<p>prepare them for professional licensure in the state where they are located.</p>	
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			__ A copy of an example or examples of the institution's Direct Disclosures including all necessary information		
13.	Instruction: Institution agrees that in cases where the institution cannot fully deliver instruction as contracted, a reasonable alternative or reasonable financial compensation will be provided.	It is the state's purview to determine what, if any, documentation is required after initial application review.		Student consumer protections in case a program or institution closes or is unable to deliver instruction as promised to the student.	2.5 Functional responsibilities of SARA States
14.	Catastrophic events: Well-documented policies and practices for addressing	It is the state's purview to determine what, if any, documentation is required after initial application review.	Example documentation: __ A copy of the institution's disaster recovery plan, procedure, policy, or affirmation which includes the institution's procedures for preserving student records in the event of institutional closure in accordance with the institution's accrediting body's standards for institutional closure.	Student consumer protections: confirmation that institution has a plan to manage catastrophic events.	2.5 Functional responsibilities of SARA States
15.	Agree to Provisional status, if applicable	It is the state's purview to determine what, if any,		Confirmation that the institution understands that provisional status	3.2 Provisional admission or renewal of an Institution

		documentation is required after initial application review.		will have requirements that must be met for continued participation in SARA.	
16.	Agree to Pay State fees, if applicable	It is the state's purview to determine what, if any, documentation is required after initial application review.		Confirmation that states requiring fees are able to collect them.	3.6 Participation Fees
17.	Agree to pay SARA fees	No	Affirmation Only	Confirmation that NC-SARA is able to collect annual fees to participate in SARA.	3.6 Participation Fees
18.	Agree to share data	No	Affirmation Only	Confirmation that the institution will share data annually with NC-SARA as required by SARA policy.	6.1 Data submission by participating institutions

* For students located in states where the institution has **not made a determination**, the institution must provide in its direct notice to prospective and enrolled students current contact information for any applicable licensing boards and advise the student or applicant to determine whether the program meets requirements for licensure where the student or applicant is located.

Section 2 - Institutional Designation and Action and Information

When providing "Institution FTE (latest IPEDS)" on the application, please use the most recently [released/published](#) IPEDS data.

On page 9 of the application, please only include out-of-state branch campuses, as defined by SARA policy, Section 1 Definitions, with distance education activity covered by SARA policies.

Still Have Questions?

1. SARA State Portal Entities have the responsibility and authority to hold institutions in compliance with SARA policy. This information is intended to be general guidance for institutions; institutions should be in regular contact with their [SARA State Portal Entity](#) for specific requirements, directions, and guidance.
2. Feel free to email NC-SARA: info@nc-sara.org

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