

Frequently Asked Questions About Southwestern's SACSCOC Accreditation

1. Who is SACSCOC?

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) is one of Southwestern Seminary's accrediting bodies responsible for accrediting degree-granting higher education institutions in the Southern states.

SACSCOC serves as the common denominator of shared values and practices primarily among the diverse institutions in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and Latin America and certain other international sites approved by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees that award associate, baccalaureate, master's, or doctoral degrees.

2. Is SWBTS still accredited?

Yes. Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS) remains accredited by SACSCOC during the probationary period. This accreditation covers all aspects of the institution—including academic programs (all degrees), branch campuses, off-campus instructional sites, and distance learning programs—as reported to SACSCOC.

3. What does it mean to be on “Probation for Good Cause” by SACSCOC? What are the implications?

Probation is the most serious public sanction imposed by SACSCOC. On June 12, 2025, SACSCOC placed SWBTS on “Probation for Good Cause.” This means that while SWBTS has not yet fully resolved the compliance issues identified in its last review, the institution has made meaningful progress, presented a credible plan for achieving full compliance, and demonstrated a clear path to compliance. The extended timeline granted by this sanction allows the institution to retain its accreditation while continuing to address matters of non-compliance.

In essence, “Probation for Good Cause” means the institution has additional time because it has shown it is on the right track. This decision was made in light of (1) that the institution has demonstrated significant recent accomplishments in addressing non-compliance, **and** (2) that the institution has provided evidence which makes it reasonable for the Board to assume it will remedy all deficiencies within a 12-month period, **and** (3) that the institution has provided assurance to the Board that it is not aware of any other reasons, other than those identified by the Board, why the institution cannot be continued for Good Cause.

4. Why was SWBTS placed on “Probation for Good Cause”?

SWBTS was initially placed on sanctions in June of 2023 for not being in compliance with Core Requirement 13.1 and Standard 13.3 based on the audited financial report of the 2021-22 year. The institution has been continued in accreditation for Good Cause and placed on Probation in order to have extended time to show ongoing progress toward compliance.

SACSCOC policy permits an institution to remain on Warning for a maximum of two years. Due to reporting timelines, the first two monitoring reports were due prior to the completion of the fiscal year, which ends on July 31, 2025.

Since the second monitoring report was submitted before the end of the 2024–25 fiscal year, it did not include the most recent improvements (see #6), which will be included in the third report due in 2026, along with the audited financial statements from the 2024-25 fiscal year. SWBTS was placed on Probation for Good Cause for a 12-month period to allow additional time to demonstrate the sustainability of these financial improvements.

5. How long will “Probation for Good Cause” last?

The probationary period began with the SACSCOC Board action on June 12, 2025, and SWBTS will be monitored for up to 12 months. While on Warning, SWBTS submitted its first two monitoring reports during the 2023–24 and 2024–25 academic years. A Third Monitoring Report will be submitted during the 2025–26 academic year, and the seminary will host a follow-up visit from SACSCOC evaluators in 2026. At its June 2026 Board meetings, SACSCOC will review the institution’s compliance with Core Requirement 13.1 (Financial Resources) and Standard 13.3 (Financial Responsibility) and will provide an update at that time.

6. I have heard that SWBTS has made a strong financial turnaround. Does this decision from SACSCOC mean that is not the case?

This decision does not detract from the significant institutional progress over the past 33 months. The reports about Southwestern Seminary’s financial improvement are accurate. However, due to SACSCOC’s review process and policies, only audited financial information through July 31, 2024, was considered prior to imposing “Probation for Good Cause.” As a result, the significant progress made during the 2024–25 fiscal year was

excluded due to report deadlines. However, the progress substantiated in the 2025 audit will be considered in June 2026.

SWBTS continues to strengthen its financial position and demonstrate stability. In particular, the institution is on track to balance the budget and fully fund depreciation for the 2024–25 fiscal year, reflecting its sustained progress toward long-term financial health.

7. What has SWBTS done to address the concerns?

While SACSCOC commends the progress SWBTS has made since the start of the Warning period—especially in improving its financial practices, reducing expenses, increasing revenue, and eliminating short-term debt—SACSCOC determined that long-term patterns of financial instability had not yet been sufficiently resolved to warrant removal of all sanctions.

SWBTS has taken the following positive actions to strengthen its operations and financial position:

- Balanced the operational budget in 2024 (unaudited) after a \$6 million overspend in 2022;
- funded 70% of depreciation (vs. 0% in 2022);
- eliminated short-term debt by December 2023;
- improved net assets by over \$20 million since 2022;
- increased cash reserves from \$1.7 million to over \$12 million; and,
- increased annual credit hours and student enrollment.

As a result of these actions and other positive developments, the seminary's Composite Financial Index score, an objective measuring tool used by the Department of Education and certain accrediting agencies, has dramatically improved. To learn more, see this [news release](#).

For an additional summary of recent actions, note the news release following [the April 2025](#) Board of Trustees meeting.

President Dockery has provided a more comprehensive look at what SWBTS has done in a recently published [letter](#) to the Southwestern community.

8. How does this decision by SACSCOC affect students?

There is no immediate impact on students. All classes, degree programs, financial aid, and student services continue as usual.

SWBTS remains committed to its mission of providing Christ-centered, academically excellent theological education to prepare men and women for Christian ministry and service.

9. How does this decision by SACSCOC affect faculty and staff?

There is no immediate impact on faculty and staff. Faculty and staff continue to play a vital role in fulfilling the mission of SWBTS. The institution's leadership remains committed to collaboration, transparency, and ongoing communication as it works toward compliance with all accreditation standards.

10. How can the community support the institution during this time?

- **Pray** for wisdom, provision, unity, and perseverance.
 - Stay **informed** through official updates.
 - **Give generously** to support students and strategic initiatives as the strategic plan, *Advance Southwestern: 2030*, continues in the months ahead.
 - **Speak positively** and advocate for the institution's mission and legacy.
-

11. What happens next?

In June 2026, the SACSCOC Board of Trustees will review the institution's accreditation status following its evaluation of a Third Monitoring Report, which will be submitted in April 2026. The seminary will also host a follow-up visit from SACSCOC evaluators in April.

The SACSCOC Board will have the following options: (1) remove the institution from Probation without an additional report; (2) continue accreditation, continue the institution on Probation for Good Cause, request a Fourth Monitoring Report and authorize a Special Committee; or (3) remove the institution from membership for failure to comply with the *Principles of Accreditation*.

12. Where can I find more information?

SACSCOC staff cannot comment on specific details related to probation. However, ongoing accreditation news and contact information are available at its website,

www.sacscoc.org. As always, the seminary stands ready to answer questions from interested persons.