

Institutional Appeals Process for SARA Participation

The State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) is an agreement among member states, districts, and territories that establishes comparable national standards for the interstate offering of postsecondary distance education.

The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) administers SARA on behalf of Washington State in accordance with the terms and standards established by the SARA agreement and reviews initial and renewal applications for SARA participation submitted by eligible institutions within the state of Washington. To be approved, an institution must submit its application for initial or renewal participation in the manner and form provided by NC-SARA and demonstrate that it meets the requirements for institutional participation established in the current SARA Manual.

If the institution's application for SARA membership is denied, WSAC's Director of Consumer Protection shall provide to the applicant institution a written reason for the denial within ten business days of the decision. The institution may reapply at any time, having corrected any deficiencies, or may appeal the denial based on the process described in this policy.

Any appeal by the applicant institution must be submitted to the Washington Student Achievement Council **no later than 30 days after receipt of the denial notice**. A denial that is not appealed within the allotted time is considered final.

All appeals should provide a clear statement of the grounds for appeal, along with underlying rationales and documentation supporting the appeal. Documentation includes any evidence related to the institution's application and SARA membership requirements as outlined in the SARA Manual. The institution shall have the burden of evidence to support the grounds for appeal.

Grounds for an appeal are limited to one or both of the following:

- (a) The determination that the applicant institution did not meet the requirements for approval was incorrect (e.g., not supported by evidence); and/ or
- (b) The procedures used to reach the decision were inconsistent with the Washington Student Achievement Council's policies or practices, and that these inconsistencies prejudiced the applicant institution.

Review by Executive Director or designee

The Washington Student Achievement Council Executive Director or designee shall conduct an appeal hearing. The Executive Director shall provide notice of a hearing date within 30 days after receipt of the institution's appeal. The appeal hearing shall be conducted within 90 days of the appeal on a date to be determined in consultation with the institution.

The appeal hearing will include a review of the entire record, including the application for SARA participation, the written reason for denial submitted by the Director of Consumer Protection, and the written appeal and supporting documentation submitted by the applicant institution. During the hearing, the institution shall have the opportunity to provide testimony that clarifies or supports information included in the record, and the Director of Consumer Protection may provide comments or

questions related to information included in the record or testimony provided by the institution. The Executive Director or designee may ask questions or request additional information from either party.

Upon conclusion of the appeal hearing, the Executive Director or designee shall issue a decision to approve the application for SARA membership, affirm its denial, or remand with instructions for further review of the application by the Director of Consumer Protection. The decision shall be provided to the applicant institution no later than 30 days after the appeal hearing.

The decision of the Executive Director or designee is final.

If the Executive Director or designee upholds denial of the institution's application for SARA membership, the institution may submit a revised application through the established SARA application process.