

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is SARA?**

The State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement is an agreement among member states, districts and territories that establishes comparable national standards for interstate offering of postsecondary distance education courses and programs. It is intended to make it easier for students to take online courses offered by postsecondary institutions based in another state. SARA is overseen by a National Council and administered by four regional education compacts. For more detailed information, please visit [nc-sara.org](http://nc-sara.org).

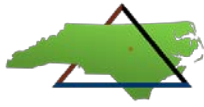
### **What other states participate in SARA?**

NC-SARA keeps an updated and [interactive map](#) of SARA states across the nation.

### **What is the relationship between NC-SARA, S-SARA and SARA North Carolina?**

NC-SARA is the National Council that provides an oversight structure via the [Council Board](#) and the four regional compacts. North Carolina's regional compact is Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) and SREB's SARA designation is S-SARA. Each SARA state has a portal entity through which SARA activity in that state is conducted.

North Carolina's portal entity is the North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority (NCSEAA). SARA North Carolina is a program of NCSEAA and all SARA business is conducted via SARA North Carolina.



**SARA NC**

State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement  
North Carolina

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## How does SARA benefit students?

- **Reduces student costs by reducing institutional costs:**

SARA allows participating institutions to streamline the regulatory compliance process for delivering distance education across state borders. This reduces both institutional compliance personnel hours and compliance costs while still maintaining high institutional standards. Institutions are then able to offer distance education to students across the nation at a significant cost savings.

- **Provides a clear path to complaint resolution:**

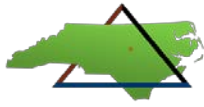
SARA provides students with one point of contact for filing complaints against SARA approved institutions. Complaint resolution can at times be a difficult process and SARA's requirements provide students with a clear path to resolution. Complaints submitted to the Portal must meet SARA criteria. For more information on the Portal's complaint process and requirements, please visit the [Complaint Process](#) page.

- **Expands educational opportunities**

- **Enhances overall distance education quality by establishing nationwide standards**

## Who do I contact for assistance with a SARA North Carolina related complaint?

The [Complaint Process](#) page contains information on SARA North Carolina's complaint process and criteria for review. For specific questions and/or concerns, please email [complaint@saranc.org](mailto:complaint@saranc.org).



## **Where can I find a list of approved NC-SARA Institutions?**

NC-SARA maintains an updated list of all [approved institutions](#).

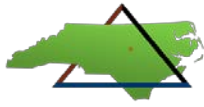
To view a listing of SARA North Carolina approved institutions, click [here](#).

## **What type of accreditation must an institution hold to participate in SARA?**

An institution must be fully accredited by a Department of Education recognized accrediting body (not “pre-accredited,” or in “candidacy”) to qualify for participation in SARA.

SARA institutions must be accredited by an accrediting body “recognized” by the U.S. Department of Education and whose scope of authority, as specified by the Department, includes distance education. The Department recognizes accrediting bodies for different purposes and within different categories, and some of those purposes and categories overlap. To meet the accreditation requirement for participation in SARA, an institution must hold institutional accreditation from an accrediting body:

- 1) which is listed by the Department in one of two categories (Regional and National Institutional Accrediting Agencies, and Specialized Accrediting Agencies) listed on the [Department's website](#).
- 2) whose scope of authority includes distance education (as listed after the name of the accrediting body).



## Do all of a state’s eligible institutions have to join SARA if the state does?

No. Every college or university decides for itself whether or not to operate under SARA.

## What state is an institution’s “home state” for SARA purposes?

The state in which the institution’s main campus or central unit holds its principal legal domicile is considered the institution’s home state.

## What fees are charged to institutions?

The following fee structure has been established by the National Council for SARA.

FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT (FTE) ENROLLMENT*	TOTAL
Fewer than 2,500 FTE students	\$2,000
2,500-9,999 FTE students	\$4,000
10,000 or more FTE students	\$6,000

\* As shown in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPED)

For fees paid to SARA North Carolina, please click [here](#).

## How was the complaint process established?

The complaint process is included in existing federal law and predates SARA. Refer to [34 CFR 600.9\(a\)\(1\)](#) (as amended in 2010) for specific language on the requirement that states have such a complaint process.