

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)
about the
Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)
between the
Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE)
and the
SACS Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI)

The GaDOE and SACS CASI have arrived at a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that will permit some schools to exercise the option to have the Georgia Assessment of Performance on School Standards (GAPSS): Closing the GAP satisfy both GaDOE and SACS CASI requirements. Schools scheduled for a mandatory GAPSS Analysis qualify to have the GAPSS satisfy requirements for the SACS CASI Quality Assurance Review if the school is within one year of the date it is scheduled to host a SACS CASI onsite visit. Additionally, under the terms of the MOA, other schools within one year of the date they are scheduled to host a SACS CASI onsite visit may request permission to have the GAPSS Analysis used in the SACS CASI Quality Assurance Review Visit. In the section below we have endeavored to answer some of the more frequently asked questions (FAQ) about the provisions of this agreement.

1. Why was this MOA between the GaDOE and SACS CASI developed?

The agreement removes unnecessary duplication for schools that have both reviews scheduled within a short period of time. It allows each entity (GaDOE, SACS CASI, and the school) more flexibility and fosters a spirit of cooperation for validating school improvement.

2. Will a school that hosts a mandatory GAPSS review be required to develop a separate school improvement plan for SACS CASI?

No, the plan required by the GaDOE will serve as the official School Improvement Plan.

3. If a school is approved to have a mandatory GAPSS review satisfy both GaDOE and SACS CASI requirements, is there any additional preparation expected by SACS CASI beyond the preparation needed for the GaDOE?

Yes. A SACS CASI representative will be appointed to serve as a member of the GAPSS team and will be responsible for applying the appropriate SACS CASI standards, completing the SACS CASI Recommendation for School-based Accreditation (Assessment Rubric), and providing a copy of the completed form to the GAPSS chairperson and to the Georgia SACS CASI office. To enable the SACS CASI representative to conduct the review of compliance with SACS CASI standards, the school must complete the Online Standards Assessment Report no earlier than six months before and no later than six weeks prior to the scheduled visit.

4. If a school is approved to have a voluntary GAPSS review satisfy both GaDOE and SACS CASI requirements, is there any additional preparation expected by SACS CASI beyond the preparation needed for the GaDOE?

Yes. As is the case with a mandatory GAPSS Review, a SACS CASI representative will be appointed to serve as a member of the GAPSS team and will be responsible for applying the appropriate SACS CASI standards, completing the SACS CASI Recommendation for School-based Accreditation (Assessment Rubric), and providing a copy of the completed form to the GAPSS chairperson and to the Georgia SACS CASI office. To enable the SACS CASI representative to conduct the review of compliance with SACS CASI standards, the school must complete the Online Standards Assessment Report no earlier than six months before and no later than six weeks prior to the scheduled visit.

5. Is there a timeline for making application to have a mandatory GAPSS Analysis also serve as the SACS CASI school-level visit?

Yes. To be eligible, a school must be scheduled by the GaDOE to host a mandatory GAPSS Analysis within one calendar year of the date that the school is required to host a SACS CASI Quality Assurance Review. With the approval of the system superintendent, the principal must communicate to both GaDOE and Georgia SACS CASI that the school wishes to have the GAPSS Analysis satisfy the onsite review requirements of both agencies. For example, a school that is scheduled to host a SACS CASI onsite review in the following school year may request approval to use the GAPSS review according to these deadlines:

- (1) Those wishing to host Fall visits must submit requests for approval by the Georgia SACS CASI office by March 1 of the previous year and must also meet the application deadline for the GaDOE.*
- (2) Those schools wishing to host a Spring visit must submit requests for approval to the Georgia SACS CASI office by October 1 of that year and must also meet the application deadline for the GaDOE.*

Schools with scheduled SACS CASI review dates that are later notified by the GaDOE that they must host a mandatory GAPSS review will, upon official written request to the Georgia SACS CASI office, be permitted to change to the dates for the GAPSS review provided those dates are within one year of the time the school's next SACS CASI onsite visit is required.

6. Will a school receive any feedback from SACS CASI if it participates in a mandatory GAPSS review that is approved to meet SACS CASI review requirements?

Yes, the school will receive a copy of the completed SACS CASI Recommendation for School-based Accreditation (Assessment Rubric).

7. If a school does not meet the requirements for a mandatory GAPSS review, are system and school officials permitted to request a GAPSS voluntary review and, if approved, use the GAPSS Analysis in lieu of a SACS CASI visit?

Yes, schools are permitted to request the voluntary GAPSS Analysis review. If the GaDOE approves a school's request to host a voluntary GAPSS (contingent on the DOE's capacity to support), the GAPSS review may be used for the SACS CASI Quality Assurance Review visit. Schools will coordinate with the GaDOE to schedule the visit.

8. If a school is approved to use the mandatory GAPSS review in lieu of the SACS CASI review, does this mean the school will no longer be required to complete a SACS CASI online update?

No. However, all accredited schools must follow current SACS CASI online reporting procedures.

9. Are there extra expenses incurred by schools that utilize the required MOA option to have the GAPSS Analysis satisfy the GaDOE and SACS CASI requirements?

The cost to schools that utilize the MOA option is determined by school size and the number of team members required to conduct the review. Generally speaking, the makeup of a GAPSS Analysis team is larger than a SACS CASI Accreditation team. The per diem expenses of the team leader employed by the Georgia Department of Education will be paid by the GaDOE. The school is responsible for paying the per diem expenses of other representatives serving on the review team. A GaDOE GAPSS Analysis team leader can assist the school in determining required team size and likely costs to be incurred.

10. If a school system is approved for District Accreditation, does having schools within the system that exercise the required MOA option exempt the system from having a District Accreditation visit?

No, the system is still required to host District Accreditation visits as per the established schedule.

11. If a school system is approved for District Accreditation, does that mean that a school within the system that exercises the required MOA option will not be included among the schools to be visited as a part of the system's District Accreditation visit?

No, schools that have had a GAPSS visit may also be included among the schools the chairperson for the District Accreditation visit selects to be visited during the system visit. However, the focus of the school visits under District Accreditation is very different from the focus of the GAPSS visit and is for the purpose of validating the system-wide improvement efforts.