

# Chapter 2

## Student Agreement

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## Overview

Chapter 2 provides detailed information about the importance of the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) Degree Network System (DNS) Student Agreement and the policies and requirements governing its use. As changes are made to the DNS, there may be changes to the Student Agreement form and/or process. Please refer to the [Student Agreement Instructions](#) for a pictorial representation of how to complete a SOC DNS Student Agreement.

While addressed primarily to colleges and college counselors or advisers, this chapter contains information that will help military education center personnel and servicemembers understand the importance of the Student Agreement and how it can be used to help servicemembers attain their education goals.

## The Importance of the SOC Degree Network System Student Agreement

Student Agreements should be issued to active duty servicemembers (not veterans), their spouses, and eligible adult children. National Guard members and Reserve components called to active duty should also be issued Student Agreements by home colleges.

The Student Agreement provides the military student with:

- a clearly defined degree plan in a standard format that is recognized by military educators and academic institutions working with military voluntary education programs;
- an official evaluation of all previously completed credit applicable to the degree, including transfer credit from other colleges and universities, and non-traditional forms of credit from military training courses, military occupational experience, and nationally recognized testing programs;
- an identification of remaining degree requirements that will help the student determine how best to complete the degree;
- protection against changing college degree requirements or policies while the Student Agreement is in effect; and
- an identification of guaranteed-transfer credit for specific courses from Degree Network System Core institutions with assigned SOC DNS Course Category Codes for these courses.

Collected Student Agreement data populate statistical reports and college participation benchmarks for institutional members, military counselors, and voluntary education service directors. The types of data reported include:

- the amount and type of applicable credit for military and non-traditional credit awarded by member institutions, including military training, military occupational experience, and nationally recognized testing programs;
- the number of servicemembers receiving Student Agreements and their participation by academic areas; and
- the distribution of participating servicemembers by military installation.

## Student Agreements Requirements

A student's home college is required to issue a Student Agreement. It is an official evaluation of a student's prior education and experience as it applies to his or her degree program. It gives the student a degree plan showing the courses and other requirements needed to complete the degree, and serves as a "contract-for-degree" between the home college and the student. This contract is the student's guarantee that he or she will be awarded the degree by the home college when all stated requirements have been met.

The Student Agreement should be issued by the time the student has completed six semester hours, or two courses, at the home college. SOC recommends that colleges establish a systematic process for early identification of degree-seeking military students and their eligible adult family members to ensure that they receive Student Agreements as appropriate. It is not necessary for a college to issue a Student Agreement to a student taking courses to apply to another college's degree program.

An institution is not allowed to issue a Student Agreement for a DNS-program they are not a member of (e.g., an institution that only participates in the DNS-2 is not allowed to issue a Student Agreement for a student pursuing a bachelor's degree because the school is not in the DNS-4).

Core member institutions are also encouraged to issue Open Network Student Agreements for degree programs not included in the DNS. Affiliate member institutions are required to issue Student Agreements for only the degree program(s) listed in the Degree Network System and are not authorized to issue them for any other degree programs at the institution. See "[Issuing Open Network Student Agreements](#)," below, for more information.

All Student Agreements are considered to be unofficial planning worksheets until signed by a college official.

It is highly recommended that each SOC DNS institution use the SOC-provided Excel template to develop a master template for each of its SOC DNS degrees. These can be easily customized for each student with the required demographic information and evaluated credit, eliminating the need to retype the degree requirements each time a student enrolls in that degree program. In addition, the Excel template contains formulas that compute totals. Computer-generated Student Agreements are acceptable but must contain the same information as the standard template in essentially the same format and must be approved by SOC for use by the college. Alternate formats will be approved on an individual case-by-case basis.

## Distributing Copies of the Student Agreement

The home college retains the official copy of the Student Agreement for tracking and recording the student's progress towards degree completion. Copies of the Student Agreement are to be distributed to:

- the student, signed by the authorized home college official;
- the Service, for the student's education file; and
- SOC, for use in quarterly status reports to the Services.

## Changes to the Student Agreement

Student Agreements may be altered for a limited number of reasons that are generally beyond the control of the institution. Examples include:

- changes that are required by accreditation bodies;
- changes mandated by state higher education authority; and
- changes to state licensure or certification requirements.

Usually these types of modifications should only affect courses not yet taken by the student. Documentation of these changes may be required upon request from SOC and the military education center. They do not invalidate the Student Agreement nor reset the time to degree completion outlined in Chapter 3 of the *SOC Degree Network System Handbooks*. Project Directors can be contacted for additional information.

Each service member holding an official Student Agreement for the affected degree should receive:

- proper advisement regarding the relative merits of the changes;
- clear and timely official communication (preferably written or electronic) from the institution in advance of the proposed program change regarding the anticipated impact of the changes on enrolled students (including applicable periods of grandfathering, potential employment impact on state licensing or state certification within the career industry, etc.);
- advisement regarding student options to remain in their current degree plan or pursue the new degree plan, any potential course substitutions, additional courses, etc. and the relative merits of each option; and
- documentation of degree plan changes for submission to military education staff, if the student voluntarily agrees to a degree plan including updated requirements.

Students with questions should contact the home college regarding the degree or SOC if there are specific questions about the Student Agreement.

## Issuing Open Network Student Agreements

SOC DNS Core member institutions may find that their military students pursue degrees that are not part of the DNS. Although not required to do so, colleges are encouraged to create a Student Agreement for these students. In such cases, the Student Agreement is completed in the regular way, except that "Open Network" is entered instead of the assigned Network. When completing these "Open Network" Student Agreements, a college should enter SOC DNS Course Category Codes for any of its courses that are listed in the Transferability Tables.

The degree or degrees offered by SOC DNS Affiliate member institutions do not belong to either Guaranteed-Transfer or Auxiliary Networks by definition. Affiliate member institutions are only allowed to complete Student Agreements for the specific degree or degrees listed in the *SOC DNS Handbook* and do not have the option of completing "Open Network" Student Agreements.

