

# Covenant Academy Accreditation

"Accredited with Quality" reads the accreditation certificate located in the office of Covenant Academy. This accreditation was granted by the Georgia Accrediting Commission (GAC) which has been a reputable and accepted agency since 1904. The GAC recognizes Covenant to be an educational institution of high quality.

Even though Covenant is, and has been, fully accredited since the 2000-2001 school year, it is still a good practice to revisit the accreditation issue periodically. With this in mind, the Covenant board established an accreditation committee, giving them the task of re-evaluating the accreditation question. The board's action in forming the committee was, in part, a positive response to the parents of Covenant Academy who need to be confident in the quality of education their children receive at this academy. It also serves to keep the board, faculty, and families of the school abreast of the trends and fads in the area of accreditation.

This brochure is a summary of the findings of the accreditation committee. In order to keep the subsets of the issue clear, it follows a question/answer format. The committee sought to ask the most pertinent questions concerning the issue and seek out the answer from the various accrediting agencies. The bulk of the questions asked originated with parents here at Covenant Academy. May each one who reads this be encouraged and assured that Covenant Academy is taking the accreditation issue seriously.

Kindergarten	GAC Accredited with Quality
Grammar	GAC Accredited with Quality
Logic	GAC Accredited with Quality
Rhetoric	GAC Accredited with Quality

## Is Covenant Academy (CA) currently accredited?

Yes! Covenant Academy is currently accredited.

## Which accrediting body is CA accredited by?

It is accredited by the Georgia Accrediting Commission (GAC). The GAC accredits 143 schools, of which 79 are high schools. That accreditation has been achieved by the most stringent methods available. Each school--Kindergarten, Grammar School, Middle/Logic School, High/Rhetoric School-- is rated individually as opposed to the full K-12 school being evaluated as one school. Covenant Academy's rating in each of the four schools for the last six years has been the highest possible rating: Accredited with Quality.

## What value does this accreditation bring to CA?

1. It provides external accountability to encourage schools to meet high quality educational standards.
2. It allows our students to graduate from an "Eligible High School" as it applies to HOPE Scholarship eligibility.
3. It does not impose upon Covenant Academy standards which are contrary to our Christian Classical educational model or our covenantal admissions policy.
  - . We may restrict our admissions and our hiring based on religious creed.
  - . We may focus on our Classical education model without being required to employ other modernistic educational trends.
4. It is a nationally recognized accreditation that meets college and university entrance requirements.
  - . The GAC was created by the University of Georgia system and is fully recognized by Georgia colleges and universities.
  - . The Boards of Regents in Florida, Alabama, Tennessee, Mississippi, South Carolina, and all other states of whom we have inquired recognize GAC accreditation.
  - . Harvard, Yale, Vanderbilt and all other universities of whom we have inquired recognize GAC accreditation.

## How much is accreditation a factor in college admissions?

Accreditation is not a factor in college admissions. Colleges across the country are generally considering students' SAT / ACT scores, high school GPAs, and the rigor of a school's curriculum.

## Universities in several states were contacted about their admissions requirements. Here are the findings:

**Georgia (UGA):** "UGA suggests that students pursue the most rigorous curriculum appropriate to their ability levels, as grades in academic courses and curriculum difficulty are the two most important factors in first-year admission decisions."

"We do not rank or prefer one accrediting body over another, we look for regional accreditation like SACS, MSACS, NCACS, NEACS, NACS or WACS, OR a state's Department of Education or certain Georgia authorities like Georgia Accrediting Commission, Georgia Private School Accrediting Commission or the Accrediting Commission for Independent Study."

**Georgia Tech (GT):** "We evaluate four primary components of an applicant's background, in order to make an admissions decision. Students that

are admitted to Tech are competitive in all four of these areas: high school GPA/rigor of curriculum; SAT/ACT scores; leadership and activity; personal essay."

**Yale:** "High school accreditation plays no role in Yale's admissions process. We do expect our applicants to take as challenging a course load as possible, and most schools provide the Admissions Office with a school Profile that describes the school, the student body, the curriculum etc... In the past, we have also admitted students who are home-schooled and do not come from a school that is accredited."

**Harvard:** "We accept home schooled students, as well as those from new 'Charter' schools. The accreditation of an institution or the lack thereof would not influence our decision."

**Alabama (UA):** "Decisions about the potential for your academic success at UA are based on your performance on the ACT and/or SAT, your high school grade point averages, and your high school course schedule."

**Auburn (AU.):** "Admission standards are based on the quality of your high school grades as well as your score on either the ACT or the SAT."

**Mississippi State University (MSU):** The two main components considered in the admissions process are SAT and/or ACT scores and completion of the high school course requirements with an appropriate core GPA.

**University of Mississippi (UM):** Their admissions standards place emphasis on a college preparatory curriculum, SAT or ACT scores, and high school GPA.

**South Carolina (USC):** "Admissions as a freshman to USC is based on a combination of grades earned in specific high school courses and official SAT or ACT scores. Admission to the university is selective. The majority of admitted students score at or above 1070-1250 (the middle fifty percent of admitted students) on the SAT, and have a b+ or better high school average. Higher grades will offset lower entrance examination scores, and vice versa. Additional factors may be taken into consideration, such as extraordinary personal circumstances, special talents, outstanding extracurricular activities, and evidence of leadership."

**Clemson:** "For freshman applicants, the following factors are considered: class standing, SAT or ACT, high school curriculum, grades, and choice of major."

**University of Tennessee (UT):** "The University of Tennessee has a competitive admissions process. Students are considered for admission based largely on their academic performance and credentials together with additional factors that demonstrate likelihood of success in college. Our freshman admissions decisions are based on the following elements: completion of core academic subjects, core GPA, SAT or ACT. Other elements include: personal statement, extracurricular and leadership activities, special talents or skills, rigor of the applicant's curriculum, difficulty of senior level course work, and recommendations from teachers and counselors."

## Covenant Academy Committee to Study Accreditation

### 1. What was the purpose of this committee?

The Accreditation Committee was formed to investigate the various accreditation options available to CA and assess whether a change was needed. Our goal was to find the option best suited for Covenant Academy and recommend that to the Board based on our findings.

### 2. What was the make-up of the committee?

The committee was composed of CA parents including Board, Administration, and Faculty Representatives.

### 3. What accreditation options did they evaluate?

There are many accreditation options available to CA. The committee

### If GAC is sufficient, why pursue Classical Accreditation?

Classical Accreditation provides different benefits and focuses. GAC provides nationally recognized accreditation and eligibility for the HOPE scholarship.

Classical Accreditation evaluates our school by criteria that are consistent with our Christian Classical model.

Accreditation by a Classical Accreditation agency will promote excellence and provide resources to assist us in the pursuit of excellence within that Christian Classical framework.

chose to focus on four options that they felt were relevant: Georgia Accrediting Commission (GAC), Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), and Association of Classical and Christian Schools (ACCS).

#### 4. What process did the accreditation committee use to evaluate the different accrediting options?

- A. The committee first developed a comprehensive list of issues related to our school with the purpose of evaluating how each accrediting body addressed that particular issue.
- B. The committee members were assigned an accrediting body to research to provide information to the rest of the committee as to how that body addressed each issue on our list.
- C. The committee read each accrediting body's manual and spoke with representatives of each accrediting agency.
- D. The committee also inquired of different universities and other classical Christian schools, as well as the boards of regents of different states, as to the role of accreditation in college admissions.
- E. The committee then compared the research gathered and made a recommendation to the Board.

#### 5. What was the recommendation?

The accreditation committee has unanimously voted as follows:

- A. That Covenant Academy maintain GAC accreditation because it provides Hope Scholarship eligibility and nationally recognized accreditation for Covenant Academy; and
- B. That Covenant Academy pursue a Classical accreditation, due to its congruence with our Christian Classical model. This accreditation will provide like-minded accountability as we continue to strive for academic excellence.

#### Reasons We Chose Not To Pursue Accreditation by SACS

In evaluating accrediting agencies the primary question the committee asked is, "Which agency or agencies would best help us to fulfill our mission statement of glorifying God by teaching for mastery and training for servant leadership in the knowledge of God?" While SACS is a well-respected accrediting agency, the committee did not feel it was the best agency for CA with regard to accreditation. This was true for a number of reasons:

- 1. While there is little doubt that pursuing SACS accreditation would enhance public perception of Covenant Academy, the question remains, to what end? It was the consensus of the committee that SACS accreditation would not insure a quality education for our students nor enhance our educational objectives.
- 2. The committee found that the policies of SACS were not congruent with our classical educational philosophy and would require Covenant Academy teachers to undergo training, not in our classical educational philosophy and methodology, but rather in modernistic pedagogy.

3. The committee was also concerned about SACS with regard to creeds. SACS expressly forbids discrimination based upon creed. We as a school do discriminate based upon creed. We do so in the hiring of staff as well as in our admission of students to the school. We require that at least one parent be a professing Christian, thereby applying a creedal test for admission to the school. While SACS does accredit Christian schools with policies like ours, they do so in violation of their own stated policy. SACS would not provide us with a written guarantee that we would not lose accreditation with them in the future over our commitment to continue to discriminate based upon adherence to our Christian statement of faith.

4. Continued accreditation with the Georgia Accrediting Commission provides Covenant Academy with a well-respected and certified accreditation that is recognized by all colleges and universities within and outside of the state of Georgia. All Covenant Academy graduates who meet the stated requirements of HOPE are eligible for the scholarship as a result of CA being accrediting by GAC.



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