

Substantive Change for Institutional Accreditation

Effective Date Monday, October 8, 2012

Status Final

Last Revised Thursday, September 21, 2023

Policy Type [Executive Vice President & Provost](#)

Contact Office

[Institutional Research and Analytics](#)

Oversight Executive

[Executive Vice President and Provost](#)

Applies To

Academic Division

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Reason for Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance with the “Substantive Change Policy and Procedures” established by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). The U.S. Department of Education requires institutional accrediting bodies, such as SACSCOC, to ensure that any substantive change to the educational mission, program, or programs of an accredited institution does not adversely affect the capacity of said institution to continue to meet the agency's standards. To do this, SACSCOC has established a substantive change policy that requires the University to notify and/or seek approval from SACSCOC when institutional actions occur that could qualify as substantive change. Failure to comply with SACSCOC’s Substantive Change Policy may jeopardize the University’s accreditation and/or ability to receive federal funds.

Definition of Terms

Substantive Change

A significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. Substantive changes can impact the quality of educational programs and services (see Code of Federal Regulations [§ 602.22 Substantive changes and other reporting requirements](#)). Actions that fall under substantive change include:

- Substantially changing the established mission or objectives of an institution or its programs.
- Changing the legal status, form of control, or ownership of an institution.
- Changing the governance of an institution.
- Merging / consolidating two or more institutions or entities.
- Acquiring another institution or any program or location of another institution.

- Relocating an institution or an off-campus instructional site of an institution (including a branch campus).
- Offering courses or programs at a higher or lower degree level than currently authorized.
- Adding graduate programs at an institution previously offering only undergraduate programs (including degrees, diplomas, certificates, and other for-credit credential).
- Changing the way an institution measures student progress, whether in clock hours or credit-hours; semesters, trimesters, or quarters; or time-based or non-time-based methods or measures.
- Adding a program that is a significant departure from the existing programs, or method of delivery, from those offered when the institution was last evaluated.
- Initiating programs by distance education or correspondence courses.
- Adding an additional method of delivery to a currently offered program.
- Entering into a cooperative academic arrangement.
- Entering into a written arrangement under 34 C.F.R. § 668.5 under which an institution or organization not certified to participate in the title IV Higher Education Act (HEA) programs offers less than 25% (notification) or 25-50% (approval) of one or more of the accredited institution's educational programs. An agreement offering more than 50% of one or more of an institution's programs is prohibited by federal regulation.
- Substantially increase or decreasing the number of clock hours or credit hours awarded or competencies demonstrated, or an increase in the level of credential awarded, for successful completion of one or more programs.
- Adding competency-based education programs.
- Adding each competency-based education program by direct assessment.
- Adding programs with completion pathways that recognize and accommodate a student's prior or existing knowledge or competency.
- Awarding dual or joint academic awards.
- Re-opening a previously closed program or off-campus instructional site.
- Adding a new off-campus instructional site/additional location including a branch campus.
- Adding a permanent location at a site at which an institution is conducting a teach-out program for students of another institution that has ceased operating before all students have completed their program of study.
- Closing an institution, a program, a method of delivery, an off-campus instructional site, or a program at an off-campus instructional site.
- Participating in the federal Prison Education Program providing Pell Grant access to confined or incarcerated students.

Policy Statement

To ensure compliance with the SACSCOC [Substantive Change Policy and Procedures](#), the following roles and responsibilities have been established. Each school is expected to designate an individual to serve as a school academic compliance contact for SACSCOC substantive change purposes.

1. Responsibilities:

The *University's SACSCOC liaison* is responsible for:

- Coordinating with the University's schools to ensure institutional activity complies with the SACSCOC policy on substantive change; and
- Acting as the institutional authority on the SACSCOC policy on substantive change, inclusive of managing all notifications and related correspondence to SACSCOC regarding a substantive change.

School academic compliance contacts are responsible for:

- Familiarizing themselves with this policy, the SACSCOC policy on substantive change, and the procedures outlined in “[Review and Approval Processes](#)” related to academic program actions;
- Altering the University’s SACSCOC liaison in advance of any activity that may constitute substantive change; and
- Promoting adherence to institutional policies and procedures that support compliance with SACSCOC substantive change policy.

Procedures

[Review and Approval Processes](#)

Related Information

[SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures](#)

[Institutional Accreditation](#)

[Review and Approval Workflow](#)

Substantive change requirements of the U.S. Department of Education: [34 C.F.R. § 602.22](#)

Major Category [Executive Vice President & Provost Policies](#)

Next Scheduled Review Friday, May 10, 2024

Revision History

Edited definition 9/21/23; Edited line "University’s SACSCOC liaison" 7/26/21; Updated 5/10/21; 8/18/14.

Applies To Text

Academic Division.

Last modified February 5, 2024 - 3:11pm

Approved By Executive Vice President and Provost

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