



# Policy on Reporting Substantive Change to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC)

## Major Topics

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[Definitions](#)

[Procedures](#)

[Appendix A - Matrix of Approval and Recommendation Responsibilities](#)

## I. Introduction

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The purpose of this regulation is to establish institutional procedures for recognizing and approving substantive change and ensuring timely notification to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). The University's SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison is the individual responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented.

The types of substantive change and the procedures for reporting them appropriately are found in the SACSCOC's policy on substantive change. If differences occur between this Administrative Regulation and the SACSCOC's policy, the SACSCOC's policy has precedence.

## II. Definitions

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### A. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges

The SACSCOC is the recognized regional accrediting body in the 11 U.S. southern states and in Latin America for those institutions of higher education that award associate, baccalaureate, master's or doctoral degrees. The SACSCOC is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as an agency whose accreditation enables its member institutions to seek eligibility to participate in Title IV programs. To maintain its recognition by the U.S. Department of Education, the Commission has incorporated federal requirements into its substantive change policy and procedures. Some of those requirements expect an institution to seek and receive approval prior to the initiation of a substantive change so that the change can be included in the institution's scope of accreditation.

## B. Substantive Change

Substantive change is a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution, as defined in SACSCOC's substantive change policy. The types of substantive change and the procedures for addressing them appropriately are found in the SACSCOC's policy on substantive change and on its substantive changes website.

<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/Substantive%20change%20policy.pdf>

<http://www.sacscoc.org/SubstantiveChange.asp>

## C. Notification

Notification to the SASCOC regarding substantive change means the President of the University, or designee, shall send a letter to the President of the SACSCOC summarizing the proposed change, providing the intended implementation date, and listing the complete physical address if the change involves the initiation of an off-campus site or branch campus.

## D. Prospectus

A prospectus is a concisely worded narrative that describes a proposed substantive change according to a format specified by the SACSCOC.

## E. Accreditation Liaison

The accreditation liaison is the individual appointed by the President of the University to help ensure the University remains in compliance with SACS accreditation requirements and policies. The Senior Vice Provost for Academic Planning, Analytics and Technologies is the University's accreditation liaison.

## F. Branch Campus

A branch campus is a location of an institution that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus of the institution. A location is independent of the main campus if the location is (1) permanent in nature, (2) offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential, (3) has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization, and (4) has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

## G. Off-campus Site

An off-campus site is a location of an institution that is geographically apart, but not independent, of the main campus. The site may be used in an ongoing manner to deliver programs or courses leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential, but it does not have its own faculty, administrative organization or budget.

## H. Distance Education

Distance education is a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) in a course occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. A distance education course may use the internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or video cassettes, DVD's, and CD-ROMS if used as part of the distance learning course or program.

## I. Degree Completion Program

A degree completion program is typically designed for a non-traditional undergraduate population such

as working adults who have completed some college-level course work but have not achieved a baccalaureate degree. Students in such programs may transfer in credit from courses taken previously and may receive credit for experiential learning. Courses in degree completion programs are often offered in an accelerated format or meet during evening and weekend hours, or may be offered via distance learning technologies.

#### J. Teach-out Agreement

A teach-out agreement is a written agreement between institutions that provides for the equitable treatment of students and a reasonable opportunity for students to complete their program of study if an institution, or an institutional location that provides fifty percent or more of at least one program offered, ceases to operate before all enrolled students have completed their program of study. Such a teach-out agreement requires SACSCOC approval in advance of implementation.

#### K. Teach-out Plan

A teach-out plan is a written plan developed by an institution that provides for the equitable treatment of students if an institution, or an institutional location that provides fifty percent or more of at least one program, ceases to operate before all students have completed their program of study, and may include, if required by the institution's accrediting agency, a teach-out agreement between institutions. Teach-out plans must be approved by SACSCOC in advance of implementation.

#### L. Significant Departure

A significant departure is when a program is not closely related to previously approved programs at the institution or site or for the mode of delivery in question. To determine whether a new program is a "significant departure," it is helpful to consider the following questions:

1. What previously approved programs does the institution offer that are closely related to the new program and how are they related?
2. Will significant additional equipment or facilities be needed?
3. Will significant additional financial resources be needed?
4. Will a significant number of new courses be required?
5. Will a significant number of new faculty members be required?
6. Will significant additional library/learning resources be needed?

### III. Procedures

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- A. SACSCOC requires notification for substantive change. Some substantive changes require prior notification and approval; others require only prior notification. Notification requirements for the various types of substantive change are illustrated in the Matrix of University Procedures, Approval and Recommendation Responsibilities for Substantive Change. (see Appendix A)

Additional procedures for certain types of changes are found in the SACSCOC's Policy Statement on Mergers, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisitions, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status, which can be found at the SACSCOC website. <http://www.sacscoc.org/subchg/policy/Mergers.pdf>

Approval authority relating to each type of substantive change occurs at various levels of the University

and is illustrated in the Matrix of University Procedure, Approval and Recommendation Responsibilities for Substantive Change. (see Appendix A)

- C. The President may delegate administrative responsibilities for approving or recommending on substantive change to the Provost or other appropriate senior administrators (*GR III.A.1*). These responsibilities shall be reflected in job descriptions of the positions, letters of appointment, and other appropriate documents for those assigned such responsibilities.
- D. In accordance with its academic approval responsibilities as established in *GR IV*, the University Senate shall maintain academic program approval procedures and forms that:
  - 1. Recognize substantive changes related to academic programs in appropriate approval documents. These documents shall accompany the proposal at each step;
  - 2. Require approval by the appropriate educational unit faculties and also include any recommendations offered by the corresponding department chair, dean, and/or Provost prior to approval of academic substantive change by the Councils of the University Senate and the University Senate; and
  - 3. Provide for timely notification to the Commission on Colleges prior to change implementation, as required by the SACS substantive change policy.
- E. The Accreditation Liaison shall inform all responsible individuals at each level of the University (see Matrix in Appendix A) of the SACS substantive change policy and the institutional substantive change policy on a biannual basis and at the same time shall request notification of substantive changes in planning for the next 12-month period. The 12-month timeframe will provide a long-range outlook to ensure that notifications can be carried out six months prior to implementation of substantive change. The Accreditation Liaison shall prepare the President's notification to the SACSCOC regarding the substantive changes that are reported.
- F. If a prospectus is subsequently required by the SACSCOC, the deans or appropriate senior administrators shall coordinate preparation of the prospectus and forward the prospectus to the Accreditation Liaison for final review.
- G. The Accreditation Liaison shall review a required prospectus and obtain approval of the President and the Provost before preparing for submission to SACSCOC by the President, or designee.

## References and Related Materials

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34 CFR 602.22

GR Part III, The President of the University

GR Part IV, The University Senate

[SACSCOC Policies](#)

[SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy Statement](#)

## Revision History

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10/1/2009, 6/4/2012, 9/9/2013

For questions, contact: [Office of Legal Counsel](#)

## Appendix I

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See below

**APPENDIX 1: Matrix of Procedures, Approval and Recommendation Responsibilities for Substantive Change** (Last update 8/19/2013)

**PROCEDURE 1 (P1):** Notification **and/or** Approval Prior to the Intended Implementation Date

**PROCEDURE 2 (P2):** Requiring **ONLY** Notification Prior to Implementation

**PROCEDURE 3 (P3):** Closing a Program, Site, Branch Campus or Institution

EXTERNAL: SACS				INTERNAL: University Levels of Approval for Substantive Change										
Types of Substantive Change	Prior Approval Required	Time Frame For Contacting or Notifying SACS	Documentation	Key: AM=Approval based on Program Academic Merit; AF=Approval based on Administrative Feasibility; AFM = approval based on Academic Merit and Administrative Feasibility, R= Recommenders *; N=Not Required										
				Faculty Approval based on Program Academic Merit , unless otherwise noted				Administration Recommenders, unless otherwise noted						
ACADEMIC				Dept.	College	Councils of the Senate	University Senate	Dept. Chair	Dean	Provost	President	BOT		
Initiating coursework or programs at a more advanced level than currently approved	Yes (P1)	12 months prior to implementation	Application for Level Change  Due Dates : 4/15 or 10/1	Not Applicable for the University of Kentucky										
Initiating programs at a lower degree level	Yes (P1)	6 months prior to implementation	Prospectus	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	R	AFM		
Expanding at current degree level (significant departure from current programs)	Yes (P1)	6 months prior to implementation	Prospectus	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	R	AFM		
Initiating a branch campus (academic program aspect)	Yes (P1)	6 months prior to implementation	Prospectus	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	R	AFM		
Initiating a certificate program ... ...using <u>existing approved</u> courses	NA	NA	NA	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	AF	N	N		
...at a <u>new off campus site</u> (previously approved program)	Yes (P1)	6 months prior to implementation	Prospectus	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	AF	N		
...that is a <u>significant departure</u> from previously approved	Yes (P1)	6 months prior to implementation	Modified Prospectus	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	AF	N		

\*Recommendation responsibility means having the opportunity to offer an opinion on the academic merit or the administrative feasibility of the proposed change that accompanies a proposal when it is transmitted to the next level of consideration.

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				Dept.	College	Councils of the Senate	University Senate	Dept. Chair	Dean	Provost	President	BOT		
<b>ACADEMIC</b>														
<b>Altering significantly</b> the length (credit hours) of a program	Yes (P1)	6 months prior to implementation	Prospectus	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	AF	N		
<b>Initiating off-campus sites</b> (including Early College High School and dual enrollment programs offered at the high school) ...Student can obtain 50% or more credits toward program	Yes (P1)	6 months prior to implementation	Prospectus	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	AF	N		
...Student can obtain 25-49 % of credit	No (P2)	6 months prior to implementation	Letter of Notification	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	AF	N		
...Student can obtain 24% or less	NA	NA	None	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	AF	N	N		
<b>Moving an off-campus instructional site</b> (serving the same geographic area)	No (P2)	Prior to Implementation	Letter of Notification with new address and starting date	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	AF	N		

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				Dept.	College	Councils of the Senate	University Senate	Dept. Chair	Dean	Provost	President	BOT	
<b>ACADEMIC</b>													
<b>Expanding program offerings</b> at previously approved <u>off-campus sites</u> ...Adding programs that are <u>significantly different from current programs</u> at the site	No (P2)	Prior to implementation	Letter of Notification	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	AF	N	
...Adding programs that are <u>NOT significantly</u> different from current programs at the site	NA	NA	NA	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	AF	N	
<b>Initiating Distance Learning</b> ...Offering 50 % or more of a <b>program</b> for the first time (Adding subsequent programs requires advance notification <b>only</b> for programs that are significant departures from the originally approved program)	Yes (P1)	6 months prior to implementation	Prospectus	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	AF	N	
...Offering 25-49 %	No (P2)	Prior to implementation	Letter of Notification	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	AF	N	
...Offering 24 % or less	NA	NA	NONE	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	N	N	

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				Dept.	College	Councils of the Senate	University Senate	Dept. Chair	Dean	Provost	President	BOT
Entering into a contract with an entity not certified to participate in USDOE Title IV programs ... if the entity provides 25% or more of an educational program offered by the COC accredited institution	Yes (P1)	6 months prior to implementation	Prospectus	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	AF	N
... if the entity provides less than 25% of an educational program offered by the accredited institution	No (P2)	6 months prior to implementation	Copy of the signed agreement	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	AF	N
Initiating degree programs offered through contractual agreement or consortium	No (P2)	Prior to implementation	Letter of Notification and copy of signed agreement	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	R (AF if approved degree)	AFM (If new degree)
Initiating certificate programs or courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium	No (P2)	Prior to implementation	Letter of Notification and copy of signed agreement	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	AF	N
Acquiring any program from another institution	Yes	6 months prior to implementation	Prospectus	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	R	AFM

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<b>ACADEMIC</b>				Dept.	College	Councils of the Senate	University Senate	Dept. Chair	Dean	Provost	President	BOT
<b>Altering</b> significantly the length of a program	Yes (P1)	NA	Prospectus	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	AF	N
<b>Initiating degree completion</b> programs (Note SACS definition)	Yes (P1)	NA	Prospectus	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	AF	N
<b>Closing</b> a program (without need for a teach-out-plan)	Yes (P3)	Immediately following decision to close	Letter of notification	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	AF (if certificate)	R (if degree)	AFM (if degree)
<b>Closing a program</b> approved off-campus site, branch campus, or institution ...Institution to <u>teach out</u> its own students	Yes (P3)	Immediately following decision to close	Description of teach-out plan included with letter of notification	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	AF (if certificate)	R (if degree)	AFM (if degree)
<u>Institution contracts with another institution</u> to teach-out students (Teach-out Agreement)	Yes (P3)	Immediately following decision to close	Description of teach-out plan included with letter of notification	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	AF (if certificate)	R (if degree)	AFM (if degree)
Initiating <b>JOINT programs</b> or <b>DUAL programs</b> with another institution ... SACS accredited institution	NA (P2)	Prior to implementation	Copy of signed agreement and contract information for each institution	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	R	AFM
...Non SACS accredited.	Yes (P1)	6 months prior implementation	Prospectus	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	R	AFM

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SACSCOC policy "Mergers,Consolidations and Change of Ownership: Review and Approval." <a href="http://www.sacscoc.org/subchg/policy/Mergers.pdf">http://www.sacscoc.org/subchg/policy/Mergers.pdf</a>				Dept.	College	Councils of the Senate	University Senate	Dept. Chair	Dean	Provost	President	BOT		
Initiating a merger/consolidation with another institution	Yes	6 months prior to implementation	Prospectus Due Dates : 4/15 or 9/15	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	AFM	
Changing governance, ownership, control, or legal status of an institution	Yes	6 months prior to implementation	Prospectus Due Dates : 4/15 or 9/15	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	AFM	
Altering significantly the educational mission of the institution	Yes (P1)	6 months prior to implementation	Prospectus	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	AFM	
Acquiring any site from another institution	Yes	6 months prior to implementation	Prospectus	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	AFM	
Adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out for students from another institution that is closing	Yes	6 months prior to implementation	Prospectus	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	AFM	
Relocating a main or branch campus	Yes (P1)	6 months prior implementation	Prospectus	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	AFM	
<b>Initiating a branch campus</b> (administrative feasibility aspect)	Yes (P1)	6 months prior to implementation	Prospectus	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	AFM	

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