

Administrative Regulation 1:5

Substantive Change Policy

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I. Introduction

The purpose of this regulation is to establish institutional policies and procedures for identifying institutional and programmatic changes that are substantive and for ensuring compliance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) policy on substantive change through timely notification. The internal approval process for each type of change varies, and follows all other Governing and Administrative Regulations, and the University Senate Rules.

II. Entities Affected

This regulation applies to all units of the University.

III. Definitions

A. 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.

B. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges

The SACSCOC, also called “the Commission”, 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. 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.

C. 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.

<https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/SubstantiveChange.pdf>
<https://sacscoc.org/accrediting-standards/substantive-changes/>

Additional definitions related to substantive change are found in the SACSCOC's policy on substantive change: <https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/SubstantiveChange.pdf>

IV. Policy

The University of Kentucky must notify SACSCOC of changes in accordance with its substantive change policy and, when required, seek approval prior to the initiation of changes.

V. Responsibilities

A. Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs)¹ are responsible for:

1. Being knowledgeable about what constitutes a substantive change as defined by SACSCOC's Substantive Change Policy and Procedures;
2. Notifying the Accreditation Liaison of any potential substantive changes to ensure that the institution follows all appropriate timelines and procedures;
3. Monitoring the instruction that occurs at off-campus instructional sites and through cooperative academic arrangements to ensure compliance with SACSCOC's Principles of Accreditation and substantive change policy; and
4. Coordinating the preparation of a prospectus or other documentation, as required.

B. The Accreditation Liaison is responsible for:

1. Being knowledgeable about what constitutes a substantive change as defined by SACSCOC's substantive change policy;
2. Monitoring any changes to SACSCOC's substantive change policy;
3. Ensuring the timely notification to SACSCOC of all required substantive changes;

¹ Defined in Administrative Regulation 3:16 Review of Chief Administrative Officers

4. Informing campus leaders about substantive change policy requirements;
 5. Gathering information about campus activities related to substantive change from CAOs and the University Senate;
 6. Serving on leadership councils, to facilitate the identification of potential substantive changes;
 7. Making and documenting institutional decisions about whether an action is or is not a substantive change;
 8. Maintaining a record of substantive change decisions; and
 9. Supporting the preparation of any prospectus or other documentation that may be required.
- C. The University Senate is responsible for developing and maintaining procedures and forms related to course and academic program approval, and to course/program changes, that ensure proposals have been reviewed for adherence to SACSCOC's substantive change policy.

VI. Procedures

A. Procedures for Identifying Substantive Changes

Potential substantive changes are proactively identified during the academic program approval process and through the Biannual Substantive Change Notification process.

1. Academic Approval Process

In accordance with its academic approval responsibilities as established in *GR IV*, the University Senate must maintain academic program approval procedures and forms that:

- a) Recognize substantive changes related to academic programs in appropriate approval documents. These documents must accompany the proposal at each step; and
- b) Provide for timely notification to the Commission on Colleges prior to change implementation, as required by the SACSCOC substantive change policy.

2. Biannual Substantive Change Notification

The Accreditation Liaison must contact all Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs, as defined in AR 3:16), and the University Senate Council Chair, about the SACSCOC substantive change policy and the institutional substantive change policy on a biannual basis to:

- a) Notify the CAO's about the policy and any changes related to the policy; and
- b) Request notification of substantive changes planned for the next 12-month period. The 12-month timeframe provides a long-range outlook to ensure that notifications can be carried out six months prior to implementation of substantive change.

B. Procedures for Determining Substantive Change

When a potential substantive change is identified through the University Senate academic approval process or through notification from a Chief Administrative Officer, the Accreditation Liaison must:

1. Collect any additional information necessary to determine whether the planned change is

considered substantive under the policy;

2. Determine whether the planned change requires no action, notification of SACSCOC or prior approval by SACSCOC;
3. Communicate the determination to the appropriate contact people for the change; and
4. Maintain institutional records of the determination process.

If the proposer of the change disagrees with the determination of the Accreditation Liaison, they may contact the Provost for resolution.

VII. Reporting Requirements

If the Accreditation Liaison determines that a prospectus is required by SACSCOC, the dean or appropriate senior administrators are responsible for coordinating the preparation of the prospectus and forwarding the prospectus to the Accreditation Liaison for final review and submission.

References and Related Materials

34 CFR 602.22

GR Part III, The President of the University GR Part IV, The University Senate

Administrative Regulation 3:16

[SACSCOC Policies](#)

[SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy Statement](#)

Revision History

10/1/2009, 6/4/2012, 9/9/2013, 11/17/2015 (Updated Titles), 10/13/2021

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