

# Substantive Change for Accreditation Purposes

Policy 107

## 1 Introduction

1.1 Member institutions are required to notify the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC or “Commission”) of changes in accordance with the Commission’s Substantive Change Policy and, when required, seek approval prior to the initiation of changes.

1.2 Member institutions are required to have a policy and procedures to ensure that all substantive changes are reported to the Commission in a timely fashion.

## 2 Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all programs and actions relevant to SACS accreditation of Appalachian State University.

## 3 Definitions

### 3.1 Distance Education

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.

### 3.2 Institutional Accreditation Liaison

the individual appointed by the President of the University to help ensure the University remains in compliance with SACS accreditation requirements and policies.

### 3.3 Off-Campus Site

where site-based, classroom group instruction occurs at a location that is geographically apart from the main campus.

### 3.4 Prospectus

a concisely worded narrative that describes a proposed substantive change according to a format specified by the COC.

### 3.5 Significant Change in Program Length

one with a noticeable impact on the program’s completion time (e.g., increasing a baccalaureate degree from 122 hours to 134 hours).

### 3.6 Significant Departure in Program

one in which the proposed new program has no closely related counterpart among the previously approved programs in the curriculum. To determine whether a new program is a significant departure, the university will consider whether the new program requires:

1. New faculty;
2. Many new courses;
3. New library or other learning resources;
4. New equipment or facilities;
5. A new resource base.

### 3.7 Substantive Change

according to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Substantive Change Policy a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. Under federal regulations, substantive change includes, but is not limited to:

1. Any change in the established mission or objectives of the institution;
2. Any change in legal status, form of control, or ownership of the institution;
3. The addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure, either in content or method of delivery, from those that were offered when the institution was last evaluated;
4. The addition of courses or programs of study at a degree or credential level different from that which is included in the institution's current accreditation or reaffirmation;
5. A change from clock hours to credit hours;
6. A substantial increase in the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program;
7. The establishment of an additional location geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers at least 50 percent of an educational program;
8. The establishment of a branch campus;
9. Closing a program, off-campus site, branch campus or institution;
10. Entering into a collaborative academic arrangement such as a dual degree program or a joint degree program with another institution;
11. Acquiring another institution or a program or location of another institution;
12. Adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out program for a closed institution;
13. Entering into a contract by which an entity not eligible for Title IV funding offers 25% or more of any of the accredited institution's programs.

### **3.8 Teach-out Plan**

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 programs 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.

## **4 Policy and Procedure Statements**

### **4.1 Notification**

4.1.1 Appalachian State University, a member institution of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), will notify the SACSCOC of substantive changes in accordance with the SACS Substantive Change Policy and, when required, seek approval prior to the initiation of such changes.

4.1.2 Notification by the University means that the Chancellor or the Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor shall send a letter to the President of the SACSCOC that describes the proposed substantive change, identifies the implementation date, and includes the physical address when the change involves an off-campus site.

4.1.3 Depending upon the substantive change, as directed in the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy, communications with SACSCOC may include either:

1. only notification from the University in the form of a letter describing the substantive change prior to implementation, or,
2. notification from the University and approval by SACSCOC prior to implementation, which may be as many as 12 months before implementation.

### **4.2 Assigned Responsibility**

4.2.1 The Chancellor or the Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor will submit all substantive change correspondence from the University to the President of the SACSCOC.

4.2.2 Overall responsibility for insuring the University's compliance with the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy is assigned to the Institutional Accreditation Liaison.

4.2.3 Further responsibility for ensuring compliance with regard to off-campus sites is assigned to the Director of the Office of Distance Education.

## 4.2.4 Campus Processes

4.2.4.1 Monitoring campus substantive changes and initiating reporting of substantive changes are the responsibilities of the Institutional Accreditation Liaison. This includes working with the Academic Policies and Procedures Committee, Council of Chairs, Deans Council, Chancellor's Cabinet, and other University bodies as appropriate to ensure that the University is in compliance with the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy. The Liaison shall biannually inform campus agencies of the substantive change policy and institutional substantive changes, and in the same communication request instances of substantive changes anticipated or planned for the upcoming 12-month period. The Liaison shall prepare appropriate letters of communication to the President of SACSCOC for execution by the Chancellor or Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor. If a Prospectus is required by SACSCOC, the Liaison will coordinate with the deans and other senior administrators to prepare the prospectus for the Chancellor or the Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor to submit to the President of SACSCOC.

4.2.4.2 Monitoring and reporting substantive change that involves off-campus sites or other distance education programming under the aegis of the Office of Distance Education is the responsibility of the Director of the Office of Distance Education. The Director will work closely with the Institutional Accreditation Liaison to ensure compliance with the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy.

## 4.3 Procedures

4.3.1 The SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy specifies three procedures for addressing different types of substantive change. The Policy includes a detailed matrix to assist in determining which procedure applies to a particular substantive change.

1. Procedure One applies to substantive changes that require both notification and approval prior to implementation.
2. Procedure Two applies to substantive changes that require only notification prior to implementation.
3. Procedure Three applies to closure of a program, site, branch campus, or institution.

## 4.4 Teach-out Plans

4.4.1 Teach-out plans must be approved by SACSCOC in advance of implementation.

## 5 Additional References

[Substantive Change Policy](#)

## 6 Authority

Office of Institutional Research and Planning – 828-262-4090

## 7 Contact Information

## 8 Original Effective Date

August 29, 2012

## 9 Revision Dates