

# Substantive Change for Accreditation Purposes

Policy 107

## 1 Introduction

1.1 Member institutions are required to notify the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools 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 programs and actions relevant to SACSCOC accreditation of Appalachian State University.

## 3 Definitions

### 3.1 Distance Education

SACSCOC defines distance education as 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 Chancellor of the University to help ensure the University remains in compliance with SACSCOC accreditation requirements and policies.

### 3.3 Off-Campus Instructional Site

A location geographically apart from an institution's sole main campus and where instruction is delivered.

### 3.4 Prospectus

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

### 3.5 Significant Change in Program Length

Program credit hours increase or decrease by 25% or more, and students' expected time to completion increases or decreases by more than one term or its equivalent or comparable measure.

### 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. 50-100% new content;
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 from existing offerings of educational programs, or method of delivery, from those that were offered when the [accrediting] agency last evaluated the institution;
4. The addition of programs of study at a degree or credential level different from that which is included in the institution's current accreditation or pre-accreditation;
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 entering into a contract under which an institution or organization not certified to participate in the title IV, HEA programs offers more than 25 percent of one or more of the accredited institution's educational programs;
8. 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;
9. The acquisition of any other institution or any program or location of another institution;
10. The addition of a permanent location at a site at which the institution is conducting a teach-out for students of another institution that has ceased operating before all students have completed their program of study;

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

A written plan developed by an institution for students to complete their programs of study because it decided to end a program, off-campus instructional site, method of delivery, or to close the institution. A teach-out plan provides an orderly process, the equitable treatment of students, minimal disruption and additional costs to students, and covers all enrolled students regardless of their progress to completion.

## **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 (SACSCOC), will notify the SACSCOC of substantive changes in accordance with the SACSCOC 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, in coordination with the Institutional Accreditation Liaison, will submit all substantive change correspondence from the University to the President of the SACSCOC.

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

#### **4.2.3 Campus Processes**

4.2.3.1 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 regularly 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.

## **4.3 Procedures**

4.3.1 The SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy specifies procedures for addressing different types of substantive change. The Policy includes detailed information and procedures to assist in determining whether a substantive change requires approval or only notification.

## **5 Additional References**

[Substantive Change Policy](#)

[SACSCOC Policy Statement on Distance Education and Correspondence Courses](#)

## **6 Authority**

University Institutional Accreditation Liaison | 828-262-4090 | [Office of Institutional Research, Assessment and Planning](#)

## **7 Contact Information**

## **8 Original Effective Date**

August 29, 2012

## **9 Revision Dates**

February 20, 2023