

**Responsible Executive:** Provost  
**Approving Official:** Provost  
**Effective Date:** 10/4/19  
**Revision History:** Adopted 2/15/13; Amended 7/13/17, 10/4/19

## I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to establish the requirements, procedures, and processes necessary to ensure timely coordination and notification of substantive changes involving Florida State University. We are required to report substantive changes to the university's regional accrediting body, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), in the form, timeframe, and manner dictated by the SACSCOC. This policy complies with the SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality as well as the Commission's policies and guidelines.

## II. POLICY

In order to meet the commitment undertaken by virtue of its membership in SACSCOC and its reaffirmation of accreditation, it is the policy of the university to demonstrate continuing compliance with the Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement by adhering to all standards, requirements, policies and procedures associated with the definition and scope of a substantive change and found in the latest revision of SACSCOC Policy for Substantive Changes for Accredited Institutions.

The vice presidents, associate and assistant vice presidents, deans, and directors should recognize that if the university fails to follow the current version of the SACSCOC substantive change policy and procedures, it may lose its Title IV funding, be prohibited from receiving federal contracts and grants or be required by the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) to reimburse the USDOE for federal funds received by the institution for programs related to the substantive change out of compliance with the latest SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy. In addition, the institution's case may be referred to SACSCOC Board of Trustees for the imposition of a sanction or for removal from membership.

### A. GENERAL

A Substantive Change is defined as a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. The current list of such changes and required actions for each can be found in Appendix I. SACSCOC is required by the federal government to monitor the compliance of its member colleges and universities with the substantive change policy and is authorized to grant permission for major changes to occur. The SACSCOC Board of Trustees requires notification of substantive changes as a condition of accreditation and, in some cases, requires approval prior to implementation. This policy and its procedures address substantive changes identified through federal regulations and those required by the SACSCOC Board.

- Closing a program, off-campus site, branch campus or institution, which includes certificate programs
- 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
- Any change in the established mission or objectives of the institution
- Any change in legal status, form of control, or ownership of the institution
- 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
- 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
- A change from clock hours to credit hours
- A substantial increase in the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program
- The establishment or relocation of a branch campus
- Acquiring another institution or a program or location of another institution
- Adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out program for a closed institution
- Initiating a collaborative academic arrangement with another institution (examples include joint degree or dual degree programs)
- Entering into a contract or arrangement with an entity not certified to participate in U.S. Department of Education Title IV programs

## 2. Definitions

- a. Branch Campus- 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
  - (4) has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

For the purpose of this university substantive change policy only, the latest revision of the SACSCOC policy should supersede the definition in Board of Governors Regulation 8.009 regarding educational sites. In the case of conflict and for purposes of this policy, the SACSCOC definition shall govern.

- b. Certificate - A certificate is a defined program of study associated with the requirements for certification to practice in or master technical aspects of an occupation. Certificates shall require a minimum of 12 credit hours, and shall be recorded on the student's transcript. Students must apply for admission to all certificate programs. No credit hours for a certificate may be earned at an off-campus site unless the site is noticed or approved for the program by SACSCOC.
- c. Cooperative Academic Arrangement – An agreement between a member institution and another entity (or entities) to deliver program content transcribed by the member institution as its own. Examples include geographic or denominational consortia, statewide distance education agreements, collaborative agreements with international institutions, and contractual instruction, among others.
- d. Distance Learning - 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.
- e. Educational program -- a coherent course of study leading to the awarding of a credential, including degree and certificate programs earned at the university.
- f. Level - Merger/Consolidation - The Commission on Colleges defines a consolidation as the combination or transfer of the assets of at least two distinct institutions (corporations) to that of a newly-formed institution (corporation), and defines a merger as the acquisition by one institution of another institution's assets. For the purposes of accreditation, consolidations and mergers are considered substantive changes requiring review and approval by the Commission on Colleges. (Examples include: a senior college acquiring a junior college, a degree-granting institution acquiring a non-degree-granting institution, two junior or senior colleges consolidating to form a new institution, or an institution accredited by the Commission on Colleges merging with a non-accredited institution.)
- g. Notification - a letter from an institution's chief executive officer, or his/her designated representative, to the SACSCOC President summarizing a 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. The policy and procedures for reporting and review of institutional substantive change are outlined in the document -Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges. (source: <http://sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/SubstantiveChange.pdf> )
- h. SACS Accreditation Liaison -The individual at the institution who is responsible for ensuring the timely submission of annual institutional profiles and other reports as requested by the Commission.
- i. Significant Departure – a program that 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:
  - What previously approved programs does the institution offer that are closely related to the new program and how are they related?
  - Will significant additional equipment or facilities be needed?

- Will significant additional financial resources be needed?
  - Will a significant number of new courses be required?
  - Will a significant number of new faculty members be required?
  - Will significant additional library/learning resources be needed?
- j. 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 50% 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. This applies to the closure of an institution, a site, or a program. Teach-out plans must be approved by SACSCOC in advance of implementation.
- k. Teach-Out Agreement - 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 50% or more of at least one program offered, ceases to operate before all enrolled students have completed their program of study. This applies to the closure of an institution, a site, or a program. Such a teach-out agreement requires SACSCOC approval in advance of implementation.
- l. Contractual Agreement – An arrangement in which an institution enters an agreement for receipt of courses/programs or portions of courses or programs delivered by another institution or service provider.
- m. Consortial Relationship -A consortial relationship typically is one in which two or more institutions share in the responsibility of developing and delivering courses and programs that meet mutually agreed upon standards of academic quality.

## B. SCOPE

This policy involves any changes, including those to academic and non-academic programs and activities that may be considered a substantive change according to the latest revision of SACSCOC Policy for Substantive Changes for Accredited Institutions and applies to all university officers who can initiate, modify, review, approve, and allocate resources toward such changes.

Within academic areas, such substantive changes can originate with (1) individual or groups of faculty members, (2) department committees, (3) Department Chairs, (4) Deans and Associate Deans, (5) Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, (6) Faculty Senate, or (7) any other area reporting to the Provost. For academic changes requiring a substantive change review, Deans will have primary responsibility for their disciplines.

In those areas outside the Division of Academic Affairs, potential substantive changes may arise in (1) individual units, (2) among supervisors in each area, (3) executive management teams within Vice Presidential or Executive Director areas, or (4) with the Vice Presidents/Executive Directors themselves. Further, a potential substantive change may come to the attention and involve the President or those in his direct reporting line. For non-academic changes requiring substantive change review, Vice Presidents will have primary responsibility for their areas of operation.

## C. RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Vice Presidents, Assistant/Associate Vice Presidents, Deans, and Directors must:

- Be aware of the substantive change policy
- Recognize potential substantive changes
- Ensure that all potential substantive changes are identified and informing the Provost and SACSCOC Liaison at the earliest point possible of proposals/actions that may be considered a substantive change for the university
- Provide any data, information, or prospectus necessary to comply with the SACSCOC policy when requested
- Conduct an annual review of internal operating procedures to ensure reporting of substantive change proposals

2. University SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will:

- Assist the university in complying with the SACSCOC Policy and Procedures on substantive change and reporting substantive changes to SACSCOC
- Maintain information on SACSCOC substantive changes submitted by the university to SACSCOC
- Oversee the process of preparing appropriate notification, in conjunction with those involved with the change, according to the requirements in the latest revision of SACSCOC Policy for Substantive Changes for Accredited Institutions and other related policy and accreditation documents maintained by SACSCOC
- Coordinate with SACSCOC and the appropriate university vice president concerning needed actions and follow up activities.
- Make recommendations to the Provost for updating this policy as SACSCOC policies and principles change.

The current university SACSCOC Liaison is  
 Dr. Ruth Feiock  
 Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs  
 (850) 644-5122  
 rsfeiock@fsu.edu

#### D. PROCEDURES

At the earliest stage of consideration, any proposed change that could be deemed substantive according to the latest revision of SACSCOC policy must be submitted in writing by the appropriate vice president to the Provost and SACSCOC Liaison. The Provost and the SACSCOC Liaison will determine if a requested action is a substantive change for SACSCOC purposes. If a change is substantive, SACSCOC must be notified as much as 12 months in advance of implementing the change. Appendix I includes a complete listing of substantive changes, timeline for notification or approval, and documentation requirements for reporting the change to SACSCOC. Substantive changes cannot be implemented before the timeframe specified by the SACSCOC, required information developed and submitted to SACSCOC, and confirmed by the SACSCOC liaison.

If a substantive change has been implemented without notification to the Provost and the university's SACSCOC liaison, the appropriate vice president has the responsibility to notify the Provost and the university's SACSCOC liaison immediately. The university's SACSCOC liaison is then responsible for notifying SACSCOC of the change as provided in the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy.

To ensure that potential substantive changes do not go unreported, vice presidents, assistant/associate vice presidents, deans, and directors should review internal processes to ensure timely reporting of substantive changes. The substantive change policy must be referenced in academic department and college bylaws.

E. RESPONSIBLE OFFICER

Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

### III. LEGAL SUPPORT, JUSTIFICATION, AND REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

Article IX, section 7, Florida Constitution, Section 1001.706, Florida Statutes, BOG Regulations 1.001, 8.009, 8.011, 8.012 and 8.015 governs academic program review.

The Florida State University Board of Trustees has delegated authority to the President who has delegated to the Provost the authority to make academic policy.

Approved



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Provost and Executive Vice President

# Substantive Change Table

## Appendix I.

Type of Change	SACS-COC Procedure Type	Notification Required to SACSCOC Prior to Implementation	Approval Required by SACS-COC Prior to Implementation	Time Frame for Submission of Notification Prior to Planned Implementation	Documentation Required by SACSCOC	Time Frame for Notifying the University's SACS Liaison Prior to Implementation
Initiating coursework or programs at a different level than currently approved	1	No	Yes	Due Dates: March 15 (for June review) September 1 (for December review)	Application for Level Change	6 months before SACSCOC Due Dates
Initiating off-campus sites where student can obtain 50% or more credits toward a program (including but not limited to Early College High School, dual enrollment programs offered at a high school, and certificate programs that are not at employer's request and not on short notice)	1	No	Yes	Due Dates: Jan. 1 for 7/1-12/31 implementation  July 1 for 1/1-6/30 implementation	Cover Sheet Prospectus	6 months before SACSCOC Due Dates
Expanding at current degree level <i>(significant departure from current programs)</i>	1	No	Yes	Due Dates: Jan. 1 for 7/1-12/31 implementation July 1 for 1/1-6/30 implementation	Cover Sheet Prospectus	6 months before SACSCOC Due Dates
Expanding program offerings at previously approved off-campus sites by adding programs that ARE significantly different from current programs at the site AND at the institution	1	No	Yes	Due Dates: Jan. 1 for 7/1-12/31 implementation July 1 for 1/1-6/30 implementation	Cover Sheet Prospectus	6 months before SACSCOC Due Dates
Initiating degree completion programs	1	No	Yes	Due Dates: Jan. 1 for 7/1-12/31 implementation July 1 for 1/1-6/30 implementation	Cover Sheet Prospectus	6 months before SACSCOC Due Dates
Initiating a branch campus (See definition of "branch campus" on p. 3 of this document.)	1	No	Yes	Due Dates: Jan. 1 for 7/1-12/31 implementation July 1 for 1/1-6/30 implementation	Cover Sheet Prospectus	6 months before SACSCOC Due Dates



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Initiating distance learning by offering 50% or more of the first program for the first time	1	No	Yes	Due Dates: Jan. 1 for 7/1-12/31 implementation July 1 for 1/1-6/30 implementation	Cover Sheet Prospectus	6 months before SACSCOC Due Dates
Relocating a main or branch campus	1	No	Yes	Due Dates: Jan. 1 for 7/1-12/31 implementation July 1 for 1/1-6/30 implementation	Cover Sheet Prospectus	6 months before SACSCOC Due Dates
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 SACSCOC accredited university	1	No	Yes	Due Dates: Jan. 1 for 7/1-12/31 implementation July 1 for 1/1-6/30 implementation	Cover Sheet Prospectus	6 months before SACSCOC Due Dates
Initiating dual or joint degrees involving program expansion (significant departure) or initiating a new site where student can obtain 50% or more credits toward a program	See SACSCOC policy "Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards"	No	Yes	Due Dates: Jan. 1 for 7/1-12/31 implementation July 1 for 1/1-6/30 implementation	Cover Sheet, Prospectus, Copy of signed agreement, contact information for each institution, and additional details on non-SACSCOC institution(s). See Policy	6 months before SACSCOC Due Dates



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Initiating dual or joint degree with at least one institution not accredited by SACSCOC	See SACSCOC policy "Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards"	At least 6 months prior to implementation	Yes		Acceptance of notification, copy of signed agreement, contact information for each institution, and additional details on non-SACSCOC institution(s). See policy	7 months before notification to SACSCOC
<u>Initiating a program or courses delivered through cooperative academic arrangement</u>	<u>Procedure 2</u>	<u>At least 6 months prior to implementation</u>	<u>No</u>		<u>Acceptance of notification, copy of signed agreement, contract information for each institution/entity</u>	
Initiating a direct assessment competency based program	See SACSCOC Policy "Direct Assessment Competency-Based Educational Programs"	Yes-Screening Form	Yes	If Prospectus is required: Due Dates March 15 (for June Review) September 1 (for December review)	Submit "Screening Form" with letter of notification	6 months before SACSCOC Due Dates

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Initiating a merger/consolidation with another institution	See SACSCOC Policy: "Mergers, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisition and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status"	Yes: December 15 (for June review)  June 1 (for December review)	Yes	Due Dates:  March 15 (for June review)  September 1 (for December review)	Cover Sheet, Institutional Summary Form, Prospectus (See Appendix in SACSCOC Policy: "Mergers, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisitions, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status"	6 months before SACSCOC Due Dates
Changing governance ownership, control, or legal status of an institution	See SACSCOC Policy: "Mergers, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisition and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status"	Yes: December 15 (for June review)  June 1 (for December review)	Yes	Due Dates:  March 15 (for June review)  September 1 (for December review)	Cover Sheet, Institutional Summary Form, Prospectus (See Appendix in SACSCOC Policy: "Mergers, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisitions, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status"	6 months before SACSCOC Due Dates

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Acquiring institution or location (including programs) of another institution	See SACSCOC Policy: "Mergers, Consolidation, Acquisition Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status – Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions Policy Statement"	Yes: December 15 (for June review)  June 1 (for December review)	Yes	Due Dates:  March 15 (for June review)  September 1 (for December review)	Cover Sheet, Institutional Summary Form, Prospectus (See Appendix in SACSCOC Policy: "Mergers, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisitions, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status"	6 months before SACSCOC Due Dates

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Adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out for students from another institution that is closing	See SACSCOC Policy: "Mergers, Consolidation, Acquisition Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status – Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions Policy Statement"	Yes: December 15 (for June review)  June 1 (for December review)	Yes	Due Dates:  March 15 (for June review)  September 1 (for December review)	Cover Sheet, Institutional Summary Form, Prospectus (See Appendix in SACSCOC Policy: "Mergers, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisitions, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status"	6 months before SACSCOC Due Dates
Initiating a certificate program at a new off-campus site at employer's request and on short notice (previously approved program)	1	No	Yes		Cover Sheet, Modified prospectus, Contact Commission Staff	6 months before implementation
Initiating a certificate program that is a significant departure from previously approved programs at employer's request and on short notice	1	No	Yes		Cover Sheet, Modified prospectus, Contact Commission Staff	6 months before implementation
Adding a site under a U.S. military contract for a previously approved program	1	No	Yes		Cover Sheet, Modified prospectus, Contact Commission Staff	6 months before implementation

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Altering significantly the length of a program	1	No	Yes		Cover Sheet, Modified prospectus, Contact Commission Staff	6 months before implementation
Altering significantly the educational mission of the institution	1	No	Yes		Cover Sheet, Modified prospectus, Contact Commission Staff	6 months before implementation
Changing from clock hours to credit hours	1	No	Yes		Justify reasons for change, indicate calculation of equivalency and other pertinent information	6 months prior to implementation
Moving an off-campus instructional site (serving the same geographic area)	2	Yes	No		Letter of notification with old address, new address, and implementation date	3 months prior to implementation
Initiating dual or joint degrees with other SACSCOC accredited institution(s)	See SACSCOC Policy "Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards"	At least 6 months prior to implementation	No		Acceptance of notification, copy of signed agreement and contact information for each institution. See Policy.	8 months prior to implementation
Initiating programs or courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium	2	Yes	No		Letter of notification and copy of signed agreement	6 months prior to implementation

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Entering into a contract with an entity not certified to participate in USDOE Title IV programs if the entity provides less than 25% of an educational program offered by the SACSCOC accredited institution	2	Yes	No		Letter of notification and copy of signed agreement	6 months prior to implementation
Initiating off-campus sites where student can obtain 25- 49% of credits toward a program (including but not limited to Early College High School, dual enrollment programs offered at a high school, and certificate programs that are not at employer's request and not on short notice)	2	Yes	No		Letter of notification Including street address and implementation date	6 months prior to implementation
Initiating distance learning by offering 25- 49 of the first program for the first time	2	Yes	No		Letter of notification Including street address and implementation date	N/A
Closing a program, approved off-campus site, branch campus, or institution where the institution plans to teach out its own students	3	Yes	Yes		Description of teach-out plan included with letter of notification	6 months prior to closure

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Closing a program, approved off-campus site, branch campus, or institution where the institution plans contracts with another institution(s) to teach-out students (Teach out Agreement)	3	Yes	Yes		Description of teach-out plan, copy of signed teach-out agreement(s) detailing terms included with notification	6 months prior to closure
Initiating a certificate program at employer's request and on short notice using existing approved courses and location	N/A	No	No		N/A	N/A
Initiating certificate program (not at employer's request and not on short notice) using existing approved courses and location	N/A	No	No		N/A	N/A
Initiating off-campus sites (including Early College High School and dual enrollment programs offered at the high school) where student can obtain 24% or less of credits toward a program	N/A	No	No		N/A	N/A
Expanding program offerings at previously approved off campus sites by adding approved programs that ARE NOT significantly different from current programs at the site	N/A	No	No		N/A	N/A



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Expanding program offerings at previously approved off-campus sites by adding approved programs that ARE significantly different from current programs at the site but NOT at the institution	N/A	No	No		N/A	N/A
Initiating distance learning by offering 24% or less of any program for the first time	N/A	No	No		N/A	N/A