

University of Florida Substantive Change Policy

Accredited institutions with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Commission on Colleges (COC) are required to notify the Commission of substantive changes, and when required, seek approval prior to the initiation of changes.

1. Policy

The University of Florida (UF) is responsible to comply with the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy.

Substantive change is a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. Under federal regulations, substantive changes include the following:

- 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 of an additional location geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers at least 50 percent of an educational program.
- The establishment of a branch campus
- Closing a program, off-campus site, branch campus or institution
- Entering into a collaborative academic arrangement such as a dual degree program or a joint degree program with another institution
- 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
- Entering into a contract by which an entity not eligible for Title IV funding offers 25% or more of one or more of the accredited institution's programs¹

¹ (SACSCOC, 2013)

2. Responsibility

Responsibilities of Assistant/Associate Provosts, Vice Presidents, Deans, and Directors:

Assistant/associate provosts, vice presidents, deans, and directors have the fundamental responsibility to be generally aware of the substantive change policy, inform the appropriate associate provost at the earliest point possible of proposals that may be considered a substantive change for the university, and provide any data, information, or prospectus necessary to comply with SACSCOC policy when requested.

Responsibilities of Associate Provost for Academic Affairs and Associate Provost for IT, E-Learning and Distance Education

All substantive changes will be coordinated through either the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs or the Associate Provost for IT, E-Learning and Distance Education. After the associate provost is notified of the substantive change, that associate provost will then notify the university's SACS liaison of the change(s) for communicating the change(s) with SACSCOC.

Responsibilities of the University's SACS Liaison:

The university's SACS liaison will:

- provide the appropriate associate provost with information about the SACSCOC substantive change policy. This includes, but is not limited to, maintaining a section on UF's SACS website concerning substantive change and sending information about substantive change to the Assistant/Associate Provosts, Vice Presidents, Deans, and Directors at least annually;
- provide a list of examples of substantive change on the Institutional Assessment website;
- work with the Director of SACS when necessary to determine whether proposed change is substantive; and
- coordinate with SACSCOC and the appropriate associate provost about any required follow-up action.

Responsibilities of the Director of SACS:

The Director of SACS will:

- work with the appropriate associate provost to determine whether a proposed change is substantive;
- determine what action with respect to SACSCOC is needed when a change is substantive;
- file the appropriate notice or prospectus with SACSCOC; and
- coordinate with the university's SACS liaison about any required follow-up action.

3. Procedure

Appendix A is a complete listing of substantive changes, timeline for notification or approval, and documentation requirements for reporting the change to SACSCOC.

Notification of the University's SACS Liaison of Proposed Changes

If a change is substantive, SACSCOC must be notified as much as 12 months in advance of implementing the change. Upon becoming aware of a proposed change that may be substantive, assistant/associate provosts, vice presidents, deans, and directors of the unit proposing the change should notify either the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs or the Associate Provost for IT, E-Learning and Distance Education.

The Director of SACS will review the University Curriculum Committee and Graduate Council agendas prior to each meeting and notify the university's SACS liaison of any changes. The university's SACS liaison will then determine if any of the University Curriculum Committee or Graduate Council agenda items could be considered a substantive change.

Late Notification to University's SACS Liaison

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

To ensure that proposals that may be considered substantive changes do not go unreported, assistant/associate provosts, vice presidents, deans, and directors should review internal processes to ensure timely reporting of substantive changes.

4. SACSCOC Definitions of Terms Listed in Appendix 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

- permanent in nature
- offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential
- has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization **and**
- has its own budgetary and hiring authority

Contractual Agreement – typically is one in which an institution enters an agreement for receipt of courses/programs or portions of courses or programs (i.e., clinical training internships, etc.) delivered by another institution or service provider.

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.

Correspondence education - a formal educational process under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor. Interaction between the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student; courses are typically self-paced.

Degree completion program – a program 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.

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. 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.

Dual degree – separate program completion credentials each of which bears only the name, seal, and signature of the institution awarding the degree to the student.

Educational program – a coherent course of study leading to the awarding of a credential (*i.e.*, a degree, diploma or certificate).

Geographically separate - an instructional site or branch campus that is located physically apart from the main campus of the institution.

Joint degree - a single program completion credential bearing the names, seals, and signatures of each of the two or more institutions awarding the degree to the student

Modified prospectus - a prospectus submitted in lieu of a full prospectus for certain designated substantive changes. When a modified prospectus is acceptable, the Commission specifies requested information from the institution.

Notification - a letter from an institution's chief executive officer, or his/her designated representative, to 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."

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 will be required?
- Will a significant number of new faculty members will be required?
- Will significant additional library/learning resources be needed?

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.

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.

Contact Information

The current University of Florida SACS liaison is
Dr. Timothy Brophy
Director, Institutional Assessment
(352) 273-4476
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References

SACSCOC. (2013, February). *Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges*. Retrieved March 15, 2013, from SACSCOC:
<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/Substantive%20change%20policy.pdf>

Date of last update: March 15, 2013

Appendix A – Substantive Change Table

(Source: <http://sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/SubstantiveChange.pdf> June 2009, Edited: February 2013, Edited: January 2015)

| Type of Change | SACS-COC Procedure Type ¹ | Notification Required to SACS-COC 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 a branch campus (see definition of "branch campus") | 1 | Yes | Yes | 6 months | Prospectus | 7 months |
| Relocating a main or branch campus | 1 | Yes | Yes | 6 months | Prospectus | 7 months |
| Moving an off-campus instructional site (serving the same geographic area) | 2 | Yes | Yes | Prior to implementation | Letter of notification with new address and starting date | 1 month prior to implementation |
| Initiating degree completion programs | 1 | NA | Yes | 6 months | Prospectus | 7 months |
| Initiating a certificate program at employer's request and on short notice | | | | | | |
| ...using exiting approved courses | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| ...at a new off-campus site (previously approved program) | 1 | NA | Yes | NA | Modified prospectus | 6 months |
| ...that is a significant departure from previously approved programs | 1 | Yes | Yes | Approval required prior to implementation | Modified prospectus | 1 month prior to implementation |

¹ 1=notification and approval prior to implementation; 2 = only notification prior to implementation; 3 = review and approval of consolidations or mergers

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|---|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|--|
| Initiating other certificate programs | | | | | | |
| ...using existing approved courses | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| ...at a new off-campus site (previously approved program) | 1 | NA | Yes | NA | Prospectus | 6 months |
| ...that is a significant departure from previously approved programs | 1 | Yes | Yes | 6 months | Prospectus | 7 months |
| Initiating joint or dual degrees with another institution: (See “Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards” policy) | | | | | | |
| Joint Programs: with another SACSCOC accredited institution | 2 | Yes | NA | Prior to implementation | Copy of signed agreement and contact information for each institution | 1 month prior to implementation |
| Joint Programs: with an institution not accredited by SACSCOC | 1 | Yes | 6 months | Yes | Prospectus | 7 months |
| Dual Programs | 2 | Yes | No | Prior to implementation | Copy of signed agreement and contact information for each institution | 1 month prior to implementation |

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|---|--|---|---|---|---|--|
| Initiating off-campus sites (including Early College High School and dual enrollment programs offered at the high school) | | | | | | |
| ...Student can obtain 50% or more credits toward program | 1 | NA | Yes | NA | Prospectus | 6 months |
| ...Student can obtain 25-49% of credit | 2 | Yes | NA | Prior to implementation | Letter of notification | 1 month prior to implementation |
| ...Student can obtain 24% or less | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| Altering significantly the length of a program | 1 | NA | Yes | NA | Modified prospectus | 6 months |
| Initiating a direct assessment competency-based program | See SACSCOC Policy " Direct Assessment Competency-Based Educational Programs " | Yes | Yes | 6 months | Submit "Screening Form" with letter of notification. If prospectus is required, due dates: April 8 or September 15. | 6 months |
| Initiating programs or courses offered through | 2 | Yes | NA | Prior to implementation | Letter of notification and copy of signed agreement | 1 month prior to implementation |

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|---|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|------------------------------------|--|
| contractual agreement or consortium | | | | | | |
| Expanding program offerings at previously approved off-campus sites | | | | | | |
| ...Adding approved programs that ARE NOT significantly different from current programs at the site | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| ...Adding approved programs that ARE significantly different from current programs at the site but NOT at the institution | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| ...Adding programs that ARE significantly different from current programs at the site AND at the institution | 1 | Yes | Yes | 6 months | Prospectus | 7 months |

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|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|
| 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 | 1 | NA | Yes | NA | Prospectus | 6 months |
| ...if the entity provides less than 25% of an educational program offered by the COC accredited institution | 2 | Yes | NA | Prior to implementation | Copy of the signed agreement | 1 month prior to implementation |
| Initiating a merger/consolidation with another institution | See SACSCOC policy " Mergers, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisitions, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status " | Yes | Yes | 6 months | Prospectus Due dates: April 8 or September 15 | 7 months |

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|--|---|---|---|---|--|--|
| Changing governance, ownership, control, or legal status of an institution | See SACSCOC policy " Mergers, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisitions, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status " | Yes | Yes | 6 months | Prospectus Due dates: April 8 or September 15 | 7 months |
| Acquiring any program or site from another institution | See SACSCOC policy " Mergers, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisitions, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status " | Yes | Yes | 6 months | Prospectus | 7 months |

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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, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisitions, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status " ² | Yes | Yes | 6 months | Prospectus | 7 months |
| Closing a program, approved off-campus site, branch campus, or institution | | | | | | |
| ... Institution to teach out its own students | 3 | Yes | Yes | Immediately following decision to close | Description of teach-out plan included with letter of notification | 6 months prior to implementation |
| ... Institution contracts with another institution to teach-out students (Teach-out Agreement) | 3 | Yes | Yes | Immediately following decision to close | Description of teach-out plan, copy of signed teach-out agreement detailing terms included with notification | 6 months prior to implementation |

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