

Substantive Change Policy

Policy Name: SACSCOC Internal Notification and Substantive Change Policy

Approval Authority: President

Interpreting and Implementing Authority: SASCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison

Effective: July 19, 2014

Last Revised: May 11, 2021

Next Review Date: May, 2026

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to facilitate timely notification and submission of required documentation to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) necessary for implementation of any substantive change to the institution, as indicated by the SACSCOC *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*.

RATIONALE:

According to the SACSCOC *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*, "An institution is required to have a written substantive change policy and procedure. It must be approved through institutional processes and published in institutional documents accessible to those affected. The purpose of the institution's substantive change policy and procedure is to ensure all substantive changes are reported to SACSCOC in a timely fashion as required by the *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*. Institutions are responsible for implementing and enforcing their substantive change policy and procedure."

POLICY STATEMENT:

SACSCOC requires institutions to notify the Commission and/or secure approval prior to implementing a substantive change. The Wesleyan College Institutional Accreditation Liaison (IAL) coordinates submission of such documentation to SACSCOC on behalf of Wesleyan College. The IAL submits documentation in accordance with the policy and procedures outlined in the *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*. To ensure the timely submission of documents, administrators must notify the IAL of forthcoming substantive changes according to the procedures outlined in this document.

DEFINITIONS:

Substantive change: According to SACSCOC, a substantive change "is a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution." Substantive changes (including those required by federal regulations) include but are not limited to the following:

- Substantially changing the established mission or objectives of an institution or its programs.
- Changing the legal status, form of control, or ownership of an institution.
- Changing the governance of an institution.
- Merging/consolidating two or more institutions or entities.
- Acquiring another institution or any program or location of another institution.
- Relocating an institution or an off-campus instructional site of an institution (including a branch campus).
- Offering courses or programs at a higher or lower degree level than currently authorized.

- Adding graduate programs at an institution previously offering only undergraduate programs (including degrees, diplomas, certificates, and other for-credit credentials).
- Changing the way an institution measures student progress, whether in clock hours or credit-hours; semesters, trimesters, or quarters; or time-based or non-time-based methods or measures.
- Adding a program that is a significant departure from the existing programs, or method of delivery, from those offered when the institution was last evaluated.
- Initiating programs by distance education or correspondence courses.
- Adding an additional method of delivery to a currently offered program.
- Entering into a cooperative academic arrangement.
- Entering into a written arrangement under 34 C.F.R §668.5 under which an institution or organization not certified to participate in the title IV Higher Education Act (HEA) programs offers less than 25% (notification) or 25-50% (approval) of one or more of the accredited institution's educational programs. An agreement offering more than 50% of one or more of an institution's programs is prohibited by federal regulation.
- Substantially increasing or decreasing the number of clock hours or credit hours awarded or competencies demonstrated, or an increase in the level of credential awarded, for successful completion of one or more programs.
- Adding competency-based educational programs.
- Adding each competency-based education program by direct assessment.
- Adding programs with completion pathways that recognize and accommodate a student's prior or existing knowledge or competency.
- Awarding dual or joint academic awards.
- Re-opening a previously closed program or off-campus instructional site.
- Adding a new off-campus instructional site/additional location including a branch campus.
- Adding a permanent location at a site at which an institution is conducting a teach-out program for students of another institution that has ceased operating before all students have completed their program of study.
- Closing an institution, a program, a method of delivery, an off-campus instructional site, or a program at an off-campus instructional site.

For additional definitions, please see the Glossary section of the most recent *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*, available at www.sacscoc.org.

PROCEDURE:

SACSCOC requires institutions to report substantive changes in various ways. Reporting formats include but are not limited to a notification letter, modified prospectus, prospectus, teach-out plan, and other report types requested by the Commission.

Administrators must consult with the IAL before a specific procedure is pursued and should contact the IAL with questions. The IAL will confer with SACSCOC staff if further guidance is required as to the nature of the proposed change or the appropriate notification or approval procedure. Once a decision to pursue a substantive change has been made, faculty and/or administrators must confer with the IAL to prepare essential documents. The IAL is responsible for submitting required documents to SACSCOC. Compliance with this procedure is mandatory.

Substantive Change Internal Processing Categories:

Substantive change prospectus, application, and notification submission deadlines depend on (1) the type of SACSCOC Board of Trustees review, if required, and (2) the intended implementation date of the substantive change (*Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*). College administrators must consult with the IAL to determine which submission type and due date apply to any proposed change.

(1) Substantive changes that require only notification: Notifications may be submitted any time before implementation. College administrators must notify the IAL of impending change as soon as possible after the decision is made to initiate the change.

(2) Substantive changes that require approval by the full SACSCOC Board of Trustees: Materials must be submitted to the Commission by the following dates, with the change to be implemented after the date of the Board meeting:

- **March 15** for review at the Board's biannual meeting in June of the same calendar year, and
- **September 1** for review at the Board's biannual meeting in December of the same calendar year.

College administrators must notify the IAL of the impending change at least two months prior to these due dates. Such changes will likely require extensive documentation. Changes requiring approval cannot be implemented until approved by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

(3) Substantive changes that require approval by the Executive Council of the Board of Trustees: Materials must be submitted to the Commission by the following dates:

- **January 1** for changes to be implemented July 1 through December 31 of the same calendar year, and
- **July 1** for changes to be implemented January 1 through June 30 of the subsequent calendar year.

College administrators must notify the IAL of the impending change at least two months prior to these due dates. Such changes will likely require extensive documentation. Changes requiring approval cannot be implemented until approved by the SACSCOC Executive Council. There are circumstances under which review and action are required by the full Board of Trustees rather than the Executive Council. Administrators should consult with the IAL to determine if any of these circumstances apply.

(4) Substantive changes that require notification and/or approval and a committee visit: Some substantive changes – such as a governance change, level change, merger/consolidation, off-campus instructional site approval, or initiation of competency-based education by direct assessment – may require a SACSCOC committee site visit. The visit will occur within six months after initiation of the change. In these cases, arranging the visit will require significant time and preparation. College administrators must consult with the IAL as soon as such a change is considered.