

## **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 programs<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> (SACSCOC, 2018)

## 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 Teaching and Technology

All substantive changes will be coordinated through either the Associate Provost for Academic and Faculty Affairs or the Associate Provost for Teaching and Technology. 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.

### **Failure to Comply with SACSCOC Reporting Requirements for Substantive Changes:**

If an institution fails to follow SACSCOC substantive change policy and procedures, it may lose its Title IV funding or be required by the U.S. Department of Education to reimburse it for money received by the institution for programs related to the unreported substantive change. 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.

### 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 6 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 and Faculty Affairs or the Associate Provost for Teaching and Technology.

The university's SACS liaison will review the University Curriculum Committee and Graduate Council agendas prior to each meeting and notify the university's SACS liaison of any potential substantive 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.

**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 (see Standard 10.9). Examples include geographic or denominational consortia, statewide distance education agreements, collaborative agreements with international institutions, and contractual instruction, among others.

**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.

**Direct Assessment Competency – Based Educational Programs** - Federal regulations define a direct assessment competency based educational program as an instructional program that, in lieu of credit hours or clock hours as a measure of student learning, uses direct assessment of student learning relying solely on the attainment of defined competencies, or recognizes the direct assessment of student learning by others. The assessment must be consistent with the accreditation of the institution or program using the results of the assessment.

**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  
[tbrophy@aa.ufl.edu](mailto:tbrophy@aa.ufl.edu)

**References**

SACSCOC. (2018, December). *Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges*. Retrieved April 30, 2019, from SACSCOC:  
<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/Substantive%20change%20policy.pdf>

**Appendix A – Substantive Change Table**

(Source: <http://sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/SubstantiveChange.pdf>)

Types of Change	Procedure or Policy	Prior Notification Required	Prior Approval Required	Documentation and Time Frame for Contacting SACSCOC
Initiating coursework or programs at a different level than currently approved	Procedure 1	No	Yes	<a href="#">Application for Level Change</a>  <b>Due dates:</b> March 15 (for June review) September 1 (for December review)
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)	Procedure 1	No	Yes	Cover Sheet <a href="#">Prospectus</a> (See Appendix B of this document)  <b>Due dates:</b> January 1 for 7/1-12/31 implementation July 1 for 1/1-6/30 implementation
Expanding at current degree level ( <i>significant departure from current programs</i> ).				
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				
Initiating degree completion programs				
Initiating a branch campus (See definition of “branch campus” on p. 3 of this document.)				
Initiating distance learning by offering 50% or more of the first program for the first time				
Relocating a main or branch campus				
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 institution				

Types of Change	Procedure or Policy	Prior Notification Required	Prior Approval Required	Documentation and Time Frame for Contacting SACSCOC
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 “ <a href="#">Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards</a> ”	No	Yes	Cover Sheet <a href="#">Prospectus</a> ( <a href="#">See Appendix B of this document</a> )  <b>Due dates:</b> January 1 for 7/1-12/31 implementation July 1 for 1/1-6/30 implementation  Copy of signed agreement, contact information for each institution, and additional details on non-SACSCOC institution(s) involved. See Policy
Initiating dual or joint degree with at least one institution <u>not</u> accredited by SACSCOC	See SACSCOC Policy “ <a href="#">Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards</a> ”	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.
Initiating a program or courses delivered through cooperative academic arrangement	Procedure 2	At least 6 months prior to implementation	No	Acceptance of notification, copy of signed agreement, contact information for each institution/entity
Initiating a direct assessment competency-based program	See SACSCOC Policy “ <a href="#">Direct Assessment Competency-Based Educational Programs</a> ”	Yes – Screening Form	Yes	Submit “Screening Form” with letter of notification. If Prospectus is required, <b>Due dates:</b> March 15 (for June review) September 1 (for December review)
Initiating a merger/consolidation with another institution	See SACSCOC Policy: “ <a href="#">Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status – Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions Policy Statement</a> ”	Yes: December 15 (for June review); June 1 (for December review)	Yes	Cover Sheet Institutional Summary Form Prospectus (See Appendix in SACSCOC Policy: <a href="#">“Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status – Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions Policy Statement”</a> )  <b>Due dates:</b> March 15 (for June review); September 1 (for December review)
Changing governance, ownership, control, or legal status of an institution				
Acquiring an institution or location (including programs) of another institution				
Adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out for students from another institution that is closing				



Types of Change	Procedure or Policy	Prior Notification Required	Prior Approval Required	Documentation and Time Frame for Contacting SACSCOC
Initiating a certificate program at a new off-campus site at employer's request and on short notice (previously approved program)	Procedure 1	No	Yes	Cover Sheet Modified prospectus Contact Commission Staff.
Initiating a certificate program that is a significant departure from previously approved programs at employer's request and on short notice				
Adding a site under a U.S. military contract for a previously approved program				
Altering significantly the length of a program				
Altering significantly the educational mission of the institution				
Changing from clock hours to credit hours	Procedure 1	No	Yes	Justify reasons for change, indicate calculation of equivalency, and other pertinent information
Moving an off-campus instructional site (serving the same geographic area)	Procedure 2	Yes	No	Letter of notification with old address, new address, and implementation date
Initiating dual or joint degrees with other SACSCOC accredited institution(s)	See SACSCOC Policy <a href="#">"Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards"</a>	At least 6 months prior to implementation	No	Acceptance of notification, copy of signed agreement and contact information for each institution. See Policy.
Initiating programs or courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium	Procedure 2	Yes	No	Letter of notification and copy of signed agreement
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				

Types of Change	Procedure or Policy	Prior Notification Required	Prior Approval Required	Documentation and Time Frame for Contacting SACSCOC
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)	Procedure 2	Yes	No	Letter of notification Including street address and implementation date
Initiating distance learning by offering 25-49 of the first program for the first time				
Closing a program, approved off-campus site, branch campus, or institution where the institution plans to teach out its own students	Procedure 3	Yes	Yes	Description of teach-out plan included with letter of notification
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)	Procedure 3	Yes	Yes	Description of teach-out plan, copy of signed teach-out agreement(s) detailing terms included with notification

Types of Change	Procedure or Policy	Prior Notification Required	Prior Approval Required	Documentation and Time Frame for Contacting SACSCOC
Initiating a certificate program at employer's request and on short notice using existing approved courses and location	NA	No	No	NA
Initiating certificate program (not at employer's request and not on short notice) using existing approved courses and location				
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				
Expanding program offerings at previously approved off-campus sites by adding approved programs that ARE NOT significantly different from current programs at the site				
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				
Initiating distance learning by offering 24% or less of any program for the first time				