



Southeastern Louisiana University

Revised January 5, 2012 as per Changes to SACS Policy

Substantive Changes: SACS Notification and Approval Requirements

The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) requires notification from the president of a SACS accredited university of any proposed modification of essential university characteristics. Faculty and staff assist the President in recognizing and reporting these changes.

As defined by SACS, substantive change is a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution and, under federal regulations, substantive change includes

- 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 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

As indicated in the Substantive Change For Accredited Institutions of the Commission of Colleges Policy Statement, notification constitutes a letter from the institution's chief executive officer or his/her designated representative to the President of the Commission summarizing the 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 [Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges Policy Statement](#) and are found on the [SACS Substantive Changes website](#). Loss of accreditation of the university's degree and certificate programs can be the result of failing to notify SACS of substantive changes (described in the table below).

The administrative heads of both academic and non-academic units are responsible for being attentive to what SACS considers a "significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution" and for being aware of related information resources concerning accreditation (see <http://www.sacscoc.org>). **Implementation of a change that clearly is or may be substantive**

Substantive Changes Concerning Individual Academic Programs and Other University Entities

It is the responsibility of the head of the department in which an academic program resides to ensure that SACS requirements of notification or approval have been met prior to implementing any substantive change concerning an academic program in his/her department. The documentation required for notifying SACS of substantive changes and for requesting prior SACS approvals is to be initiated by the relevant department head, after having obtained approval to proceed by the dean of the college and the Provost.

For substantive changes requiring notification only, the SACS liaison prepares the letter of notification after having received the requisite approved internal documentation regarding the change (e.g., Provost approval through the supervisory line of a request to initiate an off-campus instructional site where a student can obtain 25-49% of credit towards a degree).

For substantive changes requiring SACS approval prior to implementation, the requisite SACS documentation is typically prepared by the department head and is then submitted for review and consideration for approval through the supervisory line to the SACS liaison and then to the Provost (director/department head → dean → SACS liaison → Provost). The SACS liaison and assistant vice president for academic affairs are available to work with the dean and department head during the preparation of the documentation.

Some substantive changes are more global to the university environment. For any of these substantive changes, the initiation and preparation of the documentation as well as the requisite internal approval process will be determined on a case-by-case basis in accordance with relevant University of Louisiana System and Board of Regents policies or rules.

Communication with SACS personnel regarding substantive change notifications or requests for approvals is done by the President, Provost, SACS liaison, or one of their designees. Only the President or his designee (typically the SACS liaison or Provost) may submit to SACS substantive change notifications and requests for substantive change approvals.

SACS has three procedures for addressing the different types of substantive changes (greater detail for each procedure is found in the Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges Policy Statement (pp 14-22):

- Procedure One for the Review of Substantive Changes Requiring Notification and Approval Prior to Implementation
- Procedure Two for the Review of Substantive Changes Requiring Only Notification Prior to Implementation
- Procedure Three for Closing a Program, Site, Branch Campus or Institution.

Procedures for the following types of changes are included in a SACS separate document, **- Mergers, Consolidations and Change of Ownership ...:**

- initiating mergers or consolidations
- acquiring any program or site from another institution

- adding as a permanent location any site where the institution is conducting a teach-out for students of another institution that is closing
- changes in governance, ownership, means of control or legal status

The initiation or revision of programs not offered for academic credit and that are not eligible for federal financial aid does not require reporting; however, such programs are subject to review at the time of reaffirmation.

***The following table is directly from the SACS policy:
Reporting the Various Types of Substantive Change (p. 6)***

The different types of substantive change, the specific procedure to be used for each, their respective approval/notification requirements, and their reporting time lines are included in the table that follows. **Please read the full text under the appropriate procedure for details regarding reporting.**

Types of Change	Procedure	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting COC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation
Initiating coursework or programs at a different level than currently approved	1	Yes	12 months	Yes	Application for Level Change Due dates: April 15 or October 1
Expanding at current degree level (<i>significant departure from current programs</i>)	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating a branch campus (See definition of "branch campus" on p. 3 of this document.)	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating a certificate program at employer's request and on short notice					
...using existing approved courses	NA	NA	NA	NA	None
...at a new off-campus site (previously approved program)	1	Yes	Approval required prior to implementation	Yes	Modified prospectus
...that is a significant departure from previously approved programs	1	Yes	Approval required prior to implementation	Yes	Modified prospectus

Types of Change	Procedure	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting COC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation
Initiating other certificate programs ... using existing approved courses	NA	NA	NA	NA	None
... at a new off-campus site (previously approved program)	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
...that is a significant departure from previously approved programs	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Altering significantly the educational mission of the institution	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating joint or dual degrees with another institution: (See: -Collaborative Academic Arrangements: Policy and Procedures.)					
Joint programs - with another SACSCOC accredited institution	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Copy of signed agreement and contact information for each institution
- with an institution not accredited by SACSCOC	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Dual programs	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Copy of signed agreement and contact information for each institution
Initiating off-campus sites (including Early College High School programs offered at the high school)					
...Student can obtain 50 percent or more credits toward program	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
...Student can obtain 25-49 percent of credit	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Letter of notification
...Student can obtain 24 percent or less	NA	NA	NA	NA	none

Types of Change	Procedure	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting COC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation
Expanding program offerings at previously approved off-campus sites ...Adding programs that are significantly different from current programs <u>at the site</u> ...Adding programs that are NOT significantly different from current programs <u>at the site</u>	2 NA	Yes NA	Prior to implementation NA	No NA	Letter of notification NA
Altering significantly the length of a program	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating distance learning... ...Offering 50 percent or more of a program <u>for the first time</u> (Adding subsequent programs requires advance notification only for programs that are significant departures from the originally approved programs) ...Offering 25-49 percent ...Offering 24 percent or Less	1 2 NA	Yes Yes NA	6 months Prior to implementation NA	Yes No NA	Prospectus Letter of notification none
Initiating programs or courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Letter of notification and copy of signed agreement

Types of Change	Procedure	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting COC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation
<p>Entering into a contract with an entity not certified to participate in USDOE Title IV programs</p> <p>... if the entity provides 25% or more of an educational program offered by the COC accredited institution</p> <p>... if the entity provides less than 25% of an educational program offered by the accredited institution</p>	<p>1</p> <p>2</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p>	<p>6 months</p> <p>6 months</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>	<p>Prospectus</p> <p>Copy of the signed agreement</p>
Initiating a merger/consolidation with another institution	See SACSCOC policy - Mergers, Consolidations and Change of Ownership...	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus Due dates: April 15 or October 1
Changing governance, ownership, control, or legal status of an institution	See SACSCOC policy - Mergers, Consolidations and Change of Ownership...	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus Due dates: April 15 or October 1
Relocating a main or branch campus	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Moving an off-campus instructional site (serving the same geographic area)	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Letter of notification with new address and starting date
Changing from clock hours to credit hours	1	yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Altering significantly the length of a program	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating degree completion programs	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus

