



I. Title:

Substantive Change Policy

II. Policy Statement:

As required by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), Alabama State University (ASU) will report in writing any actions described as a substantive change to SACSCOC prior to implementation. The purpose of this policy is to establish the requirements, processes and procedures set forth to monitor and report academic and administrative substantive changes to the Commission.

Member institutions are required to have a policy and procedure to ensure that all substantive changes are reported to the Commission in a timely manner.¹ Failure to comply with this institutional substantive change policy may result in the institution's being placed on sanction (warning, probation, or loss of accreditation) at the time of SACSCOC Committee on Compliance and Reports' review.

III. Scope of Policy:

Alabama State University will ensure continued compliance with comprehensive standard 3.12 Substantive Change in its entirety as a member of SACSCOC, its regional accrediting body that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as an agency whose accreditation entitles its members to seek eligibility to participate in Title IV programs.

The Commission on Colleges accredits the entire institution and its programs and services, wherever they are located or however they are delivered. Accreditation, specific to an institution, is based on conditions existing at the time of the most recent evaluation and is not transferable to other institutions or entities.

When an accredited institution significantly modifies or expands its scope, changes the nature of its affiliation or its ownership, or merges with another institution, a substantive change review is required. The Commission is responsible for evaluating all substantive changes to assess the impact of the change on the institution's compliance with defined standards. If an institution fails to follow the Commission's procedures for notification and approval of substantive changes, its total accreditation may be placed in jeopardy. (See Commission policy "Substantive Change for

¹ <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/SubstantiveChange.pdf>

Accredited Institutions.”) If an institution is unclear as to whether a change is substantive in nature, it should contact Commission staff for consultation. An applicant, candidate, or member institution in litigation with the Commission may not undergo substantive change (The Principles of Accreditation, p. 33).

Alabama State University will ensure continued compliance with the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE). All substantive and non-substantives made to Alabama State University’s academic program inventory must be reported to the ACHE prior to implementation. The Substantive Changes to the Academic Program Inventory require Commission approval as reasonable alterations of existing programs. The purpose of the Commission’s review and action on such proposal is to insure that the requested change is reasonable in the context of the existing program and in terms of its impact. ACHE Forms must be used when making substantive and non-substantive changes (i.e., altering the CIP code, program title, degree nomenclature, program deletion, program inventory inactive status, and all changes in degree award nomenclature at the doctoral level).

IV. Effective Date:

February 8, 2019

V. Audience:

All employees are expected to have knowledge and understanding of the substantive change policy.

VI. Designated Responsibilities and Applicability of Substantive Change Policy:

The SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison, President, Provost, Associate Provost, Assistant Provost, Vice Presidents, Deans, Associate Deans, have designated responsibilities that are applicable to the substantive change policy as listed below:

- A. The SACSCOC Institutional **Accreditation Liaison** is an appointed position made by the president in consultation with the Provost to serve in this capacity for Alabama State University and shall ensure the following duties are performed as follows:
 - Provide the President, Vice Presidents, Provost, Associate Provost, Assistant Provost, Deans, Associate Deans and Directors with interpretation, information, and determination regarding the substantive change policy and the need to submit a change to SACSCOC;
 - Monitor the institutional actions that may be constituted substantive change;
 - Determine the necessary action to report to SACSCOC when needing to report a substantive change;
 - Develop the appropriate notification and documentation under the President’s purview for submission to SACSCOC;

- Ensure that compliance with accreditation requirements is incorporated into the planning and evaluation process of the institution;
- Assure the accuracy of all information submitted to SACSCOC to ensure ongoing compliance with the Commission standards, policies and procedures beyond reaffirmation;
- Notify SACSCOC in advance of substantive changes and program developments in accordance with the substantive change policies of the Commission;
- Familiarize faculty, staff, and students with SACSCOC's accrediting policies and procedures, and with particular sections of the accrediting standards and policies that have application to certain aspects of the campus (e.g., library, continuing education) especially when such documents are adopted or revised;
- Serve as the University's primary point of contact to SACSCOC staff. This duty includes encouraging institutional employees to route routine inquiries about the *Principles of Accreditation* and accreditation policies and processes through the SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison, who will contact SACSCOC staff, if necessary. The SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison will also monitor email communication from the SACSCOC office, assuring that emails are routed through the institution's spam filter;
- Coordinate the preparation of the annual profiles and any other reports requested by SACSCOC;
- Serve as a resource person during the decennial, fifth-year and other Commission review processes and helping prepare for and coordinating reaffirmation and other accrediting visits, and
- Maintain the formal institutional file of all accreditation materials, such as reports related to the decennial and fifth-year reviews; accreditation committee reports; accreditation manuals, standards, and policies; schedules of all visits; and correspondence from accrediting offices.

B. The **President**, **Vice Presidents**, **Provost**, **Associate Provost**, **Assistant Provost**, **Deans**, **Associate Deans**, and **Directors** have a fundamental responsibility to

- Have a general knowledge of the substantive change policy;
- Inform the SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison as soon as possible of proposals that may be considered a substantive change;
- Provide, when requested by the SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison, the information or data describing substantive change as necessary to comply with SACSCOC policy;
- Ensure that plans or initiatives support Alabama State University's compliance with the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy;

- Incorporate this policy into daily operations and to distribute the current Substantive Change Policy at annual meetings with the faculty and discuss its implications;
- Provide a written report to the Provost on or before **May 15th or November 15th** that should confirm, in writing, that the College is in compliance with the University's Substantive Change Policy and that the SACSCOC Institutional Summary is correct.

VII. Policy Management:

- Responsible Office: SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison, Office of Institutional Effectiveness
- Responsible Executive: President of Alabama State University
- Responsible Officer(s): Chief of Staff and/or SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison

VIII. Definition of Substantive Change:

Substantive change is a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. 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 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% 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 that includes only the initiation of a dual or joint academic 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, and
- 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.

IX. Procedures:

There are three procedures for addressing the different types of substantive changes to the SACSCOC:

- **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.

According to SACSCOC, it is the responsibility of Alabama State University to follow SACSCOC substantive change procedures and inform the Commission of substantive changes as specified in the three procedures for addressing different types of changes.

The different types of substantive change, the specific procedure to be used for each, their respective approval/notification requirements, and their reporting timelines are included in the following table. The appropriate procedure for reporting proposed substantive curriculum changes are outlined in the *Reporting the Various Types of Substantive Changes* table.

It is the responsibility of an institution to follow SACSCOC substantive change procedures and inform SACSCOC of substantive changes as specified in those procedures. If an institution is unclear as to whether a change is substantive in nature, it should contact SACSCOC staff for consultation. SACSCOC accredits institutions, not systems. While a system may provide SACSCOC with important information regarding changes planned or underway at its institutions, it is expected that each institution will follow the reporting requirements of the substantive change policy as follows:

1. For any and every type of proposed action that will result in a substantive change, the procedures for reporting substantive change as outlined in *Reporting the Various Types of Substantive Changes Table* and the *ASU Course and New Program Approval Guide* and the SACSCOC policies on substantive change shall be strictly adhered to at all institutional levels.
2. The degree to which proposed changes represent a significant departure from current delivery modes of instruction should be made in consultation with the institutional SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison so as to accurately categorize the specific type of substantive change and to determine the procedures, timeframes and required documentation for accurate procedure on reporting substantive change to the SACSCOC.
3. The initial responsibility for determining and notifying a proposed program or outcome that will constitute a substantive change rests with the dean of the college from which the proposed program or outcome will be executed in consultation with the university's

SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison, who will assist with facilitating formal inquiries with the SACSCOC.

4. Due to the timeframes that must be considered for SACSCOC review, approval and development of required documentation (i.e., prospectus, letter of notification), proposed actions that constitute a substantive change will require completion of appropriate forms and signatures verifying the approval of the program from the Board of Trustees, President, Provost, Dean, Department Chair, and SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison.
5. When a new program that is a significant departure from currently approved programs is approved by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, a prospectus must be submitted to the SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison to accompany the prospectus that will be submitted to SACSCOC;
6. When a prospectus must be submitted to the SACSCOC, the development of the prospectus should focus on the following elements:
 - a. Abstract (limit to one page or less)
 - b. Background information
 - c. Assessment of Need and Program Planning/Approval
 - d. Description of the Change
 - e. Faculty
 - f. Library and Learning Resources
 - g. Student Support Services
 - h. Physical Resources
 - i. Financial Support
 - j. Evaluation and Assessment
 - k. Appendices
7. Formal communication of substantive change information to the SACSCOC for any proposed action rests with the president of the university.
8. No proposed action resulting in a substantive change will be implemented prior to formal receipt of approval from the SACSCOC.
9. In any instance whereby an unreported change should occur that is determined to be substantive to SACSCOC, the appropriate party must notify in writing the Chief of Staff and/or the SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison. Upon receipt of notification, the the President will be notified to determine the appropriate course of action per SACSCOC guidelines.

Reporting the Various Types of Substantive Changes:²

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	NA	NA	Yes	Application for Level Change Due dates: April 8 or September 15
Expanding at current degree level (significant departure from current programs)	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
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	NA	Letter of notification with new address and starting date
Initiating degree completion programs	1	NA	NA	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating a certificate program at employer’s request and on short notice					
...using existing approved courses	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
...at a new off-campus site (previously approved program)	1	NA	NA	Yes	Modified prospectus
...that is a significant departure from previously approved programs	1	Yes	Approval required prior to implementation	Yes	Modified prospectus
Initiating other certificate programs					
...using existing approved courses	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
...at a new off-campus site (previously approved program)	1	NA	NA	Yes	Prospectus

² <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/SubstantiveChange.pdf>

Types of Change	Procedure	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting COC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation
...that is a significant departure from previously approved programs	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Altering significantly the educational mission of the institution	1	NA	NA	Yes	Contact commission staff (Also see page 16, item 9)
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	Prior to implementation	NA	Copy of signed agreement and contact information for each institution
Joint Programs: 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 and dual enrollment programs offered at the high school)					
...Student can obtain 50% or more credits toward program	1	NA	NA	Yes	Prospectus
...Student can obtain 25-49% of credit	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	NA	Letter of notification
...Student can obtain 24% or less	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
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

Types of Change	Procedure	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting COC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation
...Adding approved programs that ARE significantly different from current programs at the site but NOT at the institution	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Adding programs that ARE significantly different from current programs at the site AND at the institution	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Altering significantly the length of a program	1	NA	NA	Yes	Modified Prospectus
Changing from clock hours to credit hours	1	NA	NA	Yes	Justify reasons for change, indicate calculation of equivalency, and other pertinent information
Initiating a direct assessment competency-based program	See SACSCOC Policy “ Direct Assessment Competency-Based Educational Programs ”	Yes	6 months	Yes	Submit “Screening Form” with a letter of notification. If prospectus is required, due dates: April 8 or September 15.
Initiating distance learning...					
Offering 50% or more of a program for the first time	1	NA	NA	Yes	Prospectus
...Offering 25-49%	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Letter of notification
...Offering 24% or less	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Initiating programs or courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	NA	Letter of notification and copy of the signed agreement

Types of Change	Procedure	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting COC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation
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	NA	Yes	Prospectus
...if the entity provides less than 25% of an educational program offered by the COC accredited institution	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	NA	Copy of the signed agreement
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	6 months	Yes	Prospectus Due dates: April 8 or September 15
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	6 months	Yes	Prospectus Due dates: April 8 or September 15
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	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
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”	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus

Types of Change	Procedure	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting COC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation
Closing a program, approved the off-campus site, branch campus, or institution					
...Institution to teach-out its own students	3	Yes	Immediately following decision to close	Yes	Description of the teach-out plan included with a letter of notification
...Institution contracts with another institution to teach-out students (Teach-out Agreement)	3	Yes	Immediately following decision to close	Yes	Description of the teach-out plan, copy of the signed teach-out agreement detailing terms included with notification

X. Annual Audit:

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness will be responsible for monitoring all substantive changes. The Office will conduct an annual audit to ensure all academic courses and programs are approved by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC) and the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) prior to implementation. Additionally, an audit will be conducted to ensure all administrative substantive changes, (if any) are forwarded to the Commission.

XI. Substantive Change Committee:

Establish a Substantive Change Policy Review Committee that will be charged with recommending to the President recommended changes to the substantive change policy as necessary to comply with the SACSCOC standards and policies. The Committee will be chaired by the SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison and include the following: the Chief of Staff, the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, the Executive Director of Research, Assessment and Evaluation, the Chair of the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, the Graduate Dean, the Graduate Curriculum Chair, the Dean of the Levi Watkins Learning Center (LWLC), Director of Recruitment and Admissions, the Director of Continuing Education, the Director of Human Resources, and a representative from the Office of Technology Services.

XII. Substantive Change Policy Training:

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness will provide at least two substantive change policy workshops for faculty and staff. All Executive Administrators and Academic Officers, along with Department Chairs are required to attend at least one workshop/training session annually.

XIII. Reporting Substantive and Non-substantive:

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness will be responsible for assisting academic officers, department chairs and administrators with determining substantive and non-substantive changes and ensure that they are reported to SACSCOC and/or ACHE.

XIV. Late Notification:

If Alabama State University fails to follow SACSCOC procedures for notification and approval of substantive changes, its accreditation may be placed in jeopardy. For that reason, failure to follow this University policy must be avoided. If an academic program, unit or officer initiates a substantive change without following the procedures outlined in this policy, the President may direct the immediate cancellation or cessation of that change, with due regard for the educational welfare of students, when it is discovered. The President will ensure that SACSCOC is notified of non-reported substantive changes immediately upon discovery. If Alabama State University fails to follow ACHE procedures for notification of substantive and non-substantive changes the Provost will be responsible for informing the President and informing the Commission upon discovery.

XV. Exclusions:

No alterations of interpretation or exclusions of this University policy will be permitted by any employee (at any level).

XVI. Interpretation of Policy:

All questions about the interpretation of this substantive change policy should be directed to the University's SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison. Consultation may be required for some questions or inquiries with the President, Provost or appropriate leader designated by the President and/or the institution's assigned SACSCOC Vice President before giving a response.

XVII. Resources:

- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), Substantive Change for SACSOC Accredited Institutions Policy Statement, <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/SubstantiveChange.pdf>
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement, <http://sacscoc.org/pdf/2012PrinciplesOfAcreditation.pdf>
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), The Accreditation Liaison, <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/accreditation%20liaison.pdf>

Document History

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