

I 06 00 SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

Substantive change is a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. The reporting and review of substantive change is required by the SACSCOC to ensure that the scope of programs offered by the institution, as well as the structure and organization of the institution, have undergone appropriate review by SACSCOC.

This policy is applicable to all college units, divisions, centers, and campuses. The college's Accreditation Liaison, the Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness, Research, Planning, and Assessment, has overall responsibility for ensuring this policy is implemented; however, all individuals responsible for initiating activities that may be considered within the scope of substantive change are required to be familiar and comply with this policy and Standard 14.2 of the Principles of Accreditation.

Substantive changes, including those required by federal regulations, include:

- 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 credential).
- 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.
- Substantially increase 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 education 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.

Other substantive changes, including those required by federal regulations, include:

- An institution is required to notify or secure SACSCOC approval prior to implementing a substantive change.
- An institution is responsible for maintaining compliance at all times with Standard 14.2
- (Substantive change) of the Principles of Accreditation and with the Substantive Change
- Policy and Procedures and related policies, viz.,
 - Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards;
 - Credit Hours;
 - Direct Assessment Competency-based Educational Programs;
 - Distance and Correspondence Education;
 - Dual Enrollment;
 - Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status; and
 - Seeking Accreditation at a Higher or Lower Degree Level.
- 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 and to the public. 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 Substantive Change Policy and Procedures. Institutions are responsible for implementing and enforcing their substantive change policy and procedure.
- An institution's fiscal and administrative capability to operate off-campus instructional sites is assessed when a new site is reviewed for approval and as part of decennial and fifth-year interim reviews.
- A new off-campus instructional site is subject to a substantive change committee visit. A committee visit, when necessary, is authorized when a site is approved. The committee visit ensures the site has the personnel, facilities, and resources identified by an institution in its application or prospectus and ensures the quality of instructional and support services offered at the site.

- Different or additional requirements apply to an institution on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION. Restriction applies if an institution has been placed on Warning, Probation, or Probation for Good Cause over the prior three academic years, or if an institution is under provisional certification for participation in federal financial aid programs.
- An institution placed or continued on Probation or Probation for Good Cause must submit to SACSCOC an institutional contingency teach-out plan within 30 days of the notification of the Board of Trustees action.

The SACSCOC Board of Trustees has approved additional substantive changes that require notification and, in some cases, approval prior to implementation. This policy and its procedures address substantive changes identified through Federal regulations and SACSCOC Board approval.

Certain substantive changes require prior notification to SACSCOC. Other substantive changes require submission of a substantive change prospectus for approval prior to the implementation of the change and/or may require on-site committee review by the Commission. The college's Accreditation Liaison, in consultation with SACSCOC policies and staff, determines the applicability of these means of notification, approval, and review to the proposed institutional change activity.

The following policies and procedures are established to ensure timely reporting of substantive changes to the Commission.

1. The responsibilities for reporting substantive change are regularly communicated to all college faculty and staff by means of the President's Cabinet Minutes, Curriculum Committee agendas, and Curriculum Committee minutes.
2. The Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness, Research, Planning and Assessment serves as an ex-officio member of the Curriculum Committee. The Curriculum Committee is the body with primary responsibility for decisions regarding the college curriculum.
3. The form for submission of Curriculum Committee agenda items contains a line item for mandatory review of SACSCOC requirements that may be associated with the submitted action item. The curriculum submission form for programs includes questions that will be reviewed by the SACSCOC Liaison and submitted to the substantive change committee for determination of significant departure when appropriate.
4. All proposals for new and/or revised academic programs submitted to the Tennessee Board of Regents for approval include a line item for mandatory review of SACSCOC requirements that may be associated with the submitted proposal.
5. Each Vice President is responsible for working with their respective divisions and departments to provide information to the Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness, Research, Planning and Assessment concerning any actions in the

areas of academic programming and delivery, off-site expansions, and all other areas falling within the governance of SACSCOC Standard 14.2.

6. The SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison and VP of Institutional Effectiveness, Research, Planning, and Assessment will Chair the Substantive Change Committee. The Substantive Change Committee meets a minimum of once a semester, or as needed throughout the academic year, to review the Commission's Substantive Change policy, to discuss any possible changes planned for the College that might be substantive in nature, and to examine the institution's current offerings and operations to ascertain that the College is in compliance with the Commission's Substantive Change policy.
7. The following administrative officers serve on the institution's Substantive Change Committee: Accreditation Liaison (Chairperson), Vice President of Academic Affairs, College Deans, Registrar, Appointed Faculty Member, Vice President of Student Services (Ex Officio), and others as appointed by the College President or Chairperson.
8. Proposed changes are reviewed by the committee to determine if they are substantive. If any of the changes are considered substantive, then the committee also determines the specific approach for reporting the change to the Commission using a significant departure rubric.
 - Review of Substantive Changes Requiring Notification and Approval Prior to Implementation
 - Review of Substantive Changes Requiring only Notification Prior to Implementation
 - Closing a Program, Instructional Site, Branch Campus or an Institution
9. Changes are reported to the Chairperson of the Substantive Change Committee in the following methods:
 - All academic program and course changes are submitted through the curriculum approval process in curriculog.
 - All non-academic changes are submitted via email at IERPA@VolState.edu
 - Members of the substantive change committee can report changes during the committee meetings.
10. Document Submissions and approvals must meet specific deadlines or implementation will be delayed till next start cycle. The timelines required for submission are published on the VSCC website at:
<https://www.volstate.edu/accreditation/substantive-change-submission-timeline>
11. Agendas, Minutes, Relevant Documentation, and Significant Departure Rubrics are stored on the Substantive Change Committee SharePoint Site.
12. The SACSCOC Liaison is responsible for notifying the Commission of any changes considered substantive in nature.

13. If the Commission requires the institution to write a prospectus or prepare additional documentation beyond the notification letter:
 - Academic Program: The initiating academic department will be responsible for preparing the prospectus or additional documentation as requested by the SACSCOC Liaison
 - Non-Academic: The SACSCOC Liaison, with assistance from the Substantive Change Committee, is responsible for preparing the documentation.
 - Additional committees can also be organized to assist in these tasks as the need is determined.
 - The SACSCOC Liaison, with assistance from the Substantive Change Committee, will organizing any onsite substantive change committee visits.
14. To ensure that SACSCOC substantive change policy updates are regularly reviewed by multiple college stakeholders for applicability to college operations, the Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness, Research, Planning and Assessment will bring all policy changes to the President's Cabinet.
15. The Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness, Research, Planning and Assessment will conduct a comprehensive review of proposed college policy changes, will evaluate the changes for potential impact on college operations and report to SACSCOC as needed.

Failure to comply with the SACSCOC substantive change policy and procedures subjects the College to serious consequences, including the possible loss of Title IV funding or the necessity to reimburse the U.S. Department of Education for money received for programs related to unreported substantive change. Additionally, the College may be referred to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees for the imposition of a sanction or, in the most serious case, removal from membership.

SACSCOC Source: Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions

VSCC Source: President's Cabinet, July 23, 2018; President's Cabinet, August 5, 2019; President's Cabinet, January 25, 2021