


SACSCOC and UK Substantive Change Policy:

A Brief Training
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Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC)

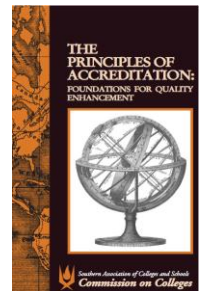
- ▶ SACSCOC, founded in 1895, is the regional body for accreditation of higher education institutions in the southern states.
 - ▶ UK has been a SACSCOC accredited institution since 1915.
 - ▶ UK's accreditation was last reaffirmed in 2002.
 - ▶ UK's last accreditation site visit was in April 2012. Reaffirmation will be announced at the December 2013 SACSCOC annual meeting.
 - ▶ Compliance with "Substantive Change" policy is now a comprehensive standard for reaffirmation of accreditation.
 - ▶ SACSCOC Substantive Change policy was revised in 2013 in response to changes in requirements by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE).
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SACS Commission on Colleges

- ▶ SACSCOC is the recognized regional accrediting body in the 11 U.S. Southern states and in Latin America for those institutions of higher education that award associate, baccalaureate, master's or doctoral degrees.
- ▶ SACSCOC recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as an agency whose accreditation enables its member institutions to seek eligibility to participate in [Title IV programs and thus receive federal funds](#).

SACS Commission on Colleges


- ▶ To maintain its recognition by the Department of Education, the Commission has incorporated federal requirements into its **Substantive Change policy and procedures**. Some of those requirements expect an institution to **seek and receive approval prior to the initiation of a substantive change so that the change can be included in the institution's scope of accreditation**.
- ▶ To gain or maintain accreditation with the Commission on Colleges, an institution must comply with the standards contained in the *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*.




What is Substantive Change?

SACSCOC defines: Substantive change:


**any significant modification or
expansion of the nature and scope of
an accredited institution.**




Types of Substantive Changes

- ▶ Any change in the established mission or objectives of the institution
 - ▶ Any change in legal status, form of control, or ownership of the institution
 - ▶ 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
 - ▶ 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 level (not just a higher level)
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Types of Substantive Changes

- ▶ 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
 - ▶ Establishment of an additional location geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers at least 50 percent of an educational program. Approvals for new sites are for a maximum of 5 years, after which they must be reviewed again (at fifth-year or decennial review)
 - ▶ Establishment of a branch campus
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Types of Substantive Changes

- ▶ 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
 - ▶ 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
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SACSCOC Definitions

- ▶ **SACSCOC Board of Trustees has approved additional substantive changes** that require notification and, in some cases, approval prior to implementation. These are identified in the SACSCOC policy and by Comprehensive Standard 3.12.
- ▶ **Notification** to SACSCOC regarding substantive change means that the President of the University or his/her designated representative shall send a letter to the President of the Commission on Colleges 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.


SACSCOC Definitions

- ▶ A **prospectus** is a concisely worded narrative that describes a proposed substantive change according to a format specified by the SACSCOC.
- ▶ The SACSCOC **Accreditation Liaison** is the individual appointed by the President of the University to help ensure the University remains in compliance with SACS accreditation requirements and policies. [Senior Vice Provost Vince Kellen is currently the SACSCOC Liaison for the University of Kentucky.](#)


SACSCOC Definitions

- ▶ A **branch campus** is a location of an institution that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus of the institution. A location is independent if it is:
 - Permanent in nature,
 - Offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree,
 - Has its own faculty and administrative organization, and
 - Has its own budgetary and hiring authority.
- ▶ An **off-campus site** is a location of an institution that is geographically apart from, but not independent of the main campus.


SACSCOC Definitions

- ▶ **Distance education** is 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 (internet, audio, video, computer technologies, and so forth).
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SACSCOC Definitions

- ▶ A **degree completion program** is a program designed for a nontraditional 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 hours 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.
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SACSCOC Definitions

- ▶ A **teach-out agreement** is 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 percent or more of at least one program offered, ceases to operate before all enrolled students have completed their program of study. Such a teach-out agreement requires SACSCOC approval in advance of implementation.
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SACSCOC Definitions

- ▶ A **significant departure** is when a program is not closely related to previously approved programs at the institution or site or for the mode of delivery in question. To determine if a new program is a **significant departure**, it is helpful to ask if the new program requires:
 - New faculty?
 - Many new courses?
 - New library or other learning resources?
 - New equipment or facilities?
 - A new resource base?


SACSCOC Definitions

- ▶ **Significant changes in mission** are those that lead to a fundamental shift in the nature of the institution, such as an institution that had offered only professional programs deciding to add general education offerings, or a technical college transforming itself into a comprehensive community college.
 - ▶ **Significant changes in program length** are those with noticeable impact on the program's completion time (e.g., increasing a baccalaureate degree from 124 hours to 150 hours).
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UK's Substantive Change Procedure

- ▶ Approval authority relating to each type of substantive change shall occur at various levels of the University. See the matrix in [UK's Substantive Change Policy](#) that depicts approval authority for the following:
 - Expanding degree programs in a way that would be a significant departure from current programs
 - Initiating degree programs at a lower level
 - Initiating off-campus sites where 25% or more of degree is offered
 - Adding significantly different degree programs at an approved site
 - Initiating distance learning where 25% or more of degree is offered
 - Initiating degree programs/courses through contractual agreement
 - Altering significantly the length of a degree program
 - Initiating complete degree programs
 - Closing a degree program
 - Initiating teach-out agreements within UK or with another institution
 - Initiating a branch campus
 - Initiating a merger/consolidation
 - Relocating a campus
 - Changing governance, ownership, control or legal status of the institution
 - Altering significantly the educational mission of the institution
 - Closing the institution

UK's Substantive Change Procedure

- ▶ The President may delegate administrative responsibilities for approving or recommending on substantive change to the Provost or other appropriate senior administrators (GR III, Page III-1).
 - ▶ The Provost may further delegate approval authority as appropriate. These responsibilities shall be reflected in job descriptions of the positions, letters of appointment, and other appropriate documents for those assigned such responsibilities.
 - ▶ Dr. Vince Kellen is currently the Provost's designee for oversight of academic substantive change.
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UK's Substantive Change Procedure

- ▶ In accordance with its academic approval responsibilities as established in GR IV.C.1, Page IV-2, the University Senate shall maintain academic program approval procedures and forms that:
 1. Recognize substantive changes related to academic programs in appropriate approval documents. These documents shall accompany the proposal at each step;
 2. Require approval by the appropriate educational unit faculties and also include any recommendations offered by the corresponding department chair, dean, and/or Provost prior to approval of academic substantive change by the Councils of the University Senate and the University Senate and
 3. Provide for timely notification to the SACSCOC prior to change implementation, as required by the [SACSCOC substantive change policy](#).


UK's Substantive Change Procedure

- ▶ The individuals and units that play a role in implementing the **academic substantive change** procedures include:
 - University Senate
 - University Senate Councils: Undergraduate, Graduate, and Health Care
 - Educational Unit Faculties
 - Educational Unit Administrators
 - UK SACSCOC Liaison

UK's Substantive Change Procedure

- ▶ The Accreditation Liaison shall inform all responsible individuals at each level of the University of the [SACSCOC substantive change policy](#) and the [institutional substantive change policy](#) on a biannual basis and at the same time shall request notification of substantive changes in planning for the next 12-month period.
- ▶ Note: the 12-month timeframe will provide a long-range outlook to ensure that notifications can be carried out six months prior to implementation of substantive change. The Accreditation Liaison shall prepare the President's notification to the SACSCOC regarding the substantive changes that are reported.


UK's Substantive Change Procedure

- ▶ If a prospectus is subsequently required by the SACSCOC, the deans or appropriate senior administrators shall coordinate preparation of the prospectus and forward the prospectus to the Accreditation Liaison for final review.
 - ▶ The Accreditation Liaison shall review a required prospectus and obtain approval of the President and the Provost before planning for submission to SACSCOC by the President.
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Frequently Asked Questions (from SACSC Substantive Change FAQs)

- ▶ **Why is SACSC interested in changes that are occurring at institutions that are already accredited?**
 - SACSCOC accredits the entire institution, including all of its programs and services, whenever they are located or however they are delivered. The Commission is interested in significant changes that are occurring because the scope of accreditation extends to the total university.

Frequently Asked Questions (from SACCS Substantive Change FAQs)

- ▶ **What are the most common substantive changes that are reported?**
 - new off-campus sites where more than 50% or more of the credits in a degree program are offered;
 - significant growth in distance education, including 50% or more of an educational program delivered via technology-based instruction; and
 - the addition of new site-based programs that are significantly different from current offerings.
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Frequently Asked Questions (from SACS Substantive Change FAQs)

- ▶ We started offering a few online courses several years ago. Now it appears that students can complete a majority of their program online although that was not intended when we started. Do we have to report this?

Yes, when an institution initiates a program leading to a degree, diploma, or certificate in which 50% or more of the credits can be obtained by some form of distance learning, the institution should notify the SACSCOC of this development and submit a prospectus for approval. Subsequent programs in distance education do not need to be reported unless they represent significant departures from previously approved programs or new modes of delivery.

Frequently Asked Questions (from SACCS Substantive Change FAQs)


- ▶ A local business has asked us to offer the MBA degree at their facility for a specific target audience. Is this considered a substantive change?

Yes, the guidelines are the same whether a single cohort or a continuous program will be offered. When an institution establishes an off-campus site at which 50% or more of the credits in a program can be obtained a **prospectus** should be submitted 3 months prior to the start date.

Frequently Asked Questions (from SACS Substantive Change FAQs)

- ▶ At the present time, we offer a master's degree in political science. Do we need to notify SACS if we plan to begin a doctorate in political science? Our institution has doctoral degrees in education and religion.


Yes, the doctorate in political science is considered significantly different from the existing doctoral degrees in education and religion. The institution should notify the COC at least 6 months before starting the program and submit a prospectus to justify the new doctoral program at least 3 months prior to implementation.



Frequently Asked Questions (from SACS Substantive Change FAQs)

- ▶ What must we do if our institution has implemented programs that should have been reported?
- ▶ An institution that has implemented programs that should have been reported must notify the *President of the Commission* **immediately** in writing concerning the unreported substantive changes. Please see the Commission's policy on Unreported Substantive Change.


Frequently Asked Questions (from SACCS Substantive Change FAQs)

- ▶ **Our college is interested in reconfiguring existing courses in an approved program to create a new degree. Is this considered substantive to SACCS?**
 - ▶ **In most cases, the re-packaging of existing courses does not constitute a substantive change.**
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Frequently Asked Questions (from SACCS Substantive Change FAQs)

- ▶ Do we need to report collaborative programs with foreign institutions or consortia with institutions in our system?
- ▶ If the institution is establishing a contractual agreement with another institution to offer credit instruction leading to a diploma, certificate or degree, a letter of notification should be sent to the Commission as well as a signed copy of the written agreement.

Frequently Asked Questions (from SACS Substantive Change FAQs)

- ▶ Do new continuing education programs need to be reported?
 - ▶ If these new programs involve **credit instruction**, they should be reported in keeping with the substantive change policy. Non-credit programs that do not qualify for federal aid do not constitute substantive changes.
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For additional information or questions,
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