

Office of Academic Affairs

Substantive Change Policy Statement University of Tennessee Southern

The University of Tennessee Southern will be proactive in ensuring that all incidences of substantive changes are reported in a timely manner as required by Southern Association of Colleges and Schools—Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). The complete SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy Statement can be found on the SACSCOC webpage.

Definition and Responsibility

According to SACSCOC, a substantive change is a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. According to their Policy Statement, the following will be considered a substantive change (taken directly from the SACSCOC website):

1. Substantially changing the established mission or objectives of an institution or its programs.
2. Changing the legal status, form of control, or ownership of an institution.
3. Changing the governance of an institution.
4. Merging / consolidating two or more institutions or entities.
5. Acquiring another institution or any program or location of another institution.
6. Relocating an institution or an off-campus instructional site of an institution (including a branch campus).
7. Offering courses or programs at a higher or lower degree level than currently authorized.
8. Adding graduate programs at an institution previously offering only undergraduate programs (including degrees, diplomas, certificates, and any other for-credit credential).
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. Initiating programs by distance education or correspondence courses.
12. Adding an additional method of delivery to a currently offered program.
13. Entering into a cooperative academic arrangement.
14. 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. An agreement offering more than 50% of one or more of an institution's programs is prohibited by federal regulation.
15. Substantially increasing 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.
16. Adding competency-based education programs.
17. Adding each competency-based education program by direct assessment.
18. Adding programs with completion pathways that recognize and accommodate a student's prior or existing knowledge or competency.
19. Awarding dual or joint academic awards.
20. Re-opening a previously closed program or off-campus instructional site.

21. Adding a new off-campus instructional site/additional location including a branch campus.
22. 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.
23. Closing an institution, a program, a method of delivery, an off-campus instructional site, or a program at an off-campus instructional site.

It is the responsibility of the University through the Accreditation Liaison to report all substantive changes based on the commission’s policy and follow all procedures and timelines as outlined in the commission’s policy statement. Such procedures may include:

1. Notification and approval prior to implementation—in some cases, as much as 12 months prior approval is needed before implementation or,
2. Notification prior to implementation—usually requires a simple letter of notification prior to implementation.

Timelines to be followed

In order to comply with SACSCOC policy on substantive change, the University recognizes the timeline necessary in the reporting process. Taken directly from the SACSCOC Policy, below are examples and timelines of substantive changes most likely to be relevant to the University. Information on additional types of changes and required timelines can be found on the SACSCOC website or by contacting the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison.

Type of Change	Requires Prior Notification?	Time Frame for Contacting COC	Prior Approval necessary?
<i>Initiating a new program or degree ...at an approved site that is significantly different from current programs</i>	Yes	Prior to implementation	No
<i>Expanding at current degree level (significant departure which may include new faculty, new courses, new equipment or facilities)</i>	Yes	6 months	Yes
<i>Initiating a branch campus</i>	Yes	6 months	Yes
<i>Initiating a certificate program ... at a new off-campus site (previously approved program)...that is a significant departure from previously approved programs</i>	Yes Yes	Approval prior to implementation Approval prior to implementation	Yes Yes

<i>Initiating off campus sites</i> ... in which a student can obtain 50 percent or more credits toward a program	Yes	6 months	Yes
... Student can obtain 25-49 percent of credit	Yes	Prior to implementation	No
... Student can obtain 24 percent or less	NA	NA	NA
<i>Expanding program offerings</i> ...at previously approved off-campus sites that are significantly different from current programs	Yes	Prior to implementation	No
<i>Initiating programs/courses</i> ...offered through contractual agreement or consortium	Yes	Prior to implementation	No
Relocating a main or branch campus	Yes	6 months	Yes
Relocating an off-campus instructional site	Yes	Prior to implementation	No
Significantly altering the length of a program	Yes	6 months	Yes
Initiating degree completion programs	Yes	6 months	Yes

Ensuring Timely Reporting of Substantive Changes to SACSCOC

The following activities/initiatives are established to ensure the timely reporting of any substantive change. Since the university liaison takes the lead in reporting all substantive changes, this person will have a presence on specific committees and groups to gain awareness of changes occurring on campus. This includes:

1. Actively works with members of the Executive Council. This will address changes related to the mission of the university as well as adding or changing instructional/branch sites.
2. Member of the Curriculum and Academic Policy Committee. This will address significant changes related to curriculum issues such as adding new programs or significant changes to current instructional programs; moving programs to a more advanced level, and other issues related to instruction.

Publishing/Awareness of the Substantive Change Policy

In order to make the campus aware of the Substantive Change Policy, the policy is published on the “Effectiveness and Planning” page of the University website. Each fall semester, the policy will be reviewed by the Executive Council and the Curriculum and Academic Policies Committee to ensure proactive reporting and consistency across the institution.

Reporting Substantive Change

Any possible Substantive Change for the University should be immediately reported to the SACSCOC liaison in order to determine if the change fits the definition of a substantive change as required by SACSCOC. The SACSCOC liaison will work with SACSCOC personnel to ensure that the correct procedure is followed. All substantive change activity will be documented in the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison through a database maintained by the liaison.