

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IN HUNTSVILLE

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

Number	02.01.53
Division	Academic Affairs
Date	August 2015, Reviewed and Revised August 24, 2022
Purpose	To establish a policy and procedures for identifying substantive changes and a process to ensure timely coordination and notification regarding same to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), and as appropriate, The University of Alabama Board of Trustees (Board), and the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE). A Substantive Change defined by SACSCOC is a significant modification/expansion of an institution's role and scope in academic curriculum, policy, and/or operations to governing bodies outside the university.
Policy	The University is responsible for obtaining approval or informing, in advance, of any substantive changes in academic curriculum, policy and/or operations to governing bodies outside the University. These governing bodies include accrediting bodies, SACSCOC, The Board, ACHE, the State of Alabama Department of Education, and the State of Alabama Nursing Board. In addition, the UAH faculty, staff and students have an important role in developing, reviewing, and giving input on academic curriculum, policy and other substantive changes.

Procedures

Definitions and Requirements

In its policy on Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions, SACSCOC defines Substantive Change broadly as any "significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution." The term "Substantive Change" includes items that are required by regulations of the U.S. Department of Education governing accrediting bodies of higher education institutions ([34 CFR Sec. 602.22](#)), as well as some additional items required by [SACSCOC](#).

SACSCOC [informs](#) institutions of their institutional obligations:

1. "Member institutions are required to notify the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) of changes in accordance with the substantive change policy and, when required, seek approval prior to the initiation of changes."
2. "Member institutions are required to have a policy and procedure to ensure that all substantive changes are reported to the Commission in a timely fashion."

"Substantive Change" includes, but is not limited to:

- Changing the established mission or objectives of an institution.
- Merging two or more institutions.
- Adding, closing, or relocating an off-campus instructional site.
- Adding courses or programs at a higher or lower degree level.
- Adding a program that is a significant departure from existing programs.
- Adding an off-site location.
- Changing or adding a method of instructional delivery, e.g. online, face to face, or correspondence.
- Entering into a cooperative academic agreement.
- Awarding dual or joint academic awards.
- Adding competency-based education programs.
- Closing an institution, program, or method of delivery.
- A change from clock hours to credit hours.
- 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.
- The establishment of a branch campus.

The [federal government](#) requires accreditation organizations to monitor the compliance of its member institutions with their substantive change policies and to grant permission for major changes to occur. Additionally, ACHE and the Board monitor the University's substantive changes.

Current SACSCOC requirements, policies, and definitions including cases where approval is needed prior to implementation, can be found on the [SACSCOC website](#).

The institution's SACSCOC Liaison (appointed by the President) works with departments, colleges and other campus units to notify and remind them of their responsibilities for complying with this policy. The SACSCOC Liaison serves as a resource to the campus regarding Substantive Changes and ensures that information regarding this policy, associated resources available from SACSCOC, and answers to questions are available to the campus community.

Approval Procedure for a Substantive Change

1. Changes at the institution level (off-site instruction, new site, etc.)
 - a. The Provost discusses with the SACSCOC Liaison possible changes at the institutional level at least one year prior to implementation or as early as possible.
 - b. The Provost and the SACSCOC Liaison determine whether notification or approval is required for the Board, for ACHE, and for SACSCOC, and what deadlines are required for these notifications and approvals. The Provost provides that information to any others on campus that need to be involved in preparing the documentation.
 - c. The Office of the Provost is responsible for completing the required documentation and submitting it by the stated deadlines.

2. Changes at the program level (new program, new partner institution, program closure, etc.)
 - a. Department chairs, deans, or others considering changes at the program level must discuss this change with the Provost and the SACSCOC Liaison at least one year prior to implementation or as soon as possible.
 - b. The Provost and the SACSCOC Liaison determine whether notification or approval is required for the Board, for ACHE, and for SACSCOC and what deadlines are required for these notifications and approvals. The Provost provides that information to the department chair and others involved.
 - c. The department chair, dean, and others involved are responsible for completing the required documentation and submitting it to the Provost by the stated deadlines.

Responsibilities

1. It is the responsibility of all UAH administrators, faculty, and staff to notify the Provost and the SACSCOC Liaison of possible Substantive Changes.
2. It is the responsibility of the SACSCOC Liaison to monitor the SACSCOC Substantive Change policy and to work with the Provost to determine if proposed changes are considered substantive.
3. It is the responsibility of the Provost, the UAH Office of Academic Affairs, and the SACSCOC Liaison to ensure that the proper notifications and approval processes are followed for SACSCOC when Substantive Changes occur.

Implementation of the Substantive Change cannot begin until any required notifications or approvals are complete.

Review Academic Affairs will review this policy every five years or sooner as needed.