



Limestone College

Policy on Reporting Substantive Change to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC)

1 Adapted, with appreciation, from College of Kentucky's "Substantive Change Checklist" and "UK Policy on Reporting Substantive Changes to SACSCOC."

2 Adapted, with appreciation, from College of Virginia's Substantive Change Checklist."

I. Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to establish institutional procedures for recognizing and approving substantive change and ensuring timely notification to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). The College's SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison is the individual responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented.

The types of substantive change and the procedures for reporting them appropriately are found in the SACSCOC's policy on substantive change. If differences occur between this Administrative Regulation and the SACSCOC's policy, the SACSCOC's policy has precedence.

II. Definitions

A. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges

The 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. The SACSCOC is 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. To maintain its recognition by the U.S. 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.

B. Substantive Change

Substantive change is a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution, as defined in SACSCOC's substantive change policy. The types of substantive change and the procedures for addressing them appropriately are found in the SACSCOC's policy on substantive change and on its substantive changes website.

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

<http://www.sacscoc.org/SubstantiveChange.asp>

C. Notification

Notification to the SASCOC regarding substantive change means the President of the College, or designee, shall send a letter to the President of the SACSCOC 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.

D. Prospectus

A prospectus is a concisely worded narrative that describes a proposed substantive change according to a format specified by the SACSCOC.

E. Accreditation Liaison

The accreditation liaison is the individual appointed by the President of the College to help ensure the College remains in compliance with SACSCOC accreditation requirements and policies. The Dean of Accreditation is Limestone College's accreditation liaison.

F. A Branch Campus

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 of the main campus if the location is (1) permanent in nature, (2) offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential, (3) has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization, and (4) has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

G. Off-campus Site

An off-campus site is a location of an institution that is geographically apart, but not independent, of the main campus. The site may be used in an ongoing manner to deliver programs or courses leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential, but it does not have its own faculty, administrative organization or budget.

H. Distance Education

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. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. A distance education course may use the internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or video cassettes, DVD's, and CD- ROMS if used as part of the distance learning course or program.

I. Degree Completion Program

A degree completion program is typically designed for a non-traditional 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 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 technologies.

J. Teach-out Agreement

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 fifty percent of 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.

K. Teach-out Plan

A teach-out plan is a written plan developed by an institution that provides for the equitable treatment of students if an institution, or an institutional location that provides fifty percent or more of at least one program, ceases to operate before all students have completed their program of study, and may include, if required by the institution's accrediting agency, a teach-out agreement between institutions. Teach-out plans must be approved by SACSCOC in advance of implementation.

L. Significant Departure

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 whether a new program is a “significant departure,” it is helpful to consider the following questions:

- What previously approved programs does the institution offer that are closely related to the new program and how are they related?
- Will significant additional equipment or facilities be needed?
- Will significant additional financial resources be needed?
- Will a significant number of new courses be required?
- Will a significant number of new faculty members be required?
- Will significant additional library/learning resources be needed?

III. Procedures

A. SACSCOC requires notification for substantive change. Some substantive changes require prior notification and approval; others require only prior notification. Notification requirements for the various types of substantive change are illustrated in the Matrix of College Procedures, Approval and Recommendation Responsibilities for Substantive Change. (See Appendix B.) Additional procedures for certain types of changes are found in the SACSCOC’s Policy Statement on Mergers, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisitions, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status, which can be found at the SACSCOC website.

<http://www.sacscoc.org/subchg/policy/Mergers.pdf>

Approval authority relating to each type of substantive change occurs at various levels of the College and is illustrated in the Matrix of College Procedure, Approval and Recommendation Responsibilities for Substantive Change. (See Appendix B.)

B. The President may delegate administrative responsibilities for approving or recommending a substantive change to the Provost or other appropriate senior administrators. These responsibilities shall be reflected in job descriptions of the positions, letters of appointment, and other appropriate documents for those assigned such responsibilities.

In accordance with its academic approval responsibilities as established in the Faculty-Staff Handbook, the college faculty shall maintain academic program approval procedures and forms that:

- Recognize substantive changes related to academic programs in appropriate approval documents. These documents shall accompany the proposal at each step;
- Require approval by the appropriate educational unit faculties and also include any recommendations offered by the corresponding department chair, division chair, and/or Provost prior to approval of academic substantive change by the faculty; and
- Provide for timely notification to the Commission on Colleges prior to change implementation, as required by the SACSCOC substantive change policy.
- The Accreditation Liaison shall inform all responsible individuals at each level of the College (see Checklist in Appendix A) of the SACSCOC substantive change policy and the institutional substantive change policy on an annual basis (at the beginning of Fall Semester) and at the same time shall request notification of substantive changes in planning for the next 12-month period. 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.
- If a prospectus is subsequently required by the SACSCOC, the Chairs or appropriate 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 preparing for submission to SACSCOC by the President, or designee.

- C. All Substantive Changes must be reported to the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees at the next scheduled meeting.

IV. References and Related Materials

SACSCOC Policies

SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy Statement

Cover Sheet

Revision History

Drafted: February 26, 2019

Approved by Coordinating Committee: March 13, 2019

Approved by Faculty Vote: March 27, 2019

Approved by President: April 9, 2019

Approved by Board of Trustees: April 26, 2019

Appendix A: Checklist for Substantive Change

Substantive change, according to the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC or SACS), is “a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution.” Substantive change is a federal concept, based in the regulations of the U.S. Department of Education, which regional accreditors are required to enforce.

Limestone College is required to submit any substantive change to SACS for review, and in some cases approval, prior to implementation of such substantive change. As noted by SACS:

“If an institution fails to follow the substantive change policy and procedures of the Commission on Colleges, it may lose its Title IV funding or be required by the U.S. Department of Education to reimburse it for money received by the institution for programs related to the unreported substantive change. In addition, the institution’s case may be referred to the Commission for the imposition of a sanction or for removal from membership.”

Checklist Instructions: To ensure substantive change compliance, individuals should complete the checklist on the following pages in the early stages of any proposal (e.g. new degree program, new certificate program, etc.) or curricular revision.

Upon completion, the form must be submitted to the Dean of Accreditation (smeyers@limestone.edu). A determination as to whether the proposed program or changes to the existing program constitutes a substantive change will be made within seven (7) business days of receipt and next steps will be communicated accordingly.

Instructions: Email completed form to smeyers@limestone.edu. Subject line: LC Sub Change. Questions concerning Substantive change should be sent to smeyers@limestone.edu.

Name of Proposed Program/Action: _____

Is this a New, Existing Degree, or Non-Degree Educational Program?

New Degree Educational Program Existing Degree Educational Program

New Non-Degree Educational Program Existing Non-Degree Educational Program

Program CIP Code (as applicable): _____

General Description of Proposed Action (e.g., new program/courses/delivery or changes to program (such as change in course(s)/delivery mode). Attach applicable documentation to support the program description with checklist submission):

Total number of Credit hours for:

New or Proposed Degree/Non-Degree/Certificate: _____ Existing Degree/Non-Degree/Certificate: _____

New or Proposed Program Major: _____ Existing Program Major: _____

New or Proposed Program Option: _____ Existing Program Option: _____

(e.g. Concentration, Specialization, Track) (e.g. Concentration, Specialization, Track)

Is this an Accredited Program? No Yes Name of Accreditor: _____

Sponsoring College/Home Educational Unit: _____

College/Department/Educational Unit Contact: _____

Date Form Completed: _____

	LC Substantive Change Items	Yes	No	Not Sure	N/A	Provide brief explanation (if necessary)
1.	The proposed program or existing program requires a number of new faculty .					
2.	More than 25 percent of the required courses for the proposed or existing program are new .					
3.	More than 50 percent of the required courses for the proposed or existing program are new .					
4.	The proposed or existing program requires new library or other learning resources.					
5.	The proposed or existing program requires new equipment or facilities.					
6.	The proposed or existing program requires a new resource base.					
7.	The proposed or existing program will initiate a branch campus .					
8.	The proposed or existing program will initiate a dual degree program with another institution.					
9.	The proposed or existing program will initiate a joint degree program with another institution.					
10.	The proposed or existing program will initiate a certificate program? <i>(if yes, answer the following)</i>					
11.	Will the proposed certificate program utilize existing courses?					
12.	Will the proposed certificate program be offered at a new off-Grounds site?					
13.	Does the proposed certificate program represent a significant departure from previously approved programs?					
14.	The proposed or existing program will be initiated at a new off-Grounds site? <i>(if yes, answer the following)</i>					
15.	Will a student be able to earn 50 percent or more of program credits at the site?					
16.	Will a student be able to earn 25 to 49 percent of program credits at the site?					
17.	Will a student be able to earn 24 percent or less of program credits at the site?					
18.	The proposed or existing program will be at an existing off-Grounds site? <i>(if yes, answer the following)</i>					
19.	Does the proposed program represent a significant departure from previously approved programs [at the existing site]?					
20.	The proposed or existing program will be offered via distance education. <i>(if yes, answer the following)</i>					
21.	Will more than 50 percent of the program be offered via distance education?					
22.	Will 25-49 percent of the program be offered via distance education?					
23.	Will less than 25 percent of the program be offered via distance education?					
24.	Total number of proposed course changes <i>(as applicable)</i>					
25.	The proposed or existing program or courses will be initiated through contractual agreement or consortium.					

	LC Substantive Change Items	Yes	No	Not Sure	N/A	Provide brief explanation (if necessary)
26.	The proposed or existing program will relocate an existing off-Grounds site.					
27.	The change to the existing program will significantly alter the length of the currently approved program.					
28.	The proposed or existing program will initiate a degree completion program.					
29.	The proposed program will close an existing program.					

Appendix B: Matrix of Procedures, Approval and Recommendation Responsibilities for Substantive Change
 PROCEDURE 1 (P1): Notification and/or Approval Prior to the Intended Implementation Date
 PROCEDURE 2 (P2): Requiring ONLY Notification Prior to Implementation
 PROCEDURE 3 (P3): Closing a Program, Site, Branch Campus or Institution

EXTERNAL: SACSCOC			INTERNAL: College Levels of Approval for Substantive Change									
Types of Substantive Change	Prior Approval Required	Time Frame For Contacting or Notifying SACSCOC	Documentation	Key: AM=Approval based on Program Academic Merit; AF=Approval based on Administrative Feasibility; R=Approval based on Academic Merit and Administrative Feasibility, R=Recommendation; N=Not Recommended, Information Only								
ACADEMIC				Faculty			Administration					
				Approval based on Program Academic Merit, unless otherwise noted	Recommendation, unless otherwise noted							
				Dept.	Department/Division	Curriculum/Comm	Faculty Vote	Dept. Chair	Division Chair	Provost	President	BOT
Initiating coursework or programs at a more advanced level than currently approved	Yes (P1)	12 months prior to implementation	Application for Level Change Due Dates : 4/15 or 10/1	AM	AM	AFM	AM	R	R	R	R	AFM
Initiating programs at a lower degree level	Yes (P1)	6 months prior to implementation	Prospectus	AM	AM	AFM	AM	R	R	R	R	AFM
Expanding at current degree level (significant departure from current programs)	Yes (P1)	6 months prior to implementation	Prospectus	AM	AM	AFM	AM	R	R	R	R	AFM
Initiating a branch campus (academic program aspect)	Yes (P1)	6 months prior to implementation	Prospectus	AM	AM	AFM	AM	R	R	R	R	AFM
Initiating a certificate programusing existing approved courses	NA	NA	NA	AM	AM	AFM	AM	R	R	AF	N	N
...at a new off campus site (previously approved program)	Yes (P1)	6 months prior to implementation	Prospectus	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	AF	N
...that is a significant departure from previously approved	Yes (P1)	6 months prior to implementation	Modified Prospectus	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	AF	N

*Recommendation responsibility means having the opportunity to offer an opinion on the academic merit or the administrative feasibility of the proposed change that accompanies a proposal when it is transmitted to the next level of consideration.

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Types of Substantive Change	Prior Approval Required	Time Frame for Contacting SACSCOC	Documentation	Dept.	Division	Curriculum Comm.	Faculty Vote	Dept. Chair	Division Chair	Provost	President	BOT
ACADEMIC				Key: AM=Approval based on Program Academic Merit; AF=Approval based on Administrative Feasibility; AFM = approval based on Academic Merit and Administrative Feasibility, R= Recommenders *; N=Not Required, Information Only Faculty Approval based on Program Academic Merit, unless otherwise noted Administration Recommenders, unless otherwise noted								
Altering significantly the length (credit hours) of a program	Yes (P1)	6 months prior to implementation	Prospectus	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	AF	N
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	Yes (P1)	6 months prior to implementation	Prospectus	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	AF	N
... Student can obtain 25-49 % of credit	No (P2)	6 months prior to implementation	Letter of Notification	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	AF	N
... Student can obtain 24% or less	NA	NA	None	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	AF	N	N
Moving an off-campus instructional site (serving the same geographic area)	No (P2)	Prior to Implementation	Letter of Notification with new address and starting date	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	AF	N

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Types of Substantive Change	Prior Approval Required	Time Frame for Contacting SACSCOC	Documentation	Dept.	Division	Curriculum	Faculty Vote	Dept. Chair	Dean/Div. Chair	Provost/VP	President	BOT	
ACADEMIC							Approval based on Program Academic Merit, unless otherwise noted					Administration Recommenders, unless otherwise noted	
Expanding program offerings at previously approved off-campus sites ...Adding programs that are significantly different from current programs at the site	No (P2)	Prior to implementation	Letter of Notification	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	AF	N	
...Adding programs that are NOT significantly different from current programs at the site Initiating Distance Learning ...Offering 50 % or more of a program for the first time (Adding subsequent programs requires advance notification only for programs that are significant departures from the originally approved program)	NA Yes (P1)	NA 6 months prior to implementation	NA Prospectus	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	AF	N	
...Offering 25-49 %	No (P2)	implementation	Letter of Notification	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	AF	N	
...Offering 24 % or less	NA	NA	NONE	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	N	N	

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EXTERNAL: SACSCOC		INTERNAL: College Levels of Approval for Substantive Change						
Types of Substantive Change	Prior Approval Required	Time Frame for Contacting SACSCOC	Documentation	Dept. Approval	Faculty Councils of the Senate	Academic Merit Approval	Administrative Approval	Other
ACADEMIC				Dept. Approval	Faculty Councils of the Senate	Academic Merit Approval	Administrative Approval	Other
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	Yes (P1)	6 months prior to implementation	Prospectus	AM	AM	AM	R	R
... if the entity provides less than 25% of an educational program offered by the accredited institution	No (P2)	6 months prior to implementation	Copy of the signed agreement	AM	AM	AM	R	R
Initiating degree programs offered through contractual agreement or consortium	No (P2)	Prior to implementation	Letter of Notification and copy of signed agreement	AM	AM	AM	R	R (AF if approved degree)
Initiating certificate programs or courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium	No (P2)	Prior to implementation	Letter of Notification and copy of signed agreement	AM	AM	AM	R	R (AF if approved degree)
Acquiring any program from another institution	Yes	6 months prior to implementation	Prospectus	AM	AM	AM	R	R

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EXTERNAL: SACSCOC				INTERNAL: College Levels of Approval for Substantive Change								
Types of Substantive Change	Prior Approval Required	Time Frame for Contacting SACSCOC	Documentation	Dept.	Division	Curriculum Commit	Faculty Vote	Dept. Chair	Division Chair	Provost/VP	President	BOT
ACADEMIC				Approval based on Program Academic Merit, unless otherwise noted				Administration Recommenders, unless otherwise noted				
Altering significantly the length of a program	Yes (P1)	NA	Prospectus	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	AF	N
Initiating degree completion programs (Note SACSCOC definition)	Yes (P1)	NA	Prospectus	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	AF	N
Closing a program (without need for a teach-out-plan)	Yes (P3)	Immediately following decision to close	Letter of notification	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	AF (if certificate)	R (if degree)	AFM (if degree)
Closing a program approved off-campus site, branch campus, or institution ...Institution to <u>teach out</u> its own students	Yes (P3)	Immediately following decision to close	Description of teach-out plan included with letter of notification	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	AF (if certificate)	R (if degree)	AFM (if degree)
Institution <u>contracts with</u> another institution to teach-out students (Teach-out Agreement)	Yes (P3)	Immediately following decision to close	Description of teach-out plan included with letter of notification	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	AF (if certificate)	R (if degree)	AFM (if degree)
Initiating <u>JOINT programs</u> or <u>DUAL programs</u> with another institution ... SACSCOC accredited institution	NA (P2)	Prior to implementation	Copy of signed agreement and contract information for each institution	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	R	AFM
....Non SACSCOC accredited.	Yes (P1)	6 months prior to implementation	Prospectus	AM	AM	AM	AM	R	R	R	R	AFM

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ADMINISTRATIVE				Faculty			Administration						
				Dept. Division	Approval based on Program Academic Merit, unless otherwise noted	Faculty Vote	Dept. Chair	Division Chair	Provost/VP	President	BOT		
SACSCOC policy "Mergers, Consolidations and Change of Ownership: Review and Approval." http://www.sacscoc.org/subchg/policy/mergers.pdf													
Initiating a merger/consolidation with another institution	Yes	6 months prior to implementation	Prospectus Due Dates : 4/15 or 9/15	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	AFM
Changing governance, ownership, control, or legal status of an institution	Yes	6 months prior to implementation	Prospectus Due Dates : 4/15 or 9/15	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	AFM
Altering significantly the educational mission of the institution	Yes (P1)	6 months prior to implementation	Prospectus	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	AFM
Acquiring any site from another institution	Yes	6 months prior to implementation	Prospectus	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	AFM
Adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out for students from another institution that is closing	Yes	6 months prior to implementation	Prospectus	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	AFM
Relocating a main or branch campus	Yes (P1)	6 months prior to implementation	Prospectus	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	AFM
Initiating a branch campus (administrative feasibility aspect)	Yes (P1)	6 months prior to implementation	Prospectus	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	AFM

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