Substantive Change Reporting Requirements

Effective: Revised: January 11, 2023
Original Adoption: September 20, 2010

Responsible Executives: Provost & Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison

Applicability: All Auburn University officers who can initiate, review, approve or allocate resources to changes that may be considered a substantive change according to SACSCOC policy.

Review By: January 11, 2026

PURPOSE

This University Policy establishes the requirements and procedures to ensure that all substantive changes are reported in a timely, accurate, and complete manner to the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC) to maintain continuous compliance with SACSCOC’s Substantive Change Policy and Procedures.

DEFINITIONS

In keeping with federal regulations, SACSCOC defines substantive change as “a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. Substantive change includes high-impact, high-risk changes and changes that can impact the quality of educational programs and services.” Specifically, substantive changes include, but are not limited to the following:

Curricular/instructional changes
- Initiating coursework or programs at a more advanced level than currently approved
- Adding a program at the current level that departs significantly from current programs
- Initiating joint degrees with another institution
- Initiating a certificate program at a new off-campus site or that is a significant departure
- Initiating an off-campus site where at least 25% of the credit for a program can be obtained
- Expanding course or program offerings at a previously approved off-campus site
- Adding programs that are significantly different from current programs
- Initiating distance learning programs or components amounting to at least 25% of a program
- Initiating programs/courses offered through contractual or consortial agreements
- Relocating a previously approved off-campus site
- Significantly altering the length of an educational program (25% or more of a program)
- Closing an educational program, a method of delivery, or a program at an off-campus instructional site
- Re-opening an educational program or off-campus instructional site

Other changes
- Initiating a branch campus
- Significantly altering the educational mission of the institution
- Initiating a merger or consolidation with another institution
- Relocating a main or branch campus
- Changing an institution’s governance, ownership, control, or legal status
- Closing an institution

* - An Off-Campus Instructional Site (OCIS) is a location geographically apart from an institution’s sole main campus and where instruction is delivered. An OCIS at which 25-49% of a program’s instruction is delivered requires notification prior to implementation. An OCIS at which 50% or more of a program’s instruction is delivered requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation.

A complete listing of substantive changes, timeline for notification or approval, and documentation requirements for reporting to SACSCOC can be found on the Auburn University Website.

**POLICY PROCEDURES**

As defined by SACSCOC, a substantive change is any action that significantly modifies or expands the University’s scope, and the University has an obligation to notify SACSCOC prior to implementation of any substantive change.

Assistant and associate provosts, vice presidents, deans, associate deans, and department heads should be aware of the Substantive Change Reporting Requirements and must work with the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison to provide all information necessary to report a substantive change to SACSCOC. The Provost and the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will oversee the process of preparing appropriate notification, in conjunction with those involved with the change, according to the requirements in SACSCOC’s Substantive Change Policy and Procedures and in other related policy and accreditation documents maintained by SACSCOC.

Auburn’s SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will provide information about the SACSCOC substantive change policy to all responsible university officers and faculty on a regular basis. The SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will also monitor potential academic substantive changes by serving as an ex-officio member on all curricular committees. The Provost and SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will ensure that information regarding this policy, associated resources available from SACSCOC, and answers to frequently asked questions are made available on the Auburn University Website.

**SANCTIONS**

Failure to follow SACSCOC procedures for notification and approval of substantive changes prior to implementation may put the university’s accreditation status in jeopardy. If an academic program, unit, or officer implements a substantive change without following the procedures outlined in this policy, the President or Provost may direct the immediate cancellation or cessation of that change, with due regard for the educational welfare of students, when it is discovered. In areas outside of Academic Affairs, the same sanction may be applied by the President or relevant Vice President/Executive Director.

**INTERPRETATION**

Questions about the interpretation of this policy should be directed to the University’s SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison.

**SOURCES**


Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*