



University Policy Substantive Change

I. Introduction

Albany State University (ASU) is responsible for compliance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Principles of Accreditation, Standard 14.2 on Substantive Change and its associated policy statement, Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions, as a condition of continued regional accreditation and eligibility for federal Title IV funding. Both require accredited institutions to “have a policy and procedure to ensure that all substantive changes are reported to the Commission in a timely fashion.”

II. Purpose

The purpose of ASU’s Substantive Change Policy is to:

- 1) Identify events that constitute substantive changes which must be reported to SACSCOC and approved if necessary by SACSCOC in advance of implementation;
- 2) Clarify who at the university is responsible for reporting substantive changes to SACSCOC;
- 3) Establish institutional procedures that ensure timely reporting of substantive changes to SACSCOC and the timely completion of any institutional follow-up required by SACSCOC;
- 4) Ensure that future changes made in the SACSCOC policy on substantive change are incorporated into ASU’s policy on substantive change; and
- 5) 5) Publish, publicize, and update substantive change policies in such a way that all affected institutional parties are readily informed about them, have easy access to the latest version of them, and are accountable for complying with them.

III. Definitions

Substantive change is a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. Under federal regulations, substantive change includes:

- 1) Any change in the established mission or objectives of the institution;
- 2) Any change in legal status, form of control, or ownership of the institution;
- 3) The 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;
- 4) The 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;
- 5) A change from clock hours to credit hours;
- 6) A substantial increase in the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program;

- 7) The establishment of an additional location geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers at least 50% of an educational program;
- 8) The establishment of a branch campus;
- 9) Closing a program, off-campus site, branch campus or institution;
- 10) Entering into a collaborative academic arrangement that includes only the initiation of a dual or joint academic program with another institution;
- 11) Acquiring another institution or a program or location of another institution;
- 12) Adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out program for a closed institution; and
- 13) 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.

The SACSCOC Board of Trustees has approved additional substantive changes that require notification and, in some cases, approval prior to implementation. An example involves the reporting of educational programs in which direct assessment competency-based methods are proposed to be used to award degrees. A comprehensive set of substantive changes is outlined in great detail in the latest edition of the Commission's Policy Statement, Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions, which is published on the Commission's website (sacscoc.org). Because federal and SACSCOC policies change frequently on substantive change, the university and its members are advised to consult the latest published edition of the Commission's policy regularly. See also the Glossary of Terms section of the Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions for proper interpretation of specific terms referenced in the Commission's Policy Statement.

IV. Policy

All administrative and academic officers and their direct reports at ASU should be fully informed about and act in compliance with ASU's and SACSCOC's substantive change policies and procedures.

Early notice of all proposed ASU substantive changes must be funneled by the involved administrative and academic officers to the ASU SACSCOC Liaison who is presently the Vice President for Institutional Planning and Accreditation. Notification of such proposed substantive changes should be made to the Liaison early in the planning process, so that SACSCOC reporting requirements and timetables can be established and implemented in a timely and appropriate fashion by the Liaison with the involved institutional parties.

To facilitate that early notification, the chief academic officer will ensure that the processes for reviewing and approving: a) new degree program proposals delivered in all modes of instruction (including direct assessment CBE); b) proposed existing degree program closures; c) proposed new off-campus instructional sites; and d) proposed closures of existing off-campus instructional sites include a formal requirement that the ASU SACSCOC Liaison be informed of such proposals early in the academic planning and approval process.

Should other less frequent proposed substantive changes emerge in the institutional planning process, the involved administrative and academic officers should inform the ASU SACSCOC Liaison early in the planning process of such possible substantive changes so that timely and appropriate action is taken with SACSCOC.

Only two university officials are typically recognized by SACSCOC as the appropriate reporters of proposed substantive changes at ASU—the ASU President and the ASU SACSCOC Liaison.

Communications with SACSCOC about substantive changes should funnel to ASU's SACSCOC Liaison for transmittal to SACSCOC by the Liaison or the President.

The ASU SACSCOC Liaison is also responsible for the following:

- 1) Updating and maintaining ASU's policy on substantive change consistent with SACSCOC policy on substantive change;
- 2) Regularly updating administrative and academic officers on SACSCOC's substantive change policy and any changes made to that policy;
- 3) Providing to the President's Cabinet with an annual summary of ASU's substantive change reports to and approvals from SACSCOC;
- 4) Publishing on the accreditation liaison's website this policy and SACSCOC policy on substantive change and related institutional procedures for complying with those policies;
- 5) Submitting the appropriate notice, prospectus, or application to SACSCOC for ASU's substantive changes; Coordinating with SACSCOC and university officials on any required follow-up action related to substantive changes; and
- 6) Keeping all records of correspondence with SACSCOC which can be referenced as needed to validate ASU's full compliance with SACSCOC policy and requirements.

V. Exceptions

There are no exceptions to this policy unless identified as exceptions in SACSCOC policy.

VI. Applicability

The policy applies to all changes of the university defined by SACSCOC as a "substantive change" in the Commission's Policy Statement on Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions.

VII. Accountability

Administrative and Academic Officers
Albany State University SACSCOC Liaison
ASU President

VIII. Contacts

Office of the ASU SACSCOC Liaison
V.P. for Institutional Effectiveness

IX. References

SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation: Foundation for Quality Enhancement, Standard 14.2
SACSCOC Policy Statement on Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions

Last Update

March 27, 2019 (ASU's Initial Policy Statement)
July 12, 2019 (Following the appointment of a new SACSCOC Liaison in June 2019)