



Substantive Change Policy

I. Policy Statement and Purpose

Athens State University is fully committed to complying with all policies and procedures mandated by the University's regional accrediting body, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). This policy states the University's responsibilities for compliance with the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy.

II. Substantive Change

Substantive changes may occur at any time and are not tied to, nor an integrated part of, the 10-Year Reaffirmation of Accreditation or of other reports due to the SACSCOC on a regular basis.

Particularly relevant to the expansion of educational opportunities is the possibility that proposed modifications and/or new initiatives may deviate significantly from existing programs or conditions, thus affecting the institutional nature and scope. Since it is the Commission's responsibility to determine the effect of a substantive change on the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of the institution, *SACS Substantive Change Policy* requires that a Substantive Change Request be filed prior to implementation.

Failure to comply with the *SACS Substantive Change Policy* may carry severe consequences for the institution under Principle 3.12 of the *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement* which states "If an institution fails to follow the Commission's procedures for notification and approval of substantive changes, its total accreditation may be placed in jeopardy."

Substantive change is a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. Types of substantive change include, but are not limited to:

- Any change in the established mission or objectives of the institution
- Any change in legal status, form of control, or ownership of the institution
- 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
- 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.
- A change from clock hours to credit hours
- A substantial increase in the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program
- The establishment of an additional location geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers at least 50% of an educational program.
- The establishment of a branch campus
- Closing a program, off-campus site, branch campus or institution
- Entering into a collaborative academic arrangement that includes only the initiation of a dual or joint academic program with another institution



- Acquiring another institution or a program or location of another institution
- 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
- Initiating certificate programs for workforce development
- Initiating certificate programs that are a significant departure from approved programs
- Initiating distance learning courses and programs by which students can earn at least 50% of a program's credits through delivery in a format other than face-to-face expanding at the institution's current degree level
- Relocating a main or branch campus
- Initiating a collaborative academic program with another institution not accredited by SACSCOC
- For site-based/classroom group instruction (where the instructor is present):
 - Initiating an off-campus site at which a student may earn at least 25% but less than 50% of credits toward a program
 - Moving an approved off-campus instructional site within the same geographic area to serve essentially the same pool of students.
- For distance learning/technology-based group or individual instruction (where the instructor and student are geographically separated):
 - Offering for the first time credit courses via distance learning by which students can obtain at least 25% but less than 50% of credits toward an educational program.
- Initiating program/courses delivered through contractual agreement or a consortium
- Entering into a contract with an entity not certified to participate in USDOE Title IV programs if the entity provides less than 25% of an educational program offered by the accredited institution.
- Repacking of an existing approved curriculum

The SACSCOC accreditation liaison, appointed by the President, must be consulted prior to any implementation, to determine if the proposed changes, modifications or expansions meet the definitions of substantive change guidelines as established by SACSCOC. The liaison is responsible for ensuring that substantive changes are recognized and reported in a timely fashion, and will consult with the SACSCOC staff member assigned to the University as necessary.

The SACSCOC liaison will ensure that the University follows all SACSCOC substantive change procedures, and the President of the University will inform SACSCOC of substantive changes as specified in the procedures.

III. Responsibility for this Operating Policy

Policy Owner

As part of the initial approval of this policy by the President and subsequent to the original dissemination of the policy, the President remains the policy owner for the ongoing evaluation,



Policy Number: I.18
Policy Level: Operating Policy
Originally Issued: August 18, 2015
Revised:
Policy Owner: President
Policy Implementation: SACSCOC Liaison

review, and approval of this policy. Subsequent reviews and revisions to this policy must be in accordance with approved operating policy procedures and processes.

This policy will be reviewed every two years or more frequently as needed.

Responsibility for Policy Implementation

The President has assigned the responsibility of implementing this policy to the SACSCOC Liaison, under the direction of the President and the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs.