

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE PROCEDURE

Substantive changes are initiated through the planning process at the University and the Strategic Planning Committee. When an academic substantive change is under consideration, the planning process is initiated by the Department Chair/Program Coordinator working in conjunction with the College Dean. Administrative substantive change proposals are initiated by the Vice President of the respective administrative unit.

Roles and Responsibilities

Faculty: Responsible for course/program research and development. All curriculum changes should follow the Athens State University Curriculum Review Process.

Department Chair/Program Coordinator: Responsible for ensuring that all required approvals and notifications are received prior to scheduling or marketing courses. Each Department Chair or Program Coordinator should keep on file copies of substantive change requests, notifications, and SACSCOC approvals for each program, location (off-campus site) and delivery format (online) in which the program is offered.

College Dean: Responsible for ensuring that no substantive change is implemented without the prior approval through internal and external processes. College Deans are also responsible for notifying the Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs at the time the project planning process begins, normally 12-18 months before a substantive change implementation is sought.

Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs (PVPAA): Responsible for managing the approval process and ensuring that all internal and external approvals and notifications are completed on time.

University Accreditation Liaison: Responsible for providing leadership and guidance to all University personnel related to COC substantive change policies and procedures. The Liaison serves as a resource during planning and implementation of all substantive change projects and serves as the authorized contact for all institutional communications with the Commission.

Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA): Responsible for systematic collection, analysis, evaluation, and dissemination of valid and reliable data used to support and assist in the development of substantive change documents. The Director of OIRA will assist with review and revision of substantive change prospectus documents. The OIRA office will serve as the official repository of all SACSCOC documentation.

Curriculum Committee: Responsible for reviewing all curriculum proposals for addition or deletion of courses, changes in degree requirements, and changes in course descriptions for existing courses. The Committee also reviews all proposed new programs (certificates, minors and majors) suggested by the Department and supported by the College as evidenced by the completed Curriculum Review Request form.

Internal Planning and Approval Process for Substantive Change

The following University procedures have been developed to ensure timely and accurate adherence to all COC substantive change requirements.

Substantive Changes that require **Notification and Approval** Prior to Implementation are listed below as well as the institutional process that must be followed.

- Initiating coursework, certificates, or programs of study at a different level
- Initiating certificate programs for workforce development
- Initiating certificate programs that are a significant departure from approved programs
- Initiating an off-campus site at which students can earn at least 50% of the credits toward an educational program
- Initiating a branch campus
- 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
- Initiating a significant change in the established mission of the institution
- Changing from clock hours to credit hours
- Changing significantly the length of a program, substantially increasing the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program
- Relocating a main or branch campus
- Initiating a collaborative academic program with another institution not accredited by SACSCOC
- Entering into a contract with an entity not certified to participate in USDOE Title IV programs
- 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

Timeline for Notification to SACSCOC: The institution must provide written notification of the change to SACSCOC at least 6 months in advance of implementation.

Step 1

At the time that a substantive change is being considered, the College Dean or appropriate administrative Vice President must complete and submit electronically the Substantive Change Checklist Form to the PVPAA and OIPRA offices. This electronic form alerts the appropriate parties of a substantive change action.

Step 2

The PVPAA notifies the President and the University Accreditation Liaison. The appropriate Vice President or College Dean, in coordination with the Department Chair/Program Coordinator, will prepare the Substantive Change Prospectus (1500-0916B). The President will begin the process of securing appropriate approvals from the President's Cabinet, the University Board of Trustees and the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE).

For Academic Substantive Changes:

The Prospectus is part of the required documentation to be presented to the Curriculum Committee for all proposed academic changes. Curriculum changes will NOT be approved without a prospectus. Additionally, a printed copy of the

completed Substantive Change Checklist should be included in the documentation submitted to the Curriculum Committee.

For Administrative Substantive Changes:

The Prospectus will be presented to the President's Cabinet for review and approval.

Step 3

Upon approval, the Chair of the Curriculum Committee (for Academic Substantive Changes) or the President or his designee (for Administrative Substantive Changes) will forward a copy of the prospectus to the PVPAA who will share with the University Accreditation Liaison and OIRA. The Liaison and the Director of OIRA will review the document and recommend changes if needed to the PVPAA.

Step 4

The PVPAA will notify the President that the substantive change prospectus is ready for submission to SACSCOC. The President prepares a cover letter and the package is sent to SACSCOC via certified mail.

Submission to SACSCOC

All documents will be submitted in both printed and electronic copy. Official copies of all submissions will be kept on file in OIPRA. The final package will consist of:

1. Original President's Cover Letter
2. Substantive Change Prospectus
3. Completed Faculty Roster (if appropriate)
4. Payment for Necessary Fees and Expenses

NOTE: Once the prospectus has been submitted, the institution may advertise and recruit students to a new program or site as long as all materials clearly state that the program or site is pending approval by SACSCOC.

Substantive Changes that require **Notification Only** Prior to Implementation are listed below as well as the institutional process that must be followed.

- 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

Timeline for Notification to SACSCOC: The institution must provide written notification of the change to the SACSCOC prior to implementation. The letter must include the implementation date of the proposed change.

Step 1

At the time that a substantive change is being considered, the College Dean or appropriate administrative Vice President must complete and submit electronically the Substantive Change Checklist Form to the PVPAA and OIPRA offices. This electronic form alerts the appropriate parties of a substantive change action.

Step 2

The PVPAA notifies the President and the University Accreditation Liaison. The President will begin the process of securing appropriate approvals from the President's Cabinet, the University Board of Trustees and the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE).

For Academic Substantive Changes:

The College Dean will submit the Substantive Change Checklist documentation to the Curriculum Committee for consideration and approval.

For Administrative Substantive Changes:

The Substantive Change Checklist will be presented to the President's Cabinet for review and approval.

Step 3

Upon approval, the Chair of the Curriculum Committee (for Academic Substantive Changes) or the President or his designee (for Administrative Substantive Changes) will forward a copy of the Checklist to the PVPAA who will share with the University Accreditation Liaison and OIRA. The Liaison and the Director of OIRA will use the Checklist to develop a draft letter of notification to the SACSCOC and provide to the PVPAA.

Step 4

The PVPAA will notify the President that the substantive change notification is ready for submission to SACSCOC. The President will finalize the notification letter and submit to SACSCOC.

Submission to SACSCOC

All documents will be submitted in both printed and electronic copy. Official copies of all submissions will be kept on file in OIPRA. The final package will consist of:

1. Official Notification Letter from President to SACSCOC.
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**Substantive Changes that require Teach Out Plans
are listed below as well as the institutional process that must be followed.**

- Closing a Program, Instructional Site, Branch Campus or an Institution

Step 1

At the time that a substantive change is being considered, the College Dean or appropriate administrative Vice President must complete and submit electronically the Substantive Change Checklist Form to the PVPAA and OIRA offices. This electronic form alerts the appropriate parties of a substantive change action.

Step 2

The PVPAA notifies the President and the University Accreditation Liaison. The President will begin the process of securing appropriate approvals from the President's Cabinet, the University Board of Trustees and the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE).

For Academic Substantive Changes:

The College Dean will develop a Teach Out Plan following SACSCOC guidelines and submit the Plan and the Substantive Change Checklist documentation to the Curriculum Committee for consideration and approval.

For Administrative Substantive Changes:

The Substantive Change Checklist will be presented to the President's Cabinet for review and approval.

Step 3

Upon approval, the Chair of the Curriculum Committee (for Academic Substantive Changes) or the President or his designee (for Administrative Substantive Changes) will forward a copy of the Checklist and the Teach-Out Plan to the PVPAA who will share with the University Accreditation Liaison and OIRA. The Liaison and the Director of OIRA will review the Teach-Out Plan and use the Checklist to develop a draft letter of notification to the SACSCOC and provide to the PVPAA.

Step 4

The PVPAA will notify the President that the substantive change notification is ready for submission to SACSCOC. The President will finalize the notification letter and submit it and the Teach-Out Plan to SACSCOC.

Timeline: As soon as the decision to close is made, the institution should provide both a letter of notification and a Teach-Out Plan to the SACSCOC.

NOTE: Teach-Out Plans must be approved by SACSCOC in advance of implementation.

Submission to SACSCOC

All documents will be submitted in both printed and electronic copy. Official copies of all submissions will be kept on file in OIPRA. The final package will consist of:

1. Official Notification Letter from President to SACSCOC
2. Teach-Out Plan